

# **Different Drummers**

**Nonconforming Thinkers in History**

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**Instructional Systems**

Sacramento, California

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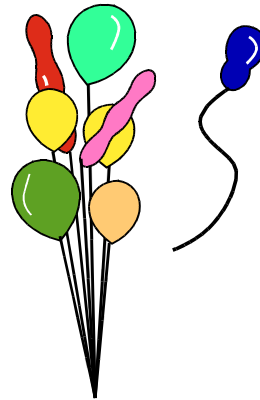
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## FOREWORD

*We have need of history in its entirety, not to fall back into it, but to see if we can escape from it.*

— José Ortega Y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, 1930

*Different Drummers: Nonconforming Thinkers in History*, is a helpful addition to the history teacher's toolbox. This supplemental learning resource offers a way to teach (and students a means to learn) about unconventional thinking, about unorthodoxy, and about the important roles that various free and independent thinkers throughout the ages have played alongside their diverse religious counterparts in human development and social progress.

It is not easy to teach impartially about certain subject matter. Public school teachers face a particularly challenging task. They have a constitutional imperative to teach in a neutral manner about the religion domain and about the role of religion in history. It is clear that *Different Drummers* will be highly beneficial to their endeavor. Its varied lessons and activities help students gain perspective on nonconformity and unconventional thinking. The module as a whole offers numerous examples of people whose beliefs and worldviews have departed from tradition and authority.

Religion has been a decisive factor in the development of civilizations. So too, though, has free and independent thinking. If religion is deserving of academic attention, then so are the rational imperatives and habits of open inquiry that compel some individuals in every era to turn aside from conventional religious explanations and interpret in their *own* ways the world in which they live.

Some of the dramatic moments in history occurred when independent reasoning or critical thinking confronted traditional authority or an existing religious institution. These events involved either an independent thinker challenging religious authority from within religion, or a freethinker challenging religion from a position of nonbelief. It is important for social science teachers to give students the intellectual tools for comprehending and analyzing such episodes.

Religion as a strand of subject matter considered without its nonconforming counterpart yields a biased curriculum. The *Different Drummers* set of instructional materials offers much-needed raw material to help classroom teachers guide future generations of citizens to an understanding of the contributions to history of autonomous thinking. It will facilitate their ongoing task of providing students with an accurate and objective perspective on human history.

John B. Massen, Coordinator of OABITAR  
(*Objectivity, Accuracy, and Balance In Teaching About Religion*)  
San Mateo, California

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Numerous ideas for the lessons and activities in this module derive from the fine cadre of people who assisted in its development across a two-year period.

The first phase of our developmental endeavor involved authoring of a skeletal instructional module geared to the textbook, *Freethought Across the Centuries* (1996) by Gerald A. Larue. We appreciate Dr. Larue taking time to carefully review that draft for content accuracy. Review Teachers then evaluated those materials, *Free and Independent Thinkers through History* (Draft Version), and their input spurred a wealth of enhancements in classroom activities. We are especially grateful to Freda Kelly and Alan Haskvitz for their insightful suggestions, which helped us to focus the project more appropriately on classroom realities and the needs of teachers and students.

Our revised set of materials, *Different Drummers: Nonconforming Thinkers in History (Pilot Version)*, was then submitted to the “front lines” for classroom tryout. Pilot Teachers reviewed the content of the module and then used various lessons with their students. We made further revisions based on their classroom suggestions, resulting in the present published edition. For California teachers, we correlated lesson content to the State Department of Education’s *California (K-12) H/SS Framework*.

The extra effort made by several Pilot Teachers to supply us with samples of their students’ work during that phase of the project is much appreciated, as is the detailed feedback from Leanne Westphal and Patricia Hardy on how and why they chose to modify a certain lesson’s approach. More than once, our preference for their version over our original motivated some revamping of strategies. We are grateful to Freda Kelly and Leanne and Scott Westphal for their further assistance in the Framework correlation phase of this project.

We are deeply indebted to all the classroom teachers who worked with us. Their fine contributions have vastly improved this instructional module. As a result of their generous help, we feel that this supplemental instructional resource is worthy of being placed into the hands of any classroom teacher interested in its learning goals.

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## AUTHORS' NOTE

Many of the most important ideas we now hold, the *ties that bind us* together and that many consider part of our American heritage, were once not anywhere to be found. Their “birth,” in some cases, caused quite an uproar.

Today’s youngsters can gain much from learning how worthwhile ideas once proved sorely irritating to the community into which they were born. Frequently, in fact, an idea that presented considerable provocation long ago, is the very one we now highly praise as a dramatic leap forward for civilization. Students can benefit from examining different instances of someone (or some group) introducing an unconventional idea. They can see what brought the idea about in the mind of its conceiver. And they can see different ways the community may have responded. These social processes make for interesting study, whether they occur in history or in the present day.

