



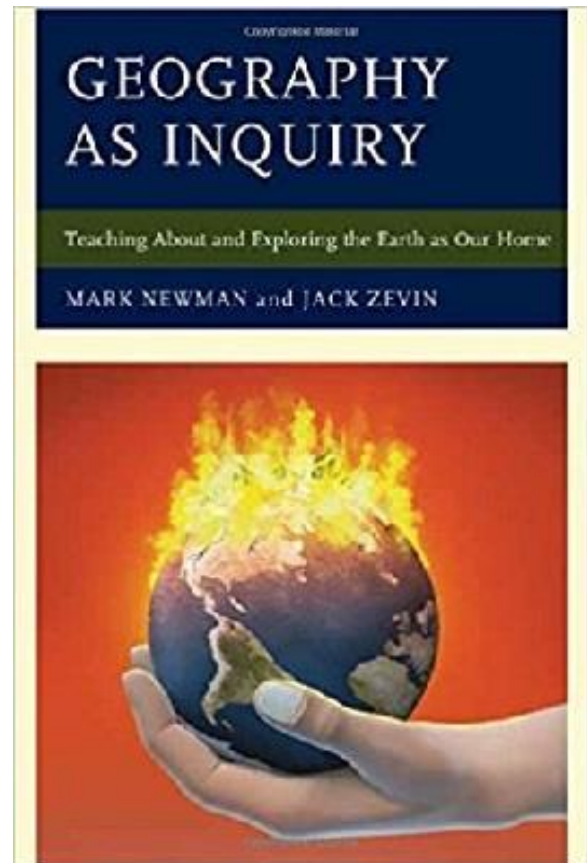
Newman, M., & Zevin, J. (2016). *Geography as inquiry: Teaching about and exploring the earth as our home*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

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Traumatic weather events and human-made or natural disasters can compel people to consider geography more than they normally would. Writing this review while major hurricanes, earthquakes, and forest fires were wreaking havoc across North America in the late fall of 2017 drove home to me the importance of geographic knowledge of the world. However, as the authors of *Geography as Inquiry: Teaching About and Exploring the Earth as Our Home* write, although we are always thinking geographically, we are not always aware of it. Social studies education scholars Mark Newman and Jack Zevin aim to remedy this lack of awareness with more explicit focus on geography content and skills through inquiry based learning (IBL), a process in which teachers and students pose and answer complex questions. This book, written for K-16 teachers, provides a strong case for paying more attention to geography as inquiry in instruction and to exploring and treating the earth as a home.



The book chapters fall into three main sections. The introductory chapters present Newman and Zevin's argument that geography *is* inquiry and provide a framework through which to approach the remaining chapters. The next five chapters focus on each of the "five themes of geography"—location, place, region, movement, and human-environment interaction—that have set the conceptual foundation for state standards and geography textbooks in the United States since 1984. The remainder of the chapters focus on spaces where teachers and students can apply the five themes and IBL: maps, study of "passages, barriers, and boundaries," and a simulation game combining geography and world history. Throughout the book, the authors use many descriptive cases that illuminate the topics and could easily be incorporated into instruction.

Newman and Zevin's working definition of "Geography is inquiry" squarely connects geographic study to the National Council for the Social Studies' (2013) C3 framework—a framework that some U.S. states have used to develop their own social studies standards. The C3 framework centers on IBL: a type of learning, Newman and Zevin argue, and I would agree, that is the answer to the question, "how do you study geography?" (p. 3). The authors then present their "big question geography inquiry model" that gives a geographic focus to the C3's IBL approach. Throughout the book, Newman and Zevin model part of the IBL approach by posing many compelling geographic questions.

