READING LIKE A HISTORIAN: A DOCUMENT-BASED HISTORY
CURRICULUM INTERVENTION IN URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

Enthusiasm about the instructional potential of primary sources dates to the late 19th century and has been echoed recently in the work of literacy experts, historians, and educational psychologists. Yet, no extended intervention study has been undertaken to test the effectiveness of primary source instruction in real history classrooms. This study, with 236 eleventh-grade students in five San Francisco high schools, represented the first extended curriculum intervention in disciplinary reading in an urban district.

The Reading Like a Historian (RLH) curriculum constituted a radical departure from traditional textbook-driven instruction by using a new activity structure, the “Document-Based Lesson,” in which students used background knowledge and disciplinary reading strategies to interrogate, and then reconcile, historical accounts from multiple texts. A quasi-experiment control design measured the effects of a six-month intervention on four dimensions: 1) students’ historical thinking; 2) their ability to transfer historical thinking strategies to contemporary issues; 3) their mastery of factual knowledge; and 4) their growth in general reading comprehension. MANCOVA analysis yielded significant main effects for the treatment condition on all four outcome-measures. Qualitative analyses of videotaped classroom lessons were conducted to determine the frequency and nature of whole-class text-based discussion. Only nine whole-class text-based discussions were identified in over 100 videotaped classroom lessons, despite the presence of instructional materials explicitly designed to support student discussion of debatable historical questions. Analysis of teacher and student participation suggests a relationship between active teacher
facilitation that reviews background knowledge and poses direct questions about texts and higher levels of student argumentation.

This dissertation consists of three free-standing papers, each of which addresses one aspect of the larger study. In the first paper, I discuss the design of the quasi-experimental study and report quantitative findings. In the second paper, I locate teacher facilitation of whole-class historical discussion in the literature on classroom discourse, and I propose a developmental framework for analyzing student historical argumentation in classroom discussion. In the third and final paper, I discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the intervention curriculum and offer two examples to illustrate the structure of the “Document-Based Lesson.”
Acknowledgements

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I will be eternally grateful to the San Francisco teachers who welcomed me into their classrooms and volunteered to implement the Reading Like a Historian curriculum, and to their students, who embraced a new approach to history instruction. Both breathed life into the curriculum and improved it immeasurably. I also want to express deep gratitude to Pete Hammer, who helped me recruit participating teachers in his capacity as District Social Studies Instructional Coordinator. Without his assistance I could not have launched this study.

I was fortunate to have had titans of educational research as my academic advisors. I emerged whole from data analysis thanks to the gentle and lucid guidance of Rich Shavelson, who helped me decipher my quantitative findings, and Pam Grossman, who helped me determine which questions to ask of my hundreds of hours of video footage. It was in Dan Schwartz’s classes that I learned the meaning of methodological rigor and painstaking data analysis. Above all, I am indebted to Sam Wineburg for articulating a vision of history instruction that insists on the capacity of all students to engage in powerful ways of reading and thinking about the past. This work is an extension of his vision.
Sam’s influence on my work extends far beyond his views on historical thinking. The past seven years have been an intensive course in the fundamentals of good teaching: reflection, humility, and the patience to accept that deep learning takes time. Sam has been a consistent voice reminding me to seek balance and perspective, to breathe. That this advice has been coupled with steadfast encouragement and the highest standards for academic scholarship, has made it all the more valuable. Sam alone knows how much I have relied on his wisdom, insight, and guidance over the past seven years. I only hope I have expressed my gratitude sufficiently.

I am been incredibly fortunate to have had friends and colleagues with whom I could laugh and commiserate throughout this journey. Since those first barbeques in Menlo Park, Eric Greenwald and Kate Walsh-Cunnane have been my family. I cannot imagine graduate school without the comfort and love of their friendship. I have also had the unbelievable luck to experience this program alongside Brad Fogo. Our hilarious conversations while commuting between San Francisco and Palo Alto are some of my fondest memories of graduate school. Brad’s insights have made me a better teacher and continue to shape all of my work. The ideas driving the curriculum in this study emerged from years of co-teaching with Brad; they are his as much as mine.

I must thank my parents, Lewis and Dalia, who have valued education above all pursuits, and who have always regarded teaching as the noblest of professions. I am deeply grateful to them for their unflagging support, encouragement, and pride. I am also grateful to my brother, Boaz, and sister, Tamar, for their friendship and
laughter. Despite our physical distance, the three of us have woven a network of support and love upon which I have come to depend.

Finally, I must find the words to thank Jessie Dorfman, who has lived with this project for the past two years, and whose patience, kindness, and insight supported me throughout. I have watched, at the same time, as she has completed her own graduate work with a degree of grace, courage, and openness that I can only hope to emulate. To the extent that this doctoral program brought me to California to meet her five years ago, it has been worth every minute.
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INTRODUCTION AND DISSERTATION OVERVIEW: PRIMARY SOURCES IN
THE HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY CLASSROOM
What is the thought, what the feeling, what the character, that find expression in this letter or speech or editorial, and what the purpose too? All this is not as plain as reading; inquisitiveness, patience, imagination, must all be invoked to get at the real and baffling essence of the matter. Reasoning is called into play to determine what may correctly be deduced from the statements before us.


Introduction

Echoing their predecessors from 1902, today’s history educators also believe that primary sources have the potential to develop students’ reasoning and love of history. The 1987 Bradley Commission on History in Schools, a body that advocated a renewed emphasis on historical study in K-12 social studies instruction, recommended “training in critical judgment based on evidence, including original sources” (Bradley Commission, 1989, p. 23). Thirty years later, technology has transformed educational websites into virtual repositories for original sources. The Library of Congress and the National Security Archives, for example, have digitized hundreds of thousands of artifacts for visitors who wish to behold Thomas Jefferson’s handwriting or a declassified CIA memo stamped “CONFIDENTIAL.” Even history textbooks have added colorful sidebars to their standard prose, featuring abridged primary sources under the titles “In Their Words” or “You Decide.”

Recent consensus reports on adolescent literacy affirm the instructional potential of primary sources. Two findings, in particular, relate directly to history instruction: the first maintains that students need exposure to a range of textual genres
in order to be prepared for college; the second recognizes that how one reads differs according to content area (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2010; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; National Institute for Literacy, 2007). In other words, historians read and ask different questions of texts than do scientists or poets; primary sources, presumably, afford students the opportunity to practice these domain-specific reading practices. The recently published Common Core State Standards underscore these findings, emphasizing the distinct forms of literacy that exist in the content areas.

Yet, the Common Core authors maintain that the content-specific Standards are “predicated on teachers of [these] subjects using their content area expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective fields” (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 3). There’s the rub. Few teacher preparation programs or professional development opportunities offer history teachers training in domain-specific ways of reading (cf. Bain & Mirel, 2006; Wineburg, 2009). Furthermore, among the reams of digitized sources, one finds few instructional tools that address the particular challenges of helping students interpret and analyze historical documents.

In the absence of such tools, the probability diminishes that primary sources will be used effectively to enrich the study of history. Recent statistics on adolescent literacy indicate that most students would struggle to access the basic meaning of original texts (Grigg, Donahue, & Dion, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The vocabulary, syntax, and unconventional spelling—not to
mention the sheer length—of many primary sources put them beyond the reach of average readers in secondary classrooms.

Furthermore, extant research on how teachers use primary sources does not bode well. In her evaluation of Teaching American History programs, a federally-funded effort to bolster history teachers’ professional development, Westhoff (2009) found that many teachers use sources either to illustrate points in the textbook or to promote interpretations that are decidedly ahistorical. She observed one class where students were encouraged to assume that Marcus Garvey’s “Declaration of the Rights of Negro Peoples of the World” represented the perspective of all African Americans in the 1920s. In another class, teachers asked students to rewrite the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments from a modern-day perspective. Such activities do not allow students to engage in precisely those reading practices—“inquisitiveness, patience, imagination”—that were celebrated in the 1902 report to the New England Teachers’ Association. Rather than help students transcend the present so that they might catch a glimpse of the past, such activities fix students in the present, moored by their contemporary worldviews and biases.

This dissertation tested a curricular approach that explicitly taught students the strategies of disciplinary historical reading so that they could engage in legitimate historical inquiry. The intervention study in five San Francisco high schools examined the effects of a document-based curriculum on student learning. The following research questions guided the study:
• What was the effect of the “Reading Like a Historian” curriculum on students’ historical thinking, transfer of historical thinking to contemporary events, reading comprehension, and factual knowledge?
• To what extent did students’ comments in whole-class discussion reflect higher levels of historical reasoning and argumentation about texts?
• What was the nature of teacher facilitation of whole-class text-based discussion?