*Different Drummers* draws most of its examples from schooling, science, politics, and religion. The religion realm offers students some of the best examples of the interplay between conforming and nonconforming thought. Throughout history there have been those who have held to ideas that directly confront the strongly held religious beliefs of their neighbors. There also have been those whose own contemplation and independent reasoning have resulted in their reaching conclusions far out of line with prevalent belief.

Ideas that depart from authority, or from tradition, or from the accepted thinking of a society tend to be noticed. In most cases the impact is nil, or limited. Sometimes, though, a society changes slightly as it accommodates to a different notion. In other instances, we see that a whole culture is dramatically revolutionized. History is altered.

An idea that strongly challenges the status quo may be the very one to lead to the largest shift in direction for humankind. But, holding to a religious or political or other idea that strongly challenges tradition or authority has seldom been easy. In authoritarian nations, it’s dangerous. And even today’s democratic societies can make things pretty tough for a different thinking citizen. In our own nation—one that loudly proclaims individual rights and freedoms for all citizens—there are certain “different notions” that are not readily tolerated. As any nonbeliever can attest, society takes note of independent thinking that leads *too far* from mainstream notions. To conform, a person needs to profess belief in at least *some* sort of God. To do otherwise, is proscribed.

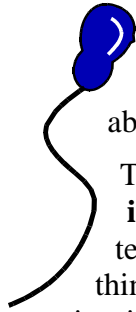
Happily, present-day American society grants us all considerable liberty to think and believe differently, and we pride ourselves on being a pluralistic society that accepts all kinds of believers, even tiny minority religions.

We are exceedingly fortunate that the United States accords all its citizens *liberty of conscience*. Constitutional protections enable the entire population of our pluralistic society to live amicably and believe, or not, as they wish. Institutionalizing state-church separation into our laws was an enlightened and unconventional idea in western history. *What marvelously different drummers our forefathers happened to be!*

Mynga Futrell, Ph.D.

Paul Geisert, Ph.D.

## PREFACE



The *Different Drummers: Nonconforming Thinkers in History* module is a collection of supplemental lessons and background materials that will complement current approaches for teaching about belief systems and their impact on history.

The teaching and learning materials center on the topic of **free and independent thought in historical context**. The module acquaints teachers and students with some of underpinnings of “different thinking” and with some of the important “different drummers” of prior times.

The *Different Drummers* module also relates to current society. It will especially facilitate a teacher who encourages students toward open-minded and objective consideration of the “different thinking” and “different believing” that is present in their own life and times. Additionally, a teacher can use the material to help students to appreciate those aspects of our American heritage that safeguard freedom of conscience for the unconventional thinkers in our midst.

### ***Grade Level Applicability***

The materials are structured for integration into the middle grades and secondary level history and social science programs. A teacher may choose to intersperse short segments of the module into the curriculum across the school year, or to teach it all (or chosen portions) as a unit of emphasis separate to itself.

To enable the student materials to be used fruitfully in the middle school, their reading level has been controlled. No story exceeds seventh grade readability level [average = 6.5] by the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Index. Measures indicate that the first tier stories do not exceed sixth grade reading level difficulty [F/K average = 5.8].

### ***Versatility of the Materials***

This module is suited to varied classroom situations. There four probable areas of curricular interest: 1) a course in history and social science; 2) a course or unit that promotes critical thinking skills or comparable topics; 3) any program examining religion in history or in the present day; and 4) instruction that advances affective aims consonant with the goals of the module.

The chart on the next page presents and further describes each of these four curriculum areas.

### ***Conceiving of Alternative Uses***

Although there are suggested routes to use of the materials that a teacher can follow, the module supports teachers who want to select from, combine, and or adapt portions of the learning materials to fit their classroom needs. Teachers may use whatever lessons or parts they deem well suited to their students and their own particular teaching style. In other words, teachers may *themselves* be “different drummers”!

**CURRICULUM****APPLICABILITY OF *DIFFERENT DRUMMERS******Teaching a course  
in history and  
social science***

All student materials, such as the stories about events in history, are carefully written to a pertinent reading level. Information is provided to help teacher match the correct reading level and the span of history.

**NOTE:** Matching of lesson content to suitable grade levels follows the *California History and Social Studies Framework, 1997*. California teachers and interested others may download a correlation key from the *Different Drummers* web site at [www.teachingaboutreligion.com](http://www.teachingaboutreligion.com).

***Teaching critical  
thinking skills and  
similar topics***

Material in *Different Drummers* is likely to be of considerable interest to a teacher whose curriculum includes critical thinking, logic, independent reasoning, or similar topics of study. The program gives particular emphasis to *divergent thinking*, to *curiosity*, and to *skepticism*.

