

**STANDARDIZED
EXERCISES IN UNITED
STATES HISTORY:
COLONIAL PERIOD**

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Standardized Exercises in United States History: Colonial Period by Sturgiss Brown Davis

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STURGISS BROWN DAVIS

**STANDARDIZED
EXERCISES IN UNITED
STATES HISTORY:
COLONIAL PERIOD**

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

STANDARDIZED EXERCISES IN UNITED
STATES HISTORY.
COLONIAL PERIOD

BY
STURGISS BROWN (DAVIS

A THESIS
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	5
2. Purpose of the Study	6
Chap. I. Selection and Organization of the Material to be Standardized.	
Sec. 1. The Content of the Exercises	9
Sec. 2. The Form of the Exercises	11
Chap. II. Standardizing the Material.	
Sec. 1. Procedure Followed	15
Sec. 2. Schools Taking Test I	20
Sec. 3. Schools Taking Tests II and III	21
Sec. 4. Scoring the Exercises	28
Sec. 5. Tabulating the Results	29
Chap. III. Tentative Scales in the form of Lists X and Y	33
Chap. IV. Weighting the Results of the Data on each Exercise.	
Sec. 1. Plan of Procedure	43
Sec. 2. Tests for the Reliability of the Data	44
Sec. 3. The Reading Difficulty of the Exercises	50
Sec. 4. The Element of Success by Chance, Formula	52
Chap. V. Classification of the Standardized Material into Scales C and D and Tests E and F	55
Chap. VI. Use of the Standardized Exercises for Supervisory Purposes.	
Sec. 1. Reorganization of Proposed Measures into Test A and Test B, Part I and Part II	69
Sec. 2. Value of the Standardized Exercises	81
Sec. 3. Significance of the Value Found for Each Exercise. Four Different Kinds of Historical Material	85
Sec. 4. Possible Uses of the Standardized Exercises	89
Chap. VII. Summary and Conclusion	95
Sec. 1. Summary	95
Sec. 2. Conclusion	96
Bibliography	97

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STANDARDIZED EXERCISES IN HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

There are now available for the use of teachers a number of standardized tests in United States History. All of these tests cover in a general way the whole period of history and are especially useful for survey work. There is need, however, of a different kind of test for supervisory purposes which shall include the many details of a single period of history and at the same time lend itself readily for diagnostic purposes. Such tests have been devised and are here presented as one more means of determining scientifically the attainment of pupils in this subject.

The plan used in standardizing the material of tests is given in more than usual detail in the hope that teachers of history and supervisory officers may be able to profit by the experience of the writer and extend the work here started. Care has been taken to exercise simplicity and directness at all times so that the student who is just beginning research work in education may find directly or indirectly answers to questions of statistical procedure.

Briefly the study was carried out as follows: After determining tentatively the aims and limits of the investigation, the material to be standardized was selected from a source of unquestioned value. This material was then put in the form of exercises to be worked out by pupils. The responses of these pupils were then scored, tabulated, evaluated, and finally weighted in terms of the functions of the Normal Frequency Curve. These weightings confirmed the belief in the possibility of classifying the exercises into tests and scales. They also showed that there are four distinct types of historical material, characterized by the difficulty pupils have in comprehending them. Such classifications were made both in form and content. While these classifications are correct theoretically it was deemed wise for practical purposes to consider only the approximate weighting of each exercise and to reclassify all the standardized material into two tests. In this form some accuracy was sacrificed but the reliability for supervisory purposes is just as valid. A Teacher's Manual was prepared which gives full directions for administering, scoring and using the results of the two tests formulated for school use.

The execution of this plan would not have been possible without the hearty co-operation of teachers of history, supervisors, and students of education. There was the most cordial response at all times and I wish here to express my appreciation of all the assistance I received however inconspicuous it may have seemed to the one giving it.

Such general acknowledgment, however, is not just regarding the sympathetic guidance and suggestions I received from Dr. Harlan Updegraff of the University of Pennsylvania. He suggested the intensive study of the Colonial Period, and the distinctive source of the content of the exercises. He also gave me the benefit of many constructive criticisms before the manuscript was presented for publication.