Overview of Papers

This dissertation consists of three papers, each of which addresses one aspect of the larger study. To the extent that these papers were conceived and written as a free-standing articles, the reader will encounter occasional repetition in the descriptions of the study and the features of the intervention curriculum. Nevertheless, the data and theory discussed in each article are distinct. The first article describes the study design, the intervention, and the measures used for capturing student learning, and reports quantitative results. The quasi-experiment control design measured the effects of a six-month intervention on four dimensions: 1) students’ historical thinking; 2) their ability to transfer historical thinking strategies to contemporary issues; 3) their mastery of factual knowledge; and 4) their growth in general reading comprehension. MANCOVA analysis yielded significant main effects for the treatment condition on all four outcome-measures. Follow-up analysis found no interaction effect between the Reading Like a Historian treatment and students’ school, gender, race/ethnicity, or incoming reading ability. The paper ends with a
discussion of the study’s implications for literacy and history instruction at the middle and high school levels.

The second article explores how teachers and students in the five 11th grade treatment classrooms participated in whole-class discussion, using intervention materials designed to promote text-based disciplinary discussion. Analysis of videotaped instruction sought to determine whether teachers moved students beyond the binaries that characterize historical knowledge in classrooms and into the *historical problem space* which is characterized by paradox: a deep appreciation for historical context alongside a recognition that the past remains irretrievable and fundamentally unknowable. At the highest level of argumentation, students demonstrated an awareness of their own subjectivity as historical actors and as *readers* of historical documents. Analyses showed that disciplinary discussion was surprisingly rare, and instances of students’ awareness of their historical subjectivity even rarer. These infrequent entries into the historical problem space followed the teacher’s use of linguistic moves that stabilized students’ background knowledge and framed the documents in ways that marked the disjuncture between past and present.

The third article describes the pedagogical practices that were at the heart of the intervention, in particular, a lesson structure that I call the *Document-Based Lesson*. The Document-Based Lesson organized existing forms of social organization that typify social studies classrooms (e.g., lecture, recitation, seatwork, group-work, whole-class discussion), into a predictable and repeatable sequence that engaged students in the processes of historical inquiry. Rather than uproot the conventional norms and structures that define classroom behavior, I preserved the traditional role of
the teacher and the signature activities that stand as landmarks of social studies instruction. Moreover, by providing classroom-ready materials and activities that married content knowledge and disciplinary inquiry, the Document-Based Lesson attempted to reconcile the fundamental tension in history instruction between depth and coverage.

Together, these articles explore the benefits and challenges of designing classroom instruction around domain-specific historical reading. The study took the important step of moving research on historical thinking from the laboratory to the urban high school classroom. In doing so, however, it raised many new questions. These three articles target a broad swath of readers—from policy makers to practitioners, and from reading specialists to historians—with the hope of generating discussion about how to design and support teachers in implementing intellectually stimulating instruction about the past.
References


PAPER ONE

READING LIKE A HISTORIAN: A DOCUMENT-BASED HISTORY
CURRICULUM INTERVENTION IN URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS
Enthusiasm about the instructional potential of primary sources dates to the late 19th century, when history first became a standard subject in the school curriculum. In 1899, the American Historical Association’s Committee of Seven maintained that sources could show “the nature of the historical process, and at the same time may make the people and events of bygone times more real” (p. 104). Three years later, the New England Teachers’ Association insisted that engaging with primary sources was “not as plain as reading; inquisitiveness, patience, imagination, must all be invoked” (Hazen, Bourne, Dean, Farrand, & Hart, 1902, p. 12). Yet, neither this early enthusiasm nor later efforts to design history curriculum around “inquiry”—for example, the New Social Studies movement of the 1960s—translated into enduring curricular reform (Sheurman & Reynolds, 2010). History teachers, then and now, have relied predominantly on recitation and lecture (Osborne, 2003; Cuban, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Stodolsky, 1998).

Today, scholars have been advocating again for the inclusion of primary sources. Facing a growing crisis in adolescent literacy, a spate of national reports recommended that literacy instruction in middle and secondary schools be tied to content and involve domain-specific reading skills (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2010; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; National Institute for Literacy, 2007). The use of sources has received support from research that suggests students need exposure to multiple genres beyond the fictional texts they encounter in Language Arts classes (Moje, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), to achieve advanced literacy. Integrating historical sources into instruction seems to answer this call.
For some time, research on domain-specific historical reading has laid the groundwork for classroom instruction with primary sources (Voss & Wiley, 2006). Wineburg (1991a, 1991b) identified in historians an epistemological orientation towards texts that regards them as human constructions, whose probity can and should be interrogated. Wineburg distilled three discrete heuristics that historians applied while reading historical texts: sourcing, (considering the document’s source and purpose), contextualization (placing the document in a temporal and spatial context), and corroboration (comparing the accounts of multiple sources against each other). Subsequent research on disciplinary “historical thinking” (e.g., Rouet, Britt, Mason, & Perfetti, 1996; Hynd, 1999; Stahl, Hynd, Britton, McNish, & Bosquet, 1996) has found that certain instructional techniques that reveal the structure of the discipline can prompt students to reason historically. For example, researchers found effects for writing prompts that ask for an argument (Wiley & Voss, 1999), for the insertion of an author’s voice in an otherwise passive textbook (Paxton, 2002), for the explicit request for sourcing information (Britt & Aglinskas, 2002), and for the juxtaposition of two contrasting arguments about an historical event (Wolfe & Goldman, 2005). These studies contribute to how we might think about history instruction with primary documents; however, their generalizability is limited because most were conducted with proficient readers and none were conducted in real classroom settings.

Two experimental classroom interventions, De La Paz (2005) and Nokes, Dole, and Hacker (2007), took the important step of embedding historical reading instruction in actual history classrooms. De La Paz’s study, with 70 eighth-graders in 12 lessons, found growth in student persuasive writing; however, effects on students’
historical reasoning were mixed and not evident in student writing. Nokes et al.’s intervention, with 200 eleventh-grade students over 15 days of instruction, found that instruction with multiple documents had a significant effect on students’ content retention and sourcing. However, student historical reasoning proved difficult to capture. Nokes et al. counted how many times students used certain strategies (i.e., sourcing and corroboration) in their final essays but did not report whether the strategies helped students write plausible and compelling historical arguments or whether these strategies led to deeper understanding of the nature of historical reasoning. By hoping to capture student historical reasoning in writing, both studies may have missed opportunities to capture growth in student historical reading.

The present study represented the first extended curriculum intervention in disciplinary reading in an urban district. The study employed a quasi-experimental control design with 236 eleventh-grade students in five public high schools and measured the effects of a six-month documents-based history curriculum on 1) students’ historical thinking; 2) students’ ability to transfer their historical thinking strategies to contemporary problems; 3) students’ retention of factual knowledge about history; and 4) growth in students’ general reading comprehension skills. Like prior experimental interventions, the curriculum focused on teaching students the strategies of disciplinary historical reading. However, the intervention differed in several ways. First, it took place in five urban high schools that represent a wide range of learning contexts and student populations. Second, this study tested a fully developed document-based curriculum, which consisted of 83 stand-alone lessons addressing the range of historical topics typically covered in an 11th grade history curriculum. Third,
this was the first study to measure whether instruction in domain specific reading improved students’ disciplinary reading and transferred to growth in their general reading comprehension ability.

Conceptual Framework

A school of research emerged in the 1980s that viewed subject matter as the central lens through which to understand classroom teaching and learning (cf. Shulman & Quinlan, 1996). The literature began with the premise that disciplines were distinct forms of knowledge with particular modes of inquiry (cf. Schwab, 1978; Hirst, 1965; Bruner, 1960), and that experts in each field had normative definitions of domain-specific knowledge and understanding (e.g., Schoenfeld, 1985; Wineburg, 1991a, 1991b; diSessa, 1985; Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1981). From his work with expert historians, Wineburg (1994) concluded that the extant text processing models for generic reading comprehension (e.g., Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978; Kintsch, 1986) did not sufficiently represent the cognitive processes of historical reading. For example, Kintsch (1986) distinguished between a textbase model, which the reader builds by parsing sentences, clauses, and ultimately, propositions in the text, and a situation model, which refers to a mental map that the reader builds of the situation in the text by connecting the content to prior knowledge. According to Kinstch, reading comprehension was limited by working memory, one’s purposes for reading the text, and one’s familiarity with the information in the text. Despite its usefulness in describing the cognitive processes guiding the comprehension of solitary texts, Kintsch’s model did not account for the intertextual aspect of disciplinary historical reading and the constructed nature of historical accounts.
Wineburg (1994) and Perfetti, Rouet, and Britt (1999) expanded Kintsch’s model. Rather than a single situation model, Wineburg proposed that the historian constructs three representations: the representation of the text (rT), which involves the parsing and propositional integration that Kintsch suggests, but also includes an understanding of language as slippery and historically contextualized; the representation of the event (rE), which reflects the text’s presentation of the event, including its historical actors and their motivations; and the representation of the subtext (rSB), which allows the reader to make judgments about the author’s biases, purposes, and intentions. The larger Event Model grows and shifts as the reader encounters additional documents and modifies his or her synoptic judgment of the event. Perfetti et al (1999) offered a similar model of intertextual reading that they call the Documents Model, composed of an interconnected Intertext Model and the Situation Model. Their Intertext Model included “intertext predicates” that represented the relationship between the documents (e.g., supports, opposes, agrees with, contradicts, came before/after, etc.), and that demonstrated the reader’s efforts to synthesize and reconcile the documents’ accounts.

