

ADVANCED READING

PASSAGE 1

Until the 1980s, most scientists believed that noncatastrophic geological processes caused the extinction of dinosaurs that occurred approximately 66 million years ago, at the end of the Cretaceous period. Geologists argued that a dramatic drop in sea level coincided with the extinction of the dinosaurs and could have caused the climatic changes that resulted in this extinction as well as the extinction of many ocean species. This view was seriously challenged in the 1980s by the discovery of large amounts of iridium in a layer of clay deposited at the end of the Cretaceous period. Because iridium is extremely rare in rocks on the Earth's surface but common in meteorites, researchers theorized that it was the impact of a large meteorite that dramatically changed the earth's climate and thus triggered the extinction of the dinosaurs. Currently available evidence, however, offers more support for a new theory, the volcanic-eruption theory. A vast eruption of lava in India coincided with the extinctions that occurred at the end of the Cretaceous period, and the release of carbon dioxide from this episode of volcanism could have caused the climatic change responsible for the demise of the dinosaurs. Such outpourings of lava are caused by instability in the lowest layer of the Earth's mantle, located just above the Earth's core. As the rock that constitutes this layer is heated by the Earth's core, it becomes less dense and portions of it eventually escape upward as blobs or molten rock, called "diapirs," that can, under certain circumstances, erupt violently through the Earth's crust. Moreover, the volcanic-eruption theory, like the impact theory, accounts for the presence of iridium in sedimentary deposits; it also explains matters that the meteorite-impact theory does not. Although iridium is extremely rare on the Earth's surface, the lower regions of the Earth's mantle have roughly the same composition as meteorites and contain large amounts of iridium, which in the case of a diapir eruption would probably be emitted as iridium hexafluoride, a gas that would disperse more uniformly in the atmosphere than the iridium-containing matter thrown out from a meteorite impact. In addition, the volcanic-eruption theory may explain why the end of the Cretaceous period was marked by a gradual change in sea level. Fossil records indicate that for several hundred thousand years prior to the relatively sudden disappearance of the dinosaurs, the level of the sea gradually fell, causing many marine organisms to die out. This change in sea level might well have been the result of a distortion in the Earth's surface that resulted from the movement of diapirs upward toward the Earth's crust, and the more cataclysmic extinction of the dinosaurs could have resulted from the explosive volcanism that occurred as material from the diapirs erupted onto the Earth's surface.

PASSAGE 2

It has become something of a truism in folklore studies that until recently the lore was more often studied than the folk. That is, folklorists concentrated on the folklore—the songs, tales, and proverbs themselves—and ignored the people who transmitted that lore as part of their oral culture. However, since the early 1970s, folklore studies have begun to regard folk performers as people of creativity who are as worthy of attention as are artists who transmit their ideas in writing. This shift of emphasis has also encouraged a growing interest in women folk performers.

Until recently, folklorists tended to collect folklore from women on only a few topics such as health and games. In other areas, as Weigle and Farrer have noted, if folklorists “had a choice between a story as told by a man or as told by a woman, the man’s version was chosen.” It is still too early to tell how profoundly this situation has changed, but one can point to several recent studies in which women performers play central roles. Perhaps more telling is the focus of the most recently published major folklore textbook, *The Dynamics of Folklore*. Whereas earlier textbooks gave little attention to women and their folklore, this book devotes many pages to women folk performers.

Recognition of women as important bearers of folklore is not entirely a recent phenomenon. As early as 1903, a few outstanding women folk performers were the focus of scholarly attention. But the scholarship devoted to these women tended to focus primarily on presenting the performer’s repertoire. Recent works about women folk artists, however, have been more biographically oriented. Juha Pentikainen’s study of Marina Tokalo, a Finnish healer and narrator of folktales, is especially extensive and probing. Though interested in the problems of repertoire analysis, Pentikainen gives considerable attention to the details of Tokalo’s life and cultural background, so that a full picture of a woman and her folklore emerges. Another notable work is Roger Abraham’s book, which presents a very clear picture of the significance of traditional singing in the life of noted ballad singer Almeda Riddle. Unfortunately, unlike Pentikainen’s study, Abraham’s study contains little repertoire analysis.

These recent books reflect the current interest of folklorists in viewing folklore in context and thus answering questions about what folklore means to the people who use it. One unexpected result of this line of study has been the discovery that women may use the same folklore that men use, but for very different purposes. This realization has potential importance for future folklore studies in calling greater attention to the type of study required if a folklorist wants truly to understand the role folklore plays in a particular culture.

