

WEST VIRGINIA: *A History for Beginners*

The Teacher's Guide

By

John Alexander Williams

Edited by

Topper Sherwood

For Online Resources

Visit

**WEST VIRGINIA:
A Beginner's Web Site**

<http://www.westvirginia.com/history>



Introduction

West Virginia: A History for Beginners is just what its name implies: a book that uses a chronological framework to introduce the geographic, cultural, political, economic and societal factors which shaped the development of the state and its people. The time-span covered in the book reaches back to pre-Columbian times and continues forward to the present day.

The book uses historical narrative and analysis to introduce key concepts in the social studies, specifically from the disciplines of archeology and anthropology, law and government, economics, and sociology. Thus, the chronological framework (proceeding from ancient Native American societies through the twentieth century) embraces a conceptual framework that students can apply to the study of other societies besides West Virginia's.

The purpose of this guide is to explain to you, the teacher, the ideas behind the book's organization and to help you use it to maximum advantage in developing your students' knowledge and skills. We will survey some of the opportunities the book offers for fostering students' critical-thinking skills -- for applying social-studies concepts in organizing factual knowledge of West Virginia and its history. There are, however, many more opportunities in the book than we can mention in this guide. If the author has succeeded in his objectives, the usefulness of the book will be limited only by the imagination and time that the teacher is able to invest in it.

The Study of History

With the teacher's help, the students who read *West Virginia: A History for Beginners* can learn to think and act like historians. Sections 1.1 and 1.3 make this point by guiding readers through an analysis of one of the most fascinating mysteries of West Virginia history, the mystery of the Mound Builders. This example introduces the concepts **evidence** and **inference** and distinguishes between facts and interpretations.

The Grave Creek Mound is the example at hand. *But these concepts of evidence and inference can be applied to any other part of the book.* Subsequent chapters also introduce concepts from the various social sciences -- concepts that were developed through the analysis of contemporary society. This book applies these same concepts to improve our understanding of historical issues and events. At the end of the book, you will find a glossary that recapitulates the definitions of the concepts introduced in each chapter. With the help of the glossary, students will be able to apply these social-studies concepts in new historical contexts as well as the context in which the concept was originally introduced.

The organization of the book reflects the author's belief that social-studies concepts are tools that young people can learn to use effectively with the help of a skilled instructor. It also reflects a conscious attempt to balance the requirements of historical narration and analysis. Narration is a fancy word for telling a story. History originated as a form of story-telling. In fact, in many European languages the words for "history" and "story" are one in the same.

A good story has to have a beginning, a middle and end. It needs actors and actions and a theme. If historians can describe behavior and events in this fashion, they are likely to create entertaining stories about the past. No one finds this kind of history dull.