***Teaching about  
religion in history  
or the present day***

**or**

***Teaching about  
religion and  
nonreligion***

The module draws from diverse religious and freethought areas, so its spectrum of historical examples can help a teacher to better achieve desirable objectivity and balance when teaching about the religion realm. [Also, because of its structure, the learning module can support any California teacher who is striving to follow that state's Department of Education recommendations for world history curricula.]

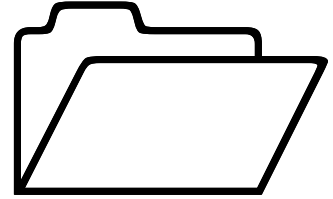
**NOTE:** For helpful guidance and resource information on teaching about religion in a public school, teachers may go to *Teaching about Religion with a View To Diversity*, a professional Web resource for educators that emphasizes national pluralism, a full spectrum of worldviews, and the desirability of religious neutrality in classrooms (go to [www.teachingaboutreligion.org](http://www.teachingaboutreligion.org)).

There is also a special section supplemental to these *Different Drummers* teaching materials. It presents background designed to better equip teachers for classroom neutrality regarding the full worldview spectrum of religion and nonreligion. This section follows the main module (*please see the TEACHER SECTION tab.*)

***Teaching to  
affective  
ends***

When the classroom teacher especially values and encourages children's independence of thought and reasoning or strives to guide students in becoming more respectful of each other and more appreciative of each others' individual differences of thought and belief, the *Different Drummers* module can play a role. Any teachers who emphasize these and similar values are invited to take a careful look at the main goals and to contemplate how they might apply several portions of these learning materials to their curriculum.

## **Module Overview**



How do the ideas that shake society—especially those ideas that lead to great social leaps for humanity—come about?

The course of history has seen civilization advance via many different avenues. There is no single thoroughfare by which humans have reaped the world’s greatest ideas. This module will explore one pathway, however, that has proved particularly fruitful. In *Different Drummers: Nonconforming Thinkers in History*, we study the avenue of free and independent thinking.

Not always, but not surprisingly either, a society’s resounding ideas frequently emerge from people who tend to “look at things” ... well ... *differently*. In every era there seem to live people who think freely and independently and do not conform to the mainstream. They are, so to speak, the “different drummers” of their times. These nonconforming thinkers make for an interesting and worthwhile topic of study.

As part of guiding your students in their study of the past, you can help them see how some of the concepts they hold in high regard today were once disparaged or condemned. You can shepherd your students’ indulgence of those who happen to reach conclusions or hold convictions unlike their own. And, you can help students to better appreciate their own freedom to reason independently and to see things differently than their peers. A different drummer’s idea sometimes changes history!

### ***Purpose of the Different Drummers Module***

1. To cultivate your students’ respect for the freedom of people to think freely or to hold unfamiliar or dissimilar philosophic and religious beliefs
2. To increase your students’ awareness of the vast diversity of human thought
3. To foster your students’ commitment to safeguarding within society individual conviction and independence of thought.

# Introduction

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## Content and Organization

Here is an overview of what you will find within the *Different Drummer* module. Look for further information on each item in the narrative that follows the chart:

INSTRUCTION	ANCILLARY MATERIAL
<i>10 Concept Lessons</i>	<i>Nonconforming Thinkers (Cards/Display Posters)</i>
<i>9 Story Lessons (with analysis strategies)</i>	<i>Free and Independent Thinking in History: A Timeline</i>
<i>15 Learning Activities</i>	<i>2 Information Booklets</i>

### Concept Lessons

Ten lessons focus on “*different thinking*” *concepts*, each providing clearly stated objectives, a correlation to the History/Social Studies Framework, guidance for teaching the lesson, and duplication master sheets for use in producing number of student exercises you need. [See “Overview of Concept Lessons,” page 8.]

### Story Lessons

Nine stories tell about *nonconforming thinkers (from history)*. A preliminary “Story Strategies” section presents story analysis tools and guides you in selecting and using the stories most suited to your curriculum and students. Individual story lessons provide teaching goals, H/SS Framework correlations, reading statistics, duplication master sheets, and, as needed, teacher background information. [See Story Matrix, page 66.]

### Learning Activities

Fifteen diverse activities concern *unconventional thinking*. Each activity provides instructions for your teaching along with necessary duplication master sheets. [See “Activities at a Glimpse,” page 102.]

### Pictorials (Nonconforming Thinkers)

Duplication masters let you make two-sided cards of free and independent thinkers in two formats:

- trading card size (like baseball-style “collector” cards)
- learning group size (for cooperative activities)

The collection features 34 persons selected as “unconventional thinkers” of their times. Most are historical figures, but a few are recent or contemporary.” A picture of each thinker is on the front of the card. The back contains supportive information and a quotation from the thinker (when available).