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PASSAGE 4

J. G. A. Pocock's numerous investigations have all revolved around the fruitful assumption that a work of political thought can only be understood in light of the linguistic constraints to which its author was subject, for these prescribed both the choice of subject matter and the author's conceptualisation of this subject matter. Only the occasional epic theorist, like Machiavelli or Hobbes, succeeded in breaking out of these bonds by redefining old terms and inventing new ones. The task of the modern commentator is to identify the "language" or "vocabulary" with and within which the author operated. While historians of literature have always been aware that writers work within particular traditions, the application of this notion to the history of political ideas forms a sharp contrast to the assumptions of the 1950s, when it was naively thought that the close reading of a text by an analytic philosopher was sufficient to establish its meaning, even if the philosopher had no knowledge of the period of the text's composition. The language Pocock has most closely investigated is that of "civic humanism." For much of his career he has argued that eighteenth-century English political thought should be interpreted as a conflict between rival versions of the "virtue" central to civic humanism. On the one hand, he argues, this virtue is described by representatives of the Tory opposition using a vocabulary of public spirit and self-sufficiency. For these writers the societal ideal is the small, independent landowner in the countryside. On the other hand, Whig writers describe such virtue using a vocabulary of commerce and economic progress; for them the ideal is the merchant. In making such linguistic discriminations Pocock has disassociated himself from historians like Namier, who deride all eighteenth-century English political language as "cant." But while Pocock's ideas have proved fertile when applied to England, they are more controversial when applied to the late-eighteenth-century United States. Pocock's assertion that Jefferson's attacks on the commercial policies of the Federalists simply echo the language of the Tory opposition in England is at odds with the fact that Jefferson rejected the elitist implications of that group's notion of virtue and asserted the right of all to participate in commercial society. Indeed, after promptings by Quentin Skinner, Pocock has admitted that a counterlanguage—one of rights and liberties—was probably as important in the political discourse of the late-eighteenth-century United States as the language of civic humanism. Fortunately, it is not necessary to rank the relative importance of all the different vocabularies in which eighteenth-century political argument was conducted. It is sufficient to recognise that any interesting text is probably a mixture of several of these vocabularies, and to applaud the historian who, though guilty of some exaggeration, has done the most to make us aware of their importance.

PASSAGE 5

In 1964 the United States federal government began attempts to eliminate racial discrimination in employment and wages: the United States Congress enacted Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, prohibiting employers from making employment decisions on the basis of race. In 1965 President Johnson issued Executive Order 11,246, which prohibited discrimination by United States government contractors and emphasized direct monitoring of minority representation in contractors' work forces.

Nonetheless, proponents of the "continuous change" hypothesis believe that United States federal law had a marginal impact on the economic progress made by black people in the United States between 1940 and 1975. Instead they emphasize slowly evolving historical forces, such as long-term trends in education that improved segregated schools for black students during the 1940s and were operative during and after the 1960s. They argue that as the quality of black schools improved relative to that of white schools, the earning potential of those attending black schools increased relative to the earning potential of those attending white schools.

However, there is no direct evidence linking increased quality of underfunded segregated black schools to these improvements in earning potential. In fact, even the evidence on relative schooling quality is ambiguous. Although in the mid-1940s term length at black schools was approaching that in white schools, the rapid growth in another important measure of school quality, school expenditures, may be explained by increases in teachers' salaries, and historically, such increases have not necessarily increased school quality. Finally, black individuals in all age groups, even those who had been educated at segregated schools before the 1940s, experienced post-1960 increases in their earning potential. If improvements in the quality of schooling were an important determinant of increased returns, only those workers who could have benefited from enhanced school quality should have received higher returns. The relative improvement in the earning potential of educated black people of all age groups in the United States is more consistent with a decline in employment discrimination.

An additional problem for continuity theorists is how to explain the rapid acceleration of black economic progress in the United States after 1964. Education alone cannot account for the rate of change. Rather, the coincidence of increased United States government antidiscrimination pressure in the mid-1960s with the acceleration in the rate of black economic progress beginning in 1965 argues against the continuity theorists' view. True, correlating federal intervention and the acceleration of black economic progress might be incorrect. One could argue that changing attitudes about employment discrimination sparked both the adoption of new federal policies and the rapid acceleration in black economic progress. Indeed, the shift in national attitude that made possible the enactment of Title VII was in part produced by the persistence of racial discrimination in the southern United States. However, the fact that the law had its greatest effect in the South, in spite of the vigorous resistance of many Southern leaders, suggests its importance for black economic progress.