The five themes of geography (location, place, region, movement, and human-environment interaction) are very well known in geography and social studies education, but the authors enhance the conversation by digging deep into the concepts to raise questions and uncertainties—particularly with the concepts location, place, and region. For example, the authors describe the "mystery" and the

"slippery nature" of place and region by raising questions about defining Istanbul, Turkey as a place: "So, what defines Istanbul as a city? Is it its geography, history, religion, culture, or all of those things?" (p. 46). Chapter 4 presents a chronological view of movement throughout world history by focusing on types of early movement of peoples and more recent migrations. The authors spend much of Chapter 5 focusing on the case of the Dust Bowl in U.S. history to exemplify human-environment interaction. I appreciated how a close examination of this particular historical phenomenon could raise such complex geographical issues of, as the authors refer to it, "working and fooling with mother earth." Here, again, the authors present a question that could guide instruction and student inquiry: "If you were a farmer, how would you respond to conditions of the 1920s and early 1930s" (p. 101).

As they do with geographic concepts, Newman and Zevin discuss the mysterious and slippery nature of maps (Chapter 6). They contend that maps are "cultural texts" that can be used effectively in classrooms "once we realize they are subjective by nature" (p. 131). In works such as *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Lewis & Wigen, 1997), geographers have argued for skepticism toward spatial structures that people use to organize the world and for examinations of the ideological motives behind such structures. Following this line of thought, Newman and Zevin offer many examples of maps that teachers could use to highlight the subjectivity and also the power and positioning of maps in history. I particularly liked the example of the Powhatan map as a way of connecting to something with which students may be familiar, the story of Pocahontas, in order to disrupt their notions of the definition of a map.

The final two chapters move beyond the standard themes and maps. In a chapter dedicated to "passages, barriers, and

boundaries,” the authors discuss numerous human-made and natural passages from the Khyber Pass to the Suez Canal. Interestingly, the chapter also includes section on non-traditional and emerging geographic concepts, such as “air and space,” as well as what they term “electronic geography”: the Internet and the Cloud. The chapter serves as a nice jumping off point for teachers to engage their students in questions of how the passages, barriers, and boundaries on the Internet or in space are similar or different to those on earth. The book ends with a description of a simulation game in which students take on different roles throughout history (e.g., hunter-gatherers, agriculturalists) to decide what to do over time to a landmass called Sequencia that contains a variety of environments. Although it may take a little work for teachers to figure out how the simulation would function in classrooms, the game should allow teachers and students to apply geographic and historical skills and knowledge to an interactive thought experiment.

Geography as Inquiry contains useful graphics, photographs, and maps throughout the chapters. Additionally, almost every chapter ends with a “classroom exploration” meant to provide specific ideas for instruction. Although I was expecting the classroom explorations to make more explicit connections to the “big question geography

inquiry model” framework presented in the introduction, those that did not still give the reader ideas that could easily be adapted to different courses and student ages and levels. For example, Chapter 6 concludes with the authors suggesting a classroom exploration focused on “mental maps”—an activity that students at any age can engage in to some degree.

Social studies teacher-educators may find *Geography as Inquiry* particularly useful. Most of the chapters could stand-alone to allow teacher candidates to take a deep dive, for example, into the themes of movement or place or into the use of maps in instruction. Because many of the chapters challenge preconceived notions about the objectivity of maps or concepts such as region, they would serve as good starting points for discussions of larger inquiry projects on these issues. As the authors write, the strength of geographic inquiry is that it “leads students down a series of rather thorny and tricky paths, along circuitous routes that do not follow a straight line to a destination of understanding. In the process, they build content knowledge while developing important literacy and problem-solving skills” (p. 4). *Geography as Inquiry* presents many sample questions and cases that could lead to fruitful geographic inquiries in classrooms across K-16 grade levels.


References

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About the Reviewer

Lauren McArthur Harris is an Associate Professor of History Education with a joint appointment in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College and the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies. Her work focuses on how teachers teach and students learn history in schools. In particular, Harris investigates the complexities involved in the creation of larger historical narratives, teachers' sense of historical pedagogical content knowledge and the role of personal background on the historical reasoning of students. Harris was formerly a ninth-grade world history teacher in Arlington, VA.



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