

Week One: Introduction to Historical Thinking

Weekly Focus: Comprehension
Weekly Skill: Historical Thinking

Lesson Summary: This week students will be introduced to the concept of “historical thinking,” and the importance of examining multiple perspectives and voices when studying history.

Materials Needed: Historical Thinking Introduction Video, T-Chart, Group Roles, Handout: Activity 1 and 2, Signpost Descriptions

Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Explore why thinking critically about history is important
- Compare and Contrast two differing points of view about a historical figure
- Begin thinking about and discussing this unit's essential question, “why do we tell stories?”

Common Core Standards Addressed: RH.11-12.2, RH.11-12.6, RH.11-12.7, WHST.11-12.2

Notes: This week will focus on the Comprehension step of our CARE learning model. You may want to review this model with students and remind them that before we can appropriately respond to a topic with our own opinion, we must adequately comprehend the topic. Thinking critically about a topic is an important step in comprehending it. When thinking critically about historical events, this is called “historical thinking.” Throughout their GED Social Studies classes, we will ask students to practice historical thinking.

*Though the signpost reading strategies are not directly referred to in this lesson, the Signpost Descriptions are below. Please distribute copies to students as necessary, as the “Contrast and Contradictions” signpost is referred to in Activity Two.

For an introduction to the six reading strategies, see the Reasoning through Language Arts curriculum, Lesson 1.

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Activities:

Testing: TABE

Time: 50 minutes

For the first hour, students will be testing on the TABE Reading test. Talk to your coordinator about this as well as your role as a proctor.

Activity 1: Introduction to Historical Thinking

Time: 40 minutes

- 1) Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Hand out group role sheets and assign each member a role.
- 2) Work through the steps in the Group Activity in the handout together.
- 3) Now, explain to students that this very discrepancy in people's perceptions of historical events is why, when we study history, we must be careful to consider many stories and voices about the same event. In other words, we must approach history critically. This is called "historical thinking."
- 4) Show students the "Introduction to Historical Thinking Video." This video is for a teacher audience, so you may want to explain this to students in advance.

Break: 10 minutes

Extension Activity: Columbus

Time: 40 minutes

- 1) Have students divide back into their small groups. Students should each pick a new role from the group roles sheet. Hand out T-charts.
- 2) Explain to students that they will read two excerpts written about the same man, Christopher Columbus. However, they contain very different information about this man.
- 3) Have students answer question one together as a group. Then, have them read through the excerpts individually. Finally, have them come back together to answer the questions.
- 4) Share group answers with the class, having each group "present" an answer.

Final Discussion Question

Time: 10 minutes

- 1) Write the question below on the board.
- 2) Have students sit in a circle and pass around a ruler, ball, etc. When each student holds the object, have them try to answer this question. Students may pass, but encourage everyone to participate.
- 3) Introduce the students to this unit's essential question, "Why do we tell stories?" If we think of history as a kind of story, why do we tell it, teach it to our children, and continue to study it?"

Extra Work/Homework: Columbus Day

Have students research Christopher Columbus on their own, adding information to what they already know. Then, ask them the question: "Do you believe that we should celebrate Columbus Day? Why or why not?" Tell them to be sure to include evidence in the form of examples, statistics, etc. to support their answer.

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Online Resources:

- 1) [Why Historical Thinking Matters](#)
- 2) [Beyond Columbus: Teaching the Lessons of 1492](#)

Suggested Teacher Readings:

[*Lies my Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* by James Loewen.](#)

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- 4) Knowing what you do about how difficult it was to agree on the most “important” events from just this last weekend, how do you think that historians decide what to include in history textbooks? Do you believe that these inclusions are always accurate? Why or why not?
- 5) Whose voices or experiences might sometimes be left out of history books?

Excerpt #2 taken from www.kidsfront.com

Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy. He was the oldest of five children in his family. His father was a wool weaver. He helped his father with the weaving, but he always wanted to sail the seas. Columbus wanted to find a short way to get to the Indies by ship.

He tried for eight years to get King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to supply him with ships and money. Finally they agreed, but he made more demands.

He wanted to be made a knight, admiral of the Ocean Sea. He wanted to be the viceroy and governor general of all lands he would discover. Also he wanted one-tenth of everything he found of value in the new lands. He even boldly told them he wanted all of this in writing. This was rather brave of him because they could have had him killed because of his demands

They finally agreed and he got three ships ready to sail. The Santa Maria and two smaller ships, the Pinta and the Nina. He took enough food for a year. In four months he was ready to sail. They left Spain on August 3, 1492. They made one stop, and then sailed on towards the west. After many days, the sailors were ready to turn around and start back home.

"Just three more days," he said. "Then if we don't see land, we'll turn around and go back home."

Two days later they saw land; an island Columbus named San Salvador. He thought he had found the Indies and called the people he saw there "Indians". When they got to Cuba, he thought he was in China. The world was a lot larger than he thought.

Columbus did not become rich as he had hoped. At the end of his life he only had a pension the king and queen had given him because he was the first to reach the New World. He spent the last few months of his life in bed because of the pain of arthritis.

Columbus not only discovered a New World, but he led the way for other explorers.

SIGNPOST DESCRIPTIONS

Contrasts and Contradictions

Definition: The character acts in a way that is contradictory or unexpected given how he or she usually acts.

Text Clue: Author shows feelings or actions the reader hasn't seen before or doesn't expect.

Question: Why would the character act this way?

Aha Moment

Definition: The character realizes or starts to realize something that changes his or her actions or thinking.

Text Clue: Characters say "I realized" or "I suddenly knew" or "Now I know why..."

Question: What might the character do now?

Tough Questions

Definition: Character asks a tough question that reveals his or her concerns (inner conflict).

Text Clue: Character asks self or another a difficult question.

Question: What does this question make me wonder about?
What does it tell me about the character?

Words of the Wiser

Definition: An older character (mentor, advisor, parent, etc.) gives advice or an insight to the main character.

Text Clue: A wiser, often older, character offers a life lesson, usually in a quiet moment.

Question: What is important about that message?

Again and Again

Definition: The author keeps bringing up the same image, phrase, or inference.

Text Clue: A repeated image, phrase, or reference.

Question: Why do you think the author brings this idea up again and again?

Memory Moment

Definition: The author interrupts the flow of the story by letting the character remember something.

Text Clue: “I suddenly remember...”; “I remember...”; or “Thinking back...”

Question: Why might this memory be important?

Text taken from *Notice and Note* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann) by Kylene Beers and Robert E. Probst. Adaptation language by Terry Brennan and Joan Boyce, Reading Specialists, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

Group Work Roles

LEADER

- Makes sure that every voice is heard
- Focuses work around the learning task; guide group from exercise to exercise

Sound bites: Let's hear from ____ next." "That's interesting, but let's get back to our task."

RECORDER

- Compiles group members' ideas:
 - Make a star on the sections/numbers we need to go over
 - Write specific questions

Sound bites: "I think I heard you say _____; is that right?" "How would you like me to write this?"

TIME KEEPER

- Encourages the group to stay on task
- Announces when time is halfway through and when time is nearly up

Sound bite: "We only have five minutes left. Let's see if we can wrap up by then."

PRESENTER

- Presents the group's finished work to the class

Sound bite: "Which questions do we need to go over in this section?" "What else do we need to ask?"

Created by Jen Ouellette for the Minnesota Literacy Council