To my fellow students of the seminar group in Educational Administration at the University of Pennsylvania, I am indebted in more ways than I can express in a formal work of this kind. However, it should be said that the constructive criticisms and pointed suggestions which they offered when the reports of progress were made from time to time on this study, served as a valuable check against biased thinking and as a stimulus to merit their approbation.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study has been the derivation of standardized testing material in United States History comparable in exactness with the contents of such material as the Monroe Reading Test, the Buckingham Spelling Scales, and the Ayres Handwriting Scales. The hypothesis was maintained that it is just as possible to measure certain aspects of content subjects, such as history, as it has been found to be possible to measure the attainments of pupils in the form subjects just mentioned.

Limits of the Investigation

For the purposes of this study and under the conditions it had to be pursued, it was deemed advisable to circumscribe the field of investigation, and to limit the method of work. Only in this way did it seem possible to secure reliable results in a field so little known. After a careful consideration of the possibilities of the situation the following limits were determined:

1. *Informational Material.* The content of the proposed tests should be confined to the informational aspect of the instruction in United States History. Full and due consideration was given to the other aims in teaching history, but the attainment of information was considered fundamental to the other aims. Dewey has shown clearly that information is one of the prerequisites to sound thinking on any problem. It seemed evident also that this aim could be measured more definitely than the other aims such as citizenship, open mindedness, method of thinking, etc.

2. *One Period of United States History.* The informational material used for the tests should be limited to a certain period of history, or a cross section of the whole course of study. It was thought that the material of a given period would be more homogeneous and could be handled more accurately. The Colonial Period was chosen because it has always been taught rather thoroughly in schools, and abounds in informational matter. There seems to be a need also for a series of tests each based upon a single period of United States History for the use of supervisors after a class has been given the usual school instruction.

3. *A Regular Form.* The information used for the testing material should be cast in a certain form in order that the scoring might be objective, and at the same time secure the probability of consistency and uniformity in preparing the tests, and the responses of pupils. Such uniformity would also be likely to economize time.

4. *Eighth Grade Pupils.* The tests should be administered only to the advanced division of pupils in the Eighth Grade. The purpose in confining the data to this class of pupils was to find out as nearly as possible the net results of school instruction relating to historical information. The belief was maintained that whatever information pupils had, at least one year or more after completing the course in the Colonial Period, represented material which is easily comprehended and retained; conversely, that material which is difficult to learn would either be wanting or so vague in the minds of the pupils as to be lacking for ready command.

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CHAPTER I

THE SELECTION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE MATERIAL TO BE STANDARDIZED

After the purposes and limits of a study of this kind have been determined the next points to be considered are the source of material and the form in which the content is to be placed. Unless this is done the investigator must be prepared to expect all sorts of irregularities in the responses of pupils.

SEC. 1.—*Content of the Exercises.* The reliability of the responses of children as data for standardizing material of instruction is in proportion to the opportunity children have had to learn the content of the test. The difficulty of finding such material for this investigation was solved by the use of the very careful study by Bagley and Rugg. This study appeared as Bulletin No. 16 of the School of Education of the University of Illinois. The authors took twenty-three American Histories then in common use and made a statistical study of the amount of space devoted to the different topics, "common to at least seventy-five per cent. of the books" and additional topics "common to at least fifty per cent. of the books." Tables V and VIII of Bulletin No. 16 include topics devoted to the "Period of Colonial Settlement and Development" and to the "Colonial Wars." The topics in these tables form the source of the content of the exercises used in this study. As the study progressed it was evident that additional exercises could be devised which were entirely within the range of pupils' interests, and as fair to them as the exercises based upon topics taken directly from the Bagley and Rugg study. The answers to these exercises were all taught in school in some form though seldom if ever asked for directly. The ability to work them out was more of an application of common sense in using the facts already acquired. The following is a typical illustration: "By the time the Mayflower had arrived at Plymouth Rock it had crossed the *Atlantic, Antarctic, Arctic, Indian, Pacific ocean.*" "By the opening of the Revolutionary War the number of colonies had increased to *twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen.*" Since these exercises were worked out successfully by a large percentage of the pupils tested, and no objection was raised by teachers, the