A dozen “display-size” **pictorials** portray historical figures that are depicted in selected lessons. These are handy for posting or for use in front of the class concurrent with the lesson.

### Teacher Section

1. A **timeline** outlines *independent thinking events through history*. Designed primarily as a teacher resource, this item chronologically catalogues many events from history in one column, with corresponding “free and independent thinking” events of the same time frame in the adjacent column. The time line helps you to identify persons and happenings that represent departures from conventional thinking (or are markers of human progress) within a time span of your choosing.
2. As a **supplement** to the module, two information booklets extend teacher thinking into aspects of unfamiliar or unorthodox perspectives with respect to the religion realm. You will find this background helpful if you are teaching about religion or handling classroom discussions of religion in your classroom.

### General Organization of Lessons

The *Different Drummers* lessons, stories, and activities involve concepts and attitudes related to nonconforming thought and its place in society and history. In general, the progression of ideas migrates through three goal areas (shown as three rows in the table on the following page).

These three concept domains are 1) conformity and nonconformity; 2) attributes of free and independent thinking; and 3) seriously nonconforming views and their consequences.

You will want to explore *all* the learning materials. Feel free! Find those which best fit your needs. Use our suggestions for sequencing the stories and lessons, or adapt the materials as you see fit. *Beat your own drum.*

## Introduction

Concepts	Main Cognitive Goals	Main Affective Intent
<b>CONFORMITY AND NONCONFORMITY</b>	Students will understand conformity and nonconformity as it relates to interplay in human groups.	<i>Fostering in students open-mindedness toward nonconformity.*</i>
<b>ATTRIBUTES OF FREE AND INDEPENDENT THINKING</b>	Students will recognize character traits frequently evident in nonconforming thinkers. Students can analyze historical situations in which free and independent thought changed the course of history and resulted in social progress.	<i>Nurturing awareness and students' appreciation that a different drummer's actions or views may in the long run be of benefit.</i>
<b>SERIOUSLY NONCONFORMING VIEWS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES</b>	Students can analyze historical situations in which dramatically nonconforming thought meets up with strongly held societal norms. Understand the relevance of our country's constitutional protections for religious freedom to its free and independent thinkers.	<i>Cultivating in students a sense that those who think "too differently" may be vulnerable and in need of legal protection.</i>

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** People have a general tendency to disapprove of nonconformist conduct or appearance. This human inclination is commonplace and, for many, habitual. *An open-minded attitude serves to buffer immediate judgment made without basis.* (Rather than a surface response, eventual judgment of "that which is different" can be *reasoned*, and the ultimate opinion of the nonconformist action or view may end up anywhere in a range from distinctly negative to clearly positive.) Early forbearance can garner major educational benefits, especially as concerns encounters with different-thinking people or with unorthodox ideas.

*Open-mindedness naturally facilitates making added inquiry into the particulars of unconventional thinking.* The door remains open for further learning and substantive evaluation (e.g., seeking elucidation, anticipating more data, weighing consequences). Hence, the affective goal here is to supplant a prejudicial reaction to nonconformity with an impartial one—open-mindedness.

## Lesson Information

For perspective on any lesson, look at its first page.

The **MAIN GOAL** will tell you right away which part of the Table at left (on page 4) is of *primary interest* in that particular Concept Lesson or Story Lesson. The Concept Lessons will have a narrower goal stated in addition to the main goal. This **SUBGOAL** is intended to be a bit more descriptive of the *students' actions* during the lesson.

There is a **LESSON CONTEXT** chart for each lesson helping you to frame the most relevant *general notions* pertaining to the lesson. For example, here is the chart for Concept Lesson 3, Class Pet, with “X” indicating that the lesson most concerns cultural literacy, involves social participation skills, and deals with civic values.

Knowledge and Cultural Understanding		Skills Attainment and Social Participation	
	<i>Historical Literacy</i>		<i>Basic Study Skills</i>
	<i>Ethical Literacy</i>		<i>Critical Thinking Skills</i>
X	<i>Cultural Literacy</i>	X	<i>Participation Skills</i>
	<i>Geographic Literacy</i>	Democratic Understanding and Civic Values	
	<i>Economic Literacy</i>		<i>National Identity</i>
	<i>Sociopolitical Literacy</i>		<i>Constitutional Heritage</i>
		X	<i>Civic Values, Rights, and Responsibilities</i>

A Story Lesson has additional information on its beginning page.

You can see the main **THEME** and the relevant **TIME PERIOD** in history. You can also decipher whether the significance of the nonconformist thinking is within *politics, science, or religion* (some stories touch on more than one arena). Additionally, you also examine the **READING PROFILE** to see how well the story is matched to your students' general reading proficiencies.



# Introduction

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