Both Wineburg’s and Perfetti et al’s intertextual models demand that the reader possess a radically different epistemological orientation toward history than that which is promoted in typical textbook instruction. Readers who can construct these complex cognitive representations fundamentally recognize that history is open to interpretation and that sources must be interrogated and read intertextually. Textbook instruction, by contrast, presents historical knowledge as fixed and easily retrievable, so long as students can comprehend the text.
The conceptual framework for the Reading Like a Historian curriculum proposes explicit strategy instruction in disciplinary reading as the mechanism that can move students from basic reading comprehension to the deep epistemological shift that is required for intertextual historical reading (see Figure 1). The approach maintains that for novices to be “apprenticed” into these expert practices of domain specific reading, they must see the strategies named and explicitly modeled (cf. Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989; Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991). Cognitive modeling is the first step in explicit strategy instruction, which has been implemented widely in literacy instruction, and consists of a three-part structure: (1) explicit instruction, including naming and modeling the strategy; (2) guided practice, including group work; and (3) independent practice (cf. Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Harris & Graham, 1996; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Nokes & Dole, 2004). The model emphasizes a gradual shift of cognitive responsibility from teacher to students.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Teaching Historical Reading
The current study departed from previous implementations of explicit strategy instruction by modeling the disciplinary strategies of historical reading, rather than generic reading comprehension strategies. In addition to sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration, the intervention curriculum trained students in the strategy of close-reading—or carefully considering an author’s use of language and word choice. Though close-reading has not appeared in the research on historical thinking, it has been identified it as one of the cognitive tools required to construct an intertextual Event Model (Martin & Wineburg, 2008). Together, these domain-specific reading strategies taught students to regard historical accounts as open to interpretation.

Method

Curriculum

We provided teachers with 83 lesson plans on topics ranging from the early settlement of the New World to the Vietnam War. Topically, the lessons were designed to correspond with the 11th grade US survey as it is covered in many states. Epistemologically, however, the lessons inverted the typical relationship between students and historical knowledge and between students and texts. Whereas in traditional history classrooms, students are expected to accept and memorize an established historical narrative from a single text (typically, the classroom textbook), in RLH lessons, students were expected to use background knowledge to interrogate, and then reconcile, the historical accounts in multiple texts.

At the core of the RLH approach was the invention of a new “activity structure” (cf. Gump, 1967; Stodolsky, 1988), which we refer to as the “Document-Based Lesson.” The “Document-Based Lesson” consisted of four distinct lesson
segments: 1) Background knowledge; 2) Central Historical Question; 3) Historical documents; and 4) Discussion. Students first reviewed relevant historical background information that prepared them to engage with the lesson’s documents. Materials providing background knowledge ranged from lecture notes, to PowerPoints, to detailed timelines, to clips from historical documentaries. Second, students were presented with a historical question that required documentary investigation. Students read between 2-5 primary documents that shed light on the central historical question from several perspectives. All of the lessons included explicit strategy instruction, whether in the form of cognitive modeling, guided practice, or independent practice. Lessons with cognitive modeling included scripts for teachers to follow. Generally, students worked in small groups to answer questions that guided their review and interpretation of the primary documents. Finally, students engaged in whole-class discussion about the central historical question, using evidence from the documents to substantiate their claims. Written lesson plans provided suggested questions for teachers to ask during whole-group discussion. Whole-class discussion simulated the knowledge-construction processes of the discipline and provided students with opportunities to defend their claims about the past in the face of peer critique. See Figure 2 for an outline of a “Document-Based Lesson.”
Figure 2: Outline of a sample “Document-Based Lesson”

Central Historical Question
Why did the Homestead strike of 1892 turn violent?

Background knowledge
- Short lecture on industrialization
- Timeline of events leading to Homestead strike

Document A
Excerpt from 1931 autobiography of Emma Goldman, radical activist, whose friend had attempted to assassinate plant manager Henry Frick to avenge the strikers who had been killed in the standoff.

Document B
Excerpt from 1892 newspaper interview with Henry Frick, manager of the Homestead plant, who was known as a strikebreaker.

Discussion
Why did the Homestead strike of 1892 turn violent?
The Document-Based Lessons directly addressed three enduring classroom realities that had eluded prior curricular interventions focused on historical inquiry: 1) classroom teachers’ lack of experience and knowledge about historical inquiry; 2) the lack of classroom ready materials that clearly distilled the processes of historical inquiry; 3) the failure of the materials to provide or accommodate a chronological historical narrative (Sheurman & Reynolds, 2010). The Reading Like a Historian curriculum tackled the challenge of teacher knowledge by embedding explicit strategy instruction in the lessons, effectively teaching both students and teachers the disciplinary reading strategies used in historical inquiry. The curriculum also provided teachers with lessons plan and daily materials, which have been tied to effective curricular reform and recognize the enormous time demands placed on public school teachers (cf. Rowen & Miller, 2007; Brown, 1996). In addition to providing relevant primary sources, guiding questions, and graphic organizers, the lessons included historical documents that had been modified, both lexically and syntactically, and made visually and cognitively accessible to students reading below grade level (cf. Wineburg & Martin, 2009). Though originals were available to all students, these adaptations were the only way struggling readers could engage, substantively, in the process of historical inquiry. Finally, whereas prior inquiry-based history interventions relied on “post-holing,” or preparing in-depth units to be used intermittently at the teacher’s discretion, the stand-alone Document-Based Lessons acknowledged teachers’ need to cover the chronological narrative required by state curricula. Rather than rehash the classic dilemma between curricular coverage and depth, the Reading Like a Historian curriculum attempted to resolve it: in the
Document-Based Lesson, factual historical knowledge enabled disciplinary historical inquiry. Figure 3 compares the features of the Reading Like a Historian approach with traditional textbook instruction. By inviting students to participate in the process of historical knowledge construction, the RLH curriculum fundamentally transformed the high school classroom, where a single textbook typically contains all authoritative knowledge (cf. Ravitch & Finn, 1987; Paxton 1999; Wineburg, 2007; Ramirez, Stearns, & Wineburg, 2007).

Figure 3: Differences between Traditional Textbook Instruction and Reading Like a Historian Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Textbook Instruction</th>
<th>Reading Like a Historian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Present students with a chronology of historical events, concepts and people.</td>
<td>Engage students in legitimate historical inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Facts</td>
<td>Students memorize facts in order to perform on standardized tests that emphasize recall.</td>
<td>Background knowledge helps students contextualize and make meaning of primary documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Texts</td>
<td>Students read a single authoritative text.</td>
<td>Students interrogate historical accounts in multiple primary sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Historical knowledge is the accumulation of discrete facts about the past.</td>
<td>Students construct historical knowledge by reading and reconciling accounts in multiple historical documents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Participants*

Participants were 236 eleventh graders from five public high schools in San Francisco Unified School District, enrolled in US History. Each school contributed one treatment and one control classroom. Treatment teachers attended a four-day training the previous summer; teachers who were interested in the project, but could not attend the summer training, served as controls. We strove for equivalence in
teachers’ background in history, as measured by the average number of history classes in undergraduate and graduate careers (treatment $M = 11.4$; control $M = 13.4$).

Treatment teachers agreed to use RLH lessons during at least fifty percent of their instructional time (or 2-3 lessons per week), but they were free to teach any of the lessons in any order. All control teachers were promised the full curriculum and training at the end of the study. None of the treatment teachers had prior familiarity with our materials or approach. Participating schools constituted a representational cross-section of the city’s schools. Table 1 lists the demographic characteristics of each school.

