

Social studies

With politics so divisive, I've wondered how we got here. I think I may have found one reason.

In an online article titled "Two States. Eight Textbooks. 2 American Stories" (Jan 13), The New York Times performed an analysis of differences in social studies textbooks published in 2016 or later used by eighth- and 11th-graders in California and Texas.

Even though the books had the same publisher and credit the same authors, they are customized for students in different states that reflect partisan divides. For example, California's version includes an excerpt from a novel about a Dominican-American family. In the same place, Texas versions highlight the voice of a Border Patrol agent.

The Times found each text has editions for California and Texas, among other states, customized to satisfy policymakers with different priorities. The differences can be attributed to state social studies standards, state laws and feedback from panels of textbook review appointees.

The article continues to point out the many differences between the two states' textbooks and reasons why certain wording or stories were included or omitted. History is written by the victors, but America loses if we are taught to only see one point of view.

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