

PROMOTING AWARENESS OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GEOLOGY AND EVENTS IN HUMAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

Gail Bennington and Linda Horowitz

Oceanside High School,
Oceanside NY 11572
paleojbb@i-2000.com

J Bret Bennington
Dept. of Geology
114 Hofstra University
Hempstead, NY 11550-1090
geojbb@hofstra.edu

To give students a better sense of the importance of geological factors in human affairs and to lend a more interdisciplinary flavor to earth science classes, we are working to compile a database of topics and examples that students and teachers can use to relate geology to historical and cultural events. To begin compiling this information a request was sent out over the internet seeking ideas and examples of how geology has influenced human history from the Pleistocene until the present. Responses to date include a wide range of topics encompassing and combining broad categories such as political and military history (probably the most common category of response, suggesting high public interest), economics, response to natural disasters, and the impact of geomorphology on the histories of migration and settlement. Some specific examples brought to our attention include Hitler's invasion of Poland as an attempt to acquire the iron and coal necessary to sustain the German war effort (military / economic), Herbert Hoover's entry into national politics as a result of the great Mississippi flood of 1932 (political / natural disaster), and the fact that the Oregon trail follows gently sloping Paleozoic and Mesozoic sedimentary structures which created a "gangplank" that provided a relatively easy route across the Rocky Mountains (geomorphology).

As educators, we are attempting to promote an awareness in our high school students that geology has had a tremendous impact on historical and cultural events and is very relevant to their lives and the other subjects they are studying in school. Once students discover the links between different disciplines learning becomes more meaningful. Connections lead to reinforcement and can enhance important critical thinking skills. We emphasize that this effort is a work in progress and we hope that other educators and scientists will continue to contribute examples of geology's place in human history.

To view a timeline highlighting important events in human history over the last 10,000 years and their relation to geology, visit the Geology and Human History web site at:

http://people.hofstra.edu/hu/faculty/bret_bennington/historyproject/index.html

and remember...

"Civilization exists by geologic consent, subject to change at any time"

- Will Durant