Table 1: School Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total student enrollment</th>
<th>Percent Racial/Ethnic Representation (above 2 %)</th>
<th>Percent Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Percent English Language Learners</th>
<th>Percent 11th graders at or above proficient on 10th grade ELA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>26.7 - 16 27.6 16.4 11.2 53.2 25.7 29.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>16.5 4.8 6.7 49.8 6.6 11 47.5 23.6 42.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>74 2 11.1 3 4.7 3.9 62.0 44.0 11.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>21 5.7 18.4 33.8 4.2 12.1 57.4 17.1 35.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>9.7 8.9 6.1 51.8 4.1 14.8 44.8 16.1 43.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is often the case in research in large public school districts (cf. Berkeley Policy Associates, 2005), we were unable to randomly assign students or teachers to condition. A chi-square test of goodness-of-fit found no significant difference
between treatment and control groups in racial/ethnic composition, $X^2 (1, N = 203) = 6.33, p = .28$, number of English Language Learners, $X^2 (1, N = 235) = .19, p = .67$, and number of students reading below the 25th percentile, $X^2 (1, N = 228) = .001, p = .98$. Treatment and control groups did differ by gender $X^2 (1, N = 236) = 4.98, p = .03$, with the treatment group having significantly more females. Table 2 compares demographic characteristics of students in treatment and control classrooms.

Table 2: Percent Student Representation in Treatment and Control Classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLH</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-test Measures

We included three pre-tests in the design, which we used as covariates:

1) **Factual knowledge**: The 10th grade history California Standards Test (CST), a standardized end-of-year exam in World History. The 60-item multiple-choice test was scored on a scale of 1-5.

2) **Historical Thinking**: We designed and validated a 30-item (22 multiple-choice and 8 constructed response) Historical Thinking Test that we administered both as a pre-test and post-test. The items were designed to capture students’ historical thinking in general, and their ability to practice the historical reading strategies that were taught in the curriculum. The measure included questions about historical
documents which were greatly modified so as not to confound student reading comprehension with historical thinking.

In two pilot administrations with different groups of eleventh graders (N=21 and N=13), the Historical Thinking Test had a reliability of .81 and .91 (Cronbach’s $\alpha$), respectively. The improved reliability on the second pilot reflected the revision of certain items. When we administered the measure to students in the study, we found a reliability of .79 (Cronbach’s $\alpha$) for the pre-test administration (N=227) and .82 (Cronbach’s $\alpha$) on the post-test administration (N=232).

Each of the eight constructed response questions was scored on a scale of 0 or 1. The rubric developed for each question narrowly defined the answers that could receive a 1. We chose to score conservatively to minimize the potential for Type I error. A second rater scored 10% of the tests, achieving .94 inter-rater reliability (Cohen’s $k$). See Appendix A and B for examples of multiple choice and constructed response items on the Historical Thinking measure.

3) Reading Comprehension: The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test—Fourth Edition (GMRT), a widely-used standardized reading test, was used to measure of students’ reading comprehension (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dryer, 2000). We administered the 10/12 grade version of the test, using only the comprehension section, which includes 48 multiple-choice questions about 11 distinct reading passages. Two alternative forms (S and T) were used as pre- and post-tests.

Post-test Measures

Four post-tests were administered at the end of the six-month intervention. The four measures were as follows:
1) *Historical Thinking*: Same measure as pre-test.


3) *Transfer of Historical Thinking*: We designed and validated a 20-item multiple choice transfer measure. Items concerned contemporary topics, such as the presidential campaign, a popular referendum on farming, a controversial movie, and similar issues, but in each item we attempted to embed a discipline-specific reading strategy (cf. Perkins & Salomon, 1989). For example, in an item about global warming, we sought to measure students’ attention to sourcing. The measure was piloted with a different group of 11th graders (N=31), with a reliability of .79 (Cronbach’s α). When we administered the measure to students in the study (N=221), we found a reliability of .67 for the post-test administration (Cronbach’s α).

4) *Factual Knowledge*: We used a 30-item multiple-choice test that measured students’ retention of factual knowledge. The post-test was comprised of released multiple-choice items from the New York State Regents Exam in US History and the Grade 11 California Standards Test (CST) in US History. Selected items corresponded to *California History-Social Science Content Standards* (California State Department of Education, 1998) and addressed a range of topics, from events (e.g., Spanish American War, World War One, Scopes Trial), to social movements (e.g., First Great Awakening, Populist Party, Americanization movement) to constitutional issues and Supreme Court cases (e.g., passage of the 14th Amendment, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Schenck v. United States*). The post-test administration of the Factual Knowledge test (N=222) had a Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 reliability coefficient of .81.
Teacher Training

Treatment teachers participated in a four full-day training prior to the school year, and two 3-hour follow-up workshops during the six-month intervention. The summer training introduced teachers to the process of historical inquiry and to the structure of the Documents-Based Lesson. Teachers worked through six sample lessons that ranged from comparisons of two opposing viewpoints to lessons with sophisticated central historical questions that required substantial background knowledge and included up to seven primary sources. Practice lessons were followed by debriefing sessions during which teachers anticipated and discussed their students’ potential questions and concerns. Considerable emphasis was also placed on explaining and practicing explicit strategy instruction for each of the discipline-specific reading skills. During the summer trainings, teachers received half the lessons in the curriculum and posters to hang in their classrooms listing all the questions a student should ask when practicing each of the historical reading strategies (see column 1 of Appendix C). Follow-up workshops during the school year used video footage of classroom observations to revisit and discuss effective examples of cognitive modeling and whole-class discussion.

Observations

The intervention began in the second week of September and concluded in the first week of March. Excluding holidays and professional development days, the study included 105 days of instruction (approximately 21 weeks). Treatment teachers were observed twice weekly on days they used the RLH curriculum. For the
remaining days, teachers reported whether or not they taught a lesson from the curriculum, and if so, which one.

A rubric was developed to gauge teacher fidelity to treatment on a score of 0-3. For a lesson to earn a base score of 2, teachers need to fulfill three criteria: 1) indicate to students that history is open to interpretation by clearly posing the central historical question; 2) allow sufficient time for students to engage with at least two documents; and 3) practice historical reading strategies either individually, in small groups, or with the teacher modeling, with some degree of teacher feedback. If teachers also successfully facilitated a whole-class discussion about students’ interpretations of the documents, they earned a 3. A score of 1 reflected a lesson where the teacher attempted to follow the lesson structure, but did not allow time for students to engage with at least two documents or did not provide feedback. A zero meant that the lesson did not draw on RLH materials. A second observer independently rated six lessons and a perfect inter-rater reliability was achieved on this observation measure.

Each of the five control classroom was observed four times across six-months to assess whether the control classrooms served as sufficient contrasts to RLH classrooms. Field notes were taken and all materials from each control lesson were collected. Following each observation, control teachers responded to three questions: 1) Why did you choose the materials you did? 2) What did you expect students would learn? 3) How typical is this lesson in your teaching?
Results

Curriculum Fidelity

We observed variability in implementation. Five treatment teachers used RLH materials anywhere from 42-72% ($M = 58.3$, $SD = 11.64$) of their instructional time. We also found variability in teacher pacing. In general, teachers required approximately 1.5 class periods to complete an RLH lesson. However, pacing had much to do with a teacher’s style (i.e., whether unread documents were assigned for homework) and students’ reading levels.

Teachers’ average curriculum fidelity scores approached, but fell below, the baseline score of 2, with the exception of Teacher 2. These scores suggest that teachers used RLH materials on observation days, but occasionally failed to allow time for students to engage with at least two documents or did not provide any feedback on student use of the historical thinking strategies. The scores also suggest that virtually no whole-class discussion was observed in any of the five classrooms.* In all cases, curriculum fidelity scores improved over time as teachers became more familiar with the approach. Despite the variability among teachers, we determined that the participating classrooms demonstrated sufficient fidelity to treatment to be included in the study. Table 3 summarizes teachers’ fidelity to treatment.

* The absence of whole-class discussion will be discussed further in Paper Two.
Table 3: Teacher Fidelity to Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Percent of class periods devoted to RLH during intervention</th>
<th>Total Number of RLH lessons taught</th>
<th>Average curriculum fidelity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each control teacher was observed four times over the course of the study to assess whether their classrooms served as sufficient contrasts to RLH classrooms. In three of the five control classrooms, teachers relied almost exclusively on the classroom textbook for both instruction and assignments. In the remaining two classrooms, instruction and classroom materials varied, and teachers occasionally included primary sources, but these sources were not used in the service of historical inquiry. For example, in one instance, primary sources provided students with a particular perspective to use in a role-play, and in another instance they were presented to illustrate a point made in the textbook. At no point were students observed evaluating the trustworthiness of an historical account. Based on the control teachers’ responses to questions about their lessons and the materials they used, we concluded that their classrooms provided effective, albeit varied, contrasts to the RLH classrooms.

Test Outcomes

The study was a 2X5 quasi-experiment with a set or vector of outcome variables. The effects of treatment condition and schools were examined with multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). Because the three pre-test
measures (10th Grade History CST, Gates-MacGinitie Pre-Test, and Historical Thinking Pre-Test) were highly correlated, we conducted a principal component analysis. A single component with eigenvalues greater than 1 was extracted, explaining 77.6% of the variance in the measures. We used this composite measure as the covariate, with the four outcome measures as a vector: Historical Thinking Post-Test; Transfer of Historical Thinking Test; Factual Knowledge Test; and Gates-MacGinitie Reading Post-Test. Little’s MCAR test was conducted to examine missing student data on any of the pre- or post-tests; the result was not significant, indicating that data was missing completely at random, $X^2 = 112.701$ (df = 101, $p = .200$). Students with missing data were excluded listwise from the analysis, reducing the total N from 236 to 182 students.

One-way analysis of variance was used to test for differences between treatment and control groups in the reduced data set on the three pre-tests and on the composite covariate. No significant differences were found between treatment and control groups on the 10th grade history test (CST), $F(1, 180) = .041, p = .84$, on the Historical Thinking Pre-Test, $F(1, 180) = 3.6, p = .06$, nor on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, $F(1, 180) = .018, p = .89$. Nor were significant differences found between treatment and control groups on the composite measure used as the covariate, $F(1,180) = .372, p = .54$. Tables 4a and 4b list the means in the full and reduced data sets for treatment and control groups on three pre-test measures.
### Table 4a: Means and Standard Deviations for Treatment and Control on Three Pre-Test Measures in Full Data Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th></th>
<th>RLH</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Grade CST</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>(1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=99</td>
<td></td>
<td>n=125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Thinking</td>
<td>13.89</td>
<td>(5.1)</td>
<td>15.03</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=104</td>
<td></td>
<td>n=123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>25.63</td>
<td>(10.4)</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>(9.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=105</td>
<td></td>
<td>n=123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4b: Means and Standard Deviations for Treatment and Control on Three Pre-Test Measures in Reduced Data Set (N = 182)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Control (n=79)</th>
<th></th>
<th>RLH (n=103)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Grade CST</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>(1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Thinking</td>
<td>14.06</td>
<td>(5.3)</td>
<td>15.59</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>26.33</td>
<td>(10.1)</td>
<td>26.13</td>
<td>(10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MANCOVA analysis showed a significant overall effect on all outcome measures for both independent variables: treatment, $F(4,168) = 6.889, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .141$, and school, $F(16, 684) = 4.565, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .096$. There was no school by treatment interaction effect, $F(16, 684)=1.226, p = .242$. Follow up univariate ANCOVA analysis found a significant effect for school on three of the outcome measures: Historical Thinking, $F(4,171) =3.997, p = .004, \eta^2_p = .085$, Factual Knowledge, $F(4,171) = 13.15, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .235$, and Reading Comprehension,
\[ F(4,171) = 2.65, p = .035, \eta_p^2 = .058, \] but not for Transfer. These findings suggest that school context predicts student achievement, regardless of treatment condition.

However, treatment condition was found to have a main effect on all four of the outcome measures: Historical Thinking, \[ F(1,171) = 17.37, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09, \] Transfer of Historical Thinking, \[ F(1,171) = 14.95, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08, \] Factual Knowledge, \[ F(1,171) = 5.65, p = .019, \eta_p^2 = .03, \] and Reading Comprehension, \[ F(1,171) = 8.70, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .05. \] Table 5 lists observed and adjusted means for treatment and control groups on all four outcome measures.

Table 5: Observed and Adjusted Means for Treatment and Control on Four Outcome Measures (N=182)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Observed Control</th>
<th>Observed RLH</th>
<th>Adjusted Control</th>
<th>Adjusted RLH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( M ) ( SD )</td>
<td>( M ) ( S )</td>
<td>( M ) ( SE )</td>
<td>( M ) ( SE )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Thinking</td>
<td>16.01 (5.4)</td>
<td>18.63 (5.4)</td>
<td>16.14 (.387)</td>
<td>18.27 (.335)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of HT</td>
<td>10.37 (3.2)</td>
<td>12.24 (3.5)</td>
<td>10.52 (9.95)</td>
<td>11.99 (.25)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factual Knowledge</td>
<td>17.46 (5.7)</td>
<td>19.09 (5.6)</td>
<td>17.24 (.41)</td>
<td>18.52 (.35) *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>29.56 (9.1)</td>
<td>32.22 (8.8)</td>
<td>29.18 (.66)</td>
<td>31.76 (.574)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Reading Comprehension

Even though we did not explicitly target general reading strategies, we hypothesized that there might be effects on general comprehension from sustained practice in close reading, as well as from increased “time-on-task” on literacy (cf. Rosenshine & Berliner, 1978) in the RLH curriculum. Indeed, a main effect for
treatment was found on students’ reading comprehension in the univariate ANCOVA. If we compare observed scores of treatment and control students who completed both the pre- and post-Gates MacGinitie test (N = 218), we see that treatment students outperformed control on reading comprehension, despite having had lower scores at the outset of the intervention (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Scatterplot of Treatment and Control Scores on Pre- and Post-Gates MacGinitie Reading Test

Historical Reading Strategies

Follow-up analysis was conducted on the Historical Thinking and Transfer of Historical Thinking Test to determine whether treatment effects could be traced to any particular historical thinking construct. Items from the two tests (50 items total) were clustered into categories representing each of the four historical reading strategies: sourcing (25 items), contextualization (10 items), close reading (7 items), and
corroboration (8 items). Using the principal component as the covariate, we conducted multivariate analysis of covariance with the four categories as a vector. MANCOVA analysis showed a significant overall effect for both independent variables: treatment, $F(4, 178) = 6.75, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .13$, and school, $F(16, 724) = 2.47, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .05$. There was no school by treatment interaction effect, $F(16, 724) = 0.82, p = .667$. Follow up univariate ANCOVA analysis found a significant effect for the treatment condition on two of the strategies: sourcing, $F(1, 181) = 15.89, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .08$, and close reading, $F(1, 181) = 9.62, p = .002, \eta^2_p = .05$, but not for contextualization or corroboration. Significant effects were found for school on three of the strategies: sourcing, $F(4, 181) = 5.83, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .114$, contextualization, $F(4, 181) = 4.09, p = .003, \eta^2_p = .08$, and corroboration, $F(4, 181) = 7.28, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .14$, but not for close reading.

**Student Demographics**

Further analysis was conducted to determine whether the effect for treatment interacted with student characteristics, namely gender, race/ethnicity, English Language proficiency, and incoming reading ability. The effects of these variables were analyzed one by one in conjunction with treatment and school, using multivariate analysis of covariance, with the four outcome measures as a vector. Gender was of particular interest because we had found a significantly higher percentage of female students in the treatment condition. However, gender was not found to be significant, $F(4, 158) = 1.072, p = .372$, nor was there a significant gender by treatment effect, $F(4, 158) = .071, p = .991$. We did not find a significant main effect for student race
and/or ethnicity, $F(20, 456) = 1.114, p = .331$, nor for the interaction of race/ethnicity by treatment, $F(16, 456) = 1.00, p = .454$.

The effect of students’ incoming language proficiency was analyzed through two dummy variables: English Language Learner (ELL) designation (RLH n=9; control n=12) and struggling readers, defined as those who scored in the bottom 25th percentile on the Gates-MacGinitie pre-test (RLH n=25; control n=17). ELL designation was not found to have a significant main effect, $F(4, 161) = 1.91, p = .111$, nor was there a significant effect for ELL by treatment, $F(4, 161) = 1.24), p = .294$.

Incoming reading ability was found to have a significant overall effect, $F(4,158) = 3.082, p = .018$, but the interaction between incoming reading ability and treatment was not significant, $F(4, 158) = 2.315, p = .06$. Furthermore, between-subjects univariate analysis found an effect for incoming reading only on Reading Comprehension, $F(1, 161) = 5.2, p = .024$, and not on the other three outcome measures. In other words, students' incoming reading ability predicted their growth in reading comprehension, as one might expect, but had no significant relationship to their performance on the three outcome measures that captured historical thinking, transfer, and factual knowledge.

To explore the possibility that the trend towards an interaction effect between incoming reading ability and treatment suggested that strong readers were responsible for the main treatment effect, we conducted further analysis to determine the effect of treatment on the subgroup of struggling readers. Using MANCOVA on the split data, we found a main effect for treatment for struggling readers, $F(4,28) = 3.07, p = .032$, $\eta^2_p = .31$. Univariate analysis showed that struggling readers in the treatment condition
performed significantly better than their counterparts on the Historical Thinking Post-
Test, $F(1, 31) = 6.132, p = .019, \eta^2_p = .17$, and the Factual Knowledge Test, $F(1,31) = 
8.53, p = .006, \eta^2_p = .22$, and their adjusted means were higher on Reading
Comprehension, but not on Transfer of Historical Thinking (see Table 6).

Table 6: Observed and Adjusted Means of Struggling Readers in Treatment and
Control on Four Outcome Measures (N=42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Observed Control</th>
<th>Observed RLH</th>
<th>Adjusted Control</th>
<th>Adjusted RLH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Thinking</td>
<td>12.0 (4.3)</td>
<td>13.64 (4.7)</td>
<td>10.41 (1.1)</td>
<td>13.51 (.66)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of HT</td>
<td>8.71 (2.6)</td>
<td>9.16 (2.6)</td>
<td>9.41 (.79)</td>
<td>9.10 (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factual Knowledge</td>
<td>11.65 (4.1)</td>
<td>14.48 (5.3)</td>
<td>11.31 (1.1)</td>
<td>15.03 (.68)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>20.88 (7.5)</td>
<td>21.56 (6.0)</td>
<td>20.52 (2.2)</td>
<td>21.70 (1.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. ** p < .01.

Discussion

This study was the first to test the effectiveness of a history curriculum focused
on disciplinary reading with primary sources. The curriculum included daily lesson
plans, with classroom-ready materials and adapted primary sources that recognized
and addressed the crisis in adolescent literacy in urban classrooms (Grigg, Donahue, &
Dion, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The results exceeded our
expectations—not only did students in treatment classrooms outperform their
counterparts on two historical thinking measures that tested students’ ability to apply
strategies of disciplinary reading, but they also scored significantly higher on
measures of factual knowledge and reading comprehension. These findings held true
across widely varying school contexts and student demographics. We found no interaction effects for treatment by school, race/ethnicity, gender, English Language proficiency, or incoming reading ability. In fact, closer analysis revealed that struggling readers in the treatment condition scored significantly higher on historical thinking and factual knowledge, and comparably higher on reading comprehension. These findings suggest that the RLH curriculum speaks to the urgent call to embed literacy instruction in the content areas to prepare students for the academic tasks that characterize tertiary education (Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2010; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; National Institute for Literacy, 2007).

Treatment teachers implemented between 36-50 “Document-Based Lessons” over the course of six-months of instruction. Given the scale of the intervention, it is difficult to identify the precise mechanism that yielded results in student learning. Curricular materials are necessarily confounded with teacher implementation. Yet, it is important to note that teacher fidelity scores were relatively low, hovering below the baseline requirement of assigning and providing feedback on two documents. Furthermore, teachers rarely, if ever, engaged in the pedagogically complex practice of facilitating whole-class text-based discussion. In a laboratory setting, such low fidelity scores might be grounds to dismiss a study; in an instructional setting, however, poor implementation places the burden of the intervention on the strength of the materials. These results suggest a relationship between the curricular materials themselves and student learning outcomes.

Certain limitations should be addressed before going further. To begin, neither students nor teachers were randomly assigned to condition, and even though we
sought equivalent controls, a quasi-experiment remains less powerful and susceptible to error. Second, a hierarchical linear model (cf. Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002), with students nested in classrooms and schools, would have been preferable, but was not possible given our small sample of teachers. Third, our measures for capturing historical thinking remain inchoate. Though our Historical Thinking findings suggest that students in treatment classes learned to apply disciplinary reading strategies, this measure did not capture students’ understanding of the discipline’s epistemology, nor any affective or attitudinal shifts towards history that students may have experienced. A closer look at student comments in whole-class discussion would have yielded more information about students’ epistemological understanding, but as the fidelity scores indicated, virtually no whole-class discussions were observed in any of the five treatment classrooms. Finally, the study’s design confounded teacher training and teacher observation with the curricular intervention. Not only did treatment teachers attend four days of summer training and two additional workshops, they were observed weekly by a researcher who was available to answer questions about the curriculum. The presence of an outsider ensured that teachers taught the curriculum on days they were observed, even if they would have preferred to screen a movie or assign seatwork. Nonetheless, given that the results were robust across a range of school and classroom contexts, as well as a range of different measures, a discussion of the effectiveness of the materials is warranted. In the following section, I offer possible explanations for student outcomes on each of these measures.

*Historical Thinking and Transfer of Historical Thinking*
Students in treatment classes outperformed counterparts on two measures of historical thinking. Follow-up analysis revealed that the most robust differences were on items related to sourcing and close reading. Sourcing questions asked students to consider an author’s perspective and purpose, or to evaluate the trustworthiness of a particular account. For example, one multiple choice question asked students why someone might question the trustworthiness of an account written in 1922 about the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876. Another question asked why someone might trust what a soldier on the battlefield wrote in a letter to his beloved wife. Close reading questions asked students to assess a document’s argument, word choice, or tone. For example, one close reading question asked why a Mississippi Senator would claim to speak for “all mothers and fathers of the South” when writing to President Eisenhower about the integration of Little Rock. Another question, from the Transfer of Historical Thinking measure, asked students to evaluate the tone of a headline from the New York Post. Both sourcing and close reading stand in contrast to the passive exercises that constitute reading in textbook-driven history instruction (cf. Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999).

Several possible explanations exist for why there were treatment effects for sourcing and close reading, but not for contextualization or corroboration. Both sourcing and close reading became habitual in treatment classrooms and were practiced daily. Before reading a document, teachers would ask, “What’s the first thing we do when we read a document?” to which students would respond in unison, “Source!” No familiar chant introduced the practice of close reading, but the strategy was made visible each time the teacher modeled highlighting, underlining, taking
notes, and re-reading challenging sections. In other words, sourcing and close reading could be demonstrated by discrete, concrete actions, such as immediately bringing one’s eyes to the source note at the bottom of a page, or underlining emotional language. Furthermore, close reading directly relates to sourcing; assessing a document’s argument, word choice, or tone requires an understanding of the author’s perspective and purpose. Finally, students can source and closely read a single document. Contextualization and corroboration, by contrast, are intertextual strategies, requiring the student to draw on prior knowledge or outside texts. They are also more difficult to model with discrete, concrete behaviors.

These distinctions between sourcing and close reading, on the one hand, and contextualization and corroboration, on the other, are ripe for further exploration. It remains unclear whether contextualization and corroboration are more sophisticated strategies than sourcing and close reading, whether they depend on a deeper epistemological understanding of the discipline, rather than mastery of discrete behaviors. Regardless of their relative complexity, the results suggest that explicit strategy instruction may not be the appropriate method for teaching contextualization and corroboration. It is possible that whole-class discussion would have afforded students multiple opportunities to practice and internalize these strategies. Because this intervention ultimately did not include sufficient whole-class discussion, the question of how to effectively teach contextualization and corroboration remains unanswered.

*Historical Content*
Students in treatment classes scored significantly higher on factual knowledge than their counterparts. At first glance, this finding seems counterintuitive considering that control classrooms, in general, placed greater emphasis on memorization and factual recall, and RLH classrooms devoted less instructional time to learning conventional historical content (i.e., names and dates). However, the RLH curriculum may have provided meaningful activities and schematic frameworks for students to organize and retain otherwise disparate facts. That treatment students scored high on a measure comprised of multiple choice items from standardized tests suggests that the opportunity to read primary sources and argue about the past may have not only compensated for the “lost” instructional time, but may, in fact, have been more effective in helping students commit facts to memory.

Reading Comprehension

Our conceptual framework suggests that the processes of disciplinary and general reading occur simultaneously, as the reader constructs a “situation model” of a particular historical event. Obviously any act of disciplinary reading engages processes of general reading comprehension. At the same time, even without instruction in disciplinary reading strategies, students in Reading Like a Historian classrooms spent more “time-on-task” (cf. Rosenshine & Berliner, 1978) engaging with print than controls because of the activity structure of the Documents Based Lesson. Normal social studies classrooms have a wide latitude for how time is spent, including recitation, contests or games, poster-making, role-plays, student reports, films, etc. (cf. Stodolsky, 1998). However, in RLH classrooms, students read daily. On average, each Document Based Lesson included nearly three primary documents
(ranging between 150-250 words). This means that even students exposed to the fewest lessons (36 lessons in Teacher 4’s class), read over a hundred primary sources. The effect, at the very least, was deep immersion in the practice of careful reading, and it is not surprising that this practice had an effect on general reading comprehension.

Implications

This study unfolded during a unique moment in the history of history education. Since 2001, the federal government has spent nearly $1 billion on an effort “to develop, implement and strengthen programs to teach American history (not social studies) as a separate subject within the school curricula” (Byrd, S.AMDT.3731, 2000). Funding for the Teaching American History (TAH) program, as it was named, has swelled to approximately $119 million per year from the original $50 million proposed by Senator Byrd. Grants have supported professional development opportunities for teachers that range from summer visits to archives and museums, lecture series by prominent historians, workshops on designing history instruction using technology such as Google maps, and often all of the above. Most of these professional development programs have used teacher self reports and items from Advance Placement exams to gauge increases in teacher knowledge, but few studies—not just in history—have tried to link professional development to student achievement (cf. Yoon, 2007). In other words, we do not know whether any of the $1 billion has led to meaningful gains in student achievement (cf. Wineburg, 2009).

The materials and measures in this study offer a different vision of how to effect meaningful instructional reform in history. Yet, they represent only a first step.
Additional research is needed to replicate the findings and determine which elements of the treatment were responsible for gains in student reading comprehension and historical thinking. The Historical Thinking measures need to be fine-tuned and expanded to capture changes in students’ epistemology. Future studies must examine how to best support history teachers as they implement new materials. Teachers’ responses to RLH materials indicate that they are hungry for classroom-ready materials that encourage students to read and think, yet hundreds of thousands of digitized online primary sources remain unusable in classrooms with struggling readers. Rather than having teachers take field trips to the archives, this study suggests the importance of having classroom-ready materials in effecting instructional change (cf. Rowan & Miller, 2007). Indeed, by providing concrete, classroom-ready materials and lessons focused on explicit instruction of discipline-specific strategies, the study may provide a model that can be leveraged to address literacy demands across the content areas.
### Document Prompt

**Sourcing**

Kate Bighead, a Cheyenne Indian, told the following story to Dr. Thomas Marquis in 1922. Dr. Marquis was a doctor and historian of the Battle of Little Bighorn, which occurred in 1876. He interviewed and photographed Cheyenne Indians in the 1920s.

“Little Big Horn was not the first meeting between the Cheyennes and General Custer. In 1868 Custer attacked our camp, destroying all our food and belongings. Then, Custer promised peace and moved the Cheyenne to a reservation. When gold was discovered, white people came and the Indians were moved again. My brothers and I joined Sitting Bull and the Sioux. As conditions on the reservations became worse more and more Indians moved west, joining our group. Six tribes lived peacefully for several months, hunting buffalo, curing the meat for the winter, and tanning buffalo hides. In the early summer, 1876, we set up camp near Little Big Horn River.”

**Corroboration**

In September 1957, nine African-American students tried to enroll in a white high school in Little Rock, Arkansas. Arkansas’s Governor ordered police to keep the students out. President Eisenhower sent in the U.S. Army to protect the nine African-American students. Please read the following two letters sent to President Eisenhower and answer the questions:

**Document A:**

Mr. President:

All mothers and fathers of the South are strongly against using federal troops to integrate the schools. This is true for both white and black parents.

The use of soldiers will completely destroy the public schools. The innocent victims will be children of both races.

It is our tradition to keep the races separate. We’ve passed this tradition from mother to daughter, from father to son.

*Letter from Mississippi Senator to President Eisenhower. October 1, 1957*

**Document B:**

Mr. President,

We, the parents of the nine children enrolled at Little Rock Central High School, want you to know that your actions in protecting our children’s rights have strengthened our faith in democracy.

We believe that freedom and equality can only be achieved if everyone has the same opportunities. You have shown that you also believe in freedom and equality. We are deeply grateful to you.

*Letter from the parents of the nine African-American students to President Eisenhower. October 1, 1957.*

If you wanted to question this document’s trustworthiness, you could say:

- a. Kate Bighead doesn’t know what she’s talking about.
- b. Kate Bighead can only speak for the women, not the men.
- c. Kate Bighead is telling this story forty-six years later, and probably doesn’t remember all the details.
- d. Kate Bighead is lying to make the Indians look good.

If read together, the two letters above provide support for the claim that:

- a. Eisenhower made a mistake by sending the U.S. Army to Arkansas.
- b. Eisenhower did a great thing by protecting the nine students.
- c. Not everyone in the South thought the same way about segregation.
- d. The use of the military in the schools always leads to violence.
### Close Reading

**Same as Corroboration prompt**

Document A is written by someone who says that he speaks for “all the mothers and fathers of the South.” From this statement, we might assume that:

- a. The Senator has spoken to equal numbers of black and white parents.
- b. The Senator thinks that his argument will be stronger if he uses this phrase.
- c. All white parents in the South agree with Mississippi Senator.
- d. All black parents support using federal troops to integrate the schools.

### Contextualization

**N/A for this item.**

In 1892, President Benjamin Harrison declared that the birthday of Italian explorer Christopher Columbus a national holiday. What information might explain the timing of Harrison’s declaration?

- a. Harrison read books about Columbus’s voyages as a young boy.
- b. Harrison was born in 1833 near Cincinnati.
- c. Harrison knew that Italian immigrants were among the largest group of immigrants to America in the early 1890s.
- d. Harrison thought that most Americans hadn’t heard of Columbus.
Appendix B: Constructed Response Item, Rubric, and Sample Student Answers on Historical Thinking Test

Question

A British soldier wrote the letter below to his wife during World War One. World War One began in August 1914 and lasted until 1919.

If you were a historian and you wanted to know how Bill really felt about the war, what is one reason why you would NOT trust what Bill says in a letter to his wife?

February 18, 1916

Darling,

I can’t bear you to be unhappy about me. Think of the cause, the cause. It is England, England, England, always and all the time. The individual counts as nothing, the common cause counts as everything. Have faith, my dear, If only you will have faith in the ultimate victory of the good, the true, and the beautiful, you will not be unhappy even if I never return to you. Dear, I am here, and I shall either survive or not survive. In the meantime, I have never been truly happier. It’s all one long blaze of glory!

All my love,
Bill

Rubric and Student Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sample Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 0     | • Not believable that he would love England that much  
      | • No one is that happy in war | Example 1: “I can’t bear you to be unhappy about me. . . I have never been truly happier.” It doesn’t make sense.  
Example 2: Because war is not a happy thing even for soldiers. |
| 1     | • Wouldn’t want her to worry; wants to protect her OR  
      | • Military might have censored letters | Example 1: Bill wants his wife to be happy, so he does not tell her that he is sad and upset. He tries to be optimistic.  
Example 2: He could’ve wrote the letter and been afraid of who might open and read it, so he put unsincere thoughts in it. |
## Appendix C: Historical Reading Strategies Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Reading Strategies</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Students should be able to . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Sourcing** (Before reading document) | • What is the author’s point of view?  
• Why was it written?  
• When was it written?  
• Is this source believable? Why or why not? | • Identify author's position on historical event  
• Identify and evaluate author's purpose in producing document  
• Predict what author will say BEFORE reading document  
• Evaluate source's believability/trustworthiness by considering genre, audience, and author's purpose. |

| **Contextualization** | • What else was going on at the time this was written?  
• What was it like to be alive at this time?  
• What things were different back then? What things were the same? | • Use context/background information to draw more meaning from document  
• Infer historical context from document(s)  
• Recognize that document reflects one moment in changing past  
• Understand that words must be understood in a larger context |

| **Close Reading** | • What claims does the author make?  
• What evidence does the author use to support those claims?  
• How is this document make me feel?  
• What words or phrases does the author use to convince me that he/she is right?  
• What information does the author leave out? | • Identify author’s claims about event  
• Evaluate evidence/reasoning author uses to support claims  
• Evaluate author’s word choice; understand that language is used deliberately |

| **Corroboration** | • What do other pieces of evidence say?  
• Am I finding different versions of the story? Why or why not?  
• What pieces of evidence are most believable? | • Establish what is true by comparing documents to each other  
• Recognize disparities between two accounts |
References


Rowan, B. & Miller, K. (2007). Organizational strategies for promoting instructional change: Implementation dynamics in schools working with comprehensive


PAPER TWO

BEYOND THE BINARY: ENTERING THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM SPACE IN WHOLE-CLASS TEXT-BASED DISCUSSION
Real, genuine attention means mental movement, not only on the part of the individual but also on the part of the class. It means that ideas come into the class, various persons follow out those ideas, and new points are brought out; and yet the teacher harmonizes it all, combining this play of variety, this expression of different elements, so that it leads consistently and consecutively in a definite direction. (Italics added, Dewey, 1901/1990, p. 283).

Classroom discussion has been long promoted as an antidote to the drudgery of traditional teacher-centered instruction. A considerable literature shines a light on how classroom discussion fosters and supports reasoned student inquiry. These studies range from cases (e.g., Lampert, 1990; Ball, 1993; O’Connor & Michaels, 1996; O’Connor, 2001; Kazemi & Stipek, 2001), to broad theoretical frameworks and pedagogical approaches, such as Fostering Learning Communities (Brown & Campione, 1994), Accountable Talk (cf. Michaels, O’Connor, Hall, & Resnick, 2002; Michaels, O’Connor, & Resnick, 2008), and Collaborative Reasoning (cf. Clark, Anderson, Archodidou, Nguyen-Jahiel, Kuo, & Kim, 2003). Several recent studies have found effects for classroom discussion on student achievement in reading and writing (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Nystrand, 2006; Reznitskaya, Anderson, McNunnel, Nguyen-Jahiel, Archodidou, & Kim, 2001). At the risk of minimizing differences, these lines of research share the common goal of moving teachers away from traditional Initiation-Response-Evaluation (I-R-E) patterns that typify classroom instruction (cf. Meehan, 1979; Cazden, 2001; Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, & Prendergast, 1997) towards pedagogical practices that engage
students in examining evidence and testing claims in an effort to further collective understanding.

In all of these studies, teachers played a critical role in guiding the development of students’ ability to tolerate complexity. Several studies have identified teacher “moves” that have been effective in promoting meaningful student interaction that deepens conceptual understanding. These practices include *authentic questions* that have no prespecified answer and *uptake*, whereby teachers pose questions that incorporate a previous student comment (cf. Nystrand et al, 1997; Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003). McElhone (2009) has identified an effect for *conceptual press discourse*, when a teacher responds to a student utterance with a request for evidence, examples, elaboration, or clarification. Similarly, in her work on text-based discussions, Haroutunian-Gordon highlights the importance of *interpretive questions* that ask students about the meaning of the text, rather than *evaluative* questions that ask students to judge whether what the text says is “right or wrong, good or bad” (2009, p.6). O’Connor and Michaels (1993, 1996) describe a more complex teacher practice of *revoicing*, or reformulating student contributions so that they reveal alignments and oppositions between students and certain propositions within an argument, thereby initiating students “as legitimate participants in the activity of making, analyzing, and evaluating claims, hypotheses, and predictions” (O’Connor & Michaels, 1996, p. 78). These discursive moves serve as tools that help teachers steer students in the direction of the discussion’s “problem space,” where they engage in legitimate inquiry and knowledge-construction.
Much of the best-known work on classroom discussion has involved elementary math, science, or reading comprehension, rather than high school humanities classrooms (Wells & Arauz, 2006). Research on text-based discussion in secondary classrooms is especially limited, and has primarily occurred in English, rather than history or social studies classrooms (e.g., Lee, 1995; Haroutunian-Gordon, 1991). Hess and Posselt (2002) examined student reactions to a controversial public issues (CPI) curriculum; however, the topics concerned contemporary policy issues, not the past. Wortham (1994, 2001) examined a classroom discussion about Plutarch’s description of the Spartan practice of infanticide, but his analysis began when students departed from the text and used contemporary analogies and “participant examples,” rather than close textual interpretation, to understand the past. The only research that has examined how students in middle or high school marshaled textual evidence to support claims about the past has emerged in European contexts (Dickenson & Lee, 1984; Pontecorvo & Girardet, 1993; Martens, 2009). Yet, even these studies examined students in autonomous small groups, rather than in teacher-led, whole-class discussions.

The present study examined whole-class text-based discussions in classrooms that participated in the Reading like a Historian (RLH) project, a six-month curriculum intervention in 11th grade history classrooms. The quasi-experimental curriculum intervention compared students whose teachers used the documents-based RLH curriculum to students in traditional history classrooms. Students in treatment classes outperformed their counterparts on historical thinking, factual recall, and a measure of reading comprehension. The curriculum entailed the creation of a new activity
sequence (cf. Gump, 1967), the “Document-Based Lesson.” The Document Based Lesson consisted of four distinct lesson segments: 1) Reviewing background knowledge; 2) Posing the Central Historical Question; 3) Reading and interpreting historical documents; 4) Whole-Class discussion. Students first reviewed relevant historical background information that prepared them to engage with the lesson’s documents. Second, students were presented with a historical question that required documentary investigation. Students read between 2-5 primary documents that shed light on the central historical question from different perspectives. Guiding questions and graphic organizers were designed to help students apply the strategies of disciplinary historical reading, namely sourcing, close reading, contextualization, and corroboration (cf. Wineburg, 1991a, 1991b; Martin & Wineburg, 2008). Finally, students engaged in whole-class discussion about the central historical question, using evidence from the documents to substantiate their claims. The multiple documents were intentionally selected to maximize the likelihood that students would arrive at conflicting interpretations that would have to be reconciled through discussion.

The present study focused on teacher and student participation in the document-based whole-class discussions that should have occurred at the end of each RLH lesson. The broad quantitative measures used in the larger study did not capture the nuances of historical understanding evident in student speech. This study identified emergent and sophisticated instances of historical understanding, and explored whether relationships existed between particular teacher moves and higher levels of student historical argumentation. The following research questions guide this analysis:
• To what extent did the RLH Document-Based Lessons foster whole-class disciplinary discussion?

• To what extent did students’ comments in whole-class discussion reflect higher levels of historical reasoning and argumentation about texts?

• What was the nature of teacher facilitation of classroom discussion?

• What characterizes the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers who lead students into the “historical problem space?”

Conceptual Framework

Much of the discussion literature has emerged from two theoretical foundations. The first, sociocultural theory, maintains that learning is situated and mediated by language, and that novices learn by observing experts and by participating in cultural activities. Productive classroom discussion, therefore, initiates students into the processes of knowledge construction and fosters the development of what Vygotsky called “higher mental functions” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981). Such discussions promote dialogic student interaction and participation (Wells, 1999). The intervention curriculum drew directly from sociocultural theory in designing classroom activities that explicitly simulated, modeled and initiated students into the work of disciplinary historical inquiry.

Less evident in the discussion literature is a second theoretical influence: teacher pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986; Shulman & Quinlan, 1996). Rather than the simple mastery of discreet and easily transferable behaviors, this view holds that effective teaching requires the ability to represent subject matter knowledge
to students in developmentally appropriate ways. Teachers must not only master the discipline’s content knowledge—both its substantive concepts and the methods by which its practitioners verify truth claims (Schwab, 1978)—but also anticipate novices’ common misconceptions and preconceptions, and have appropriate strategies to address them (Shulman, 1986).

In the present study, pedagogical content knowledge provides a useful lens for understanding the distinction between generic and disciplinary discussion (in math, cf. Lampert, 1990; Ball, 1993; Kazemi & Stipek 2001). Whereas the goals of generic discussion may include student interaction, participation, and even argumentation, the goal of disciplinary historical discussion must be the construction of historical knowledge. As philosophers of history contend, historical knowledge is characterized by paradox: by close attention to the particulars of historical context alongside the recognition that the past remains irretrievable and fundamentally unknowable (cf. Carr, 1967; Collingwood, 1946; Wineburg, 2001). We must rely on our cognitive tools to understand the past, but these tools will always preclude complete understanding. This paper asks what characterizes the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers who lead students into this paradoxical “historical problem space.”

To bring students into the historical problem space, teachers must move them beyond the binary that characterizes historical knowledge in classrooms. On one side of this binary lies a notion of history as a strange but retrievable past, lying dormant in dusty facts. By opening the floor to discussion, however, teachers often present a history that lies on the other side of the binary: a past that is familiar and recognizable, but subject to distortion in the face of contemporary interpretation.
When students see the past as familiar and recognizable, they permit themselves to judge historical actors, condoning or condemning their actions according to presentist values and contemporary moral standards. These favorable or critical judgments constitute a second binary that one commonly finds in history classrooms. To overcome these binaries and move towards historical understanding, students must see the paradox of the past/present divide: they must see that their existence in the present colors and therefore limits their perception of the past. In the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Having an historical sense is to conquer in a consistent manner the natural naiveté which makes us judge the past by the so-called obvious scales of our current life, in the perspective our institutions, and from our acquired values and truths” (1979, p. 90). The idea of an historical problem space for classroom discussion implies a “definite direction” for student participation: away from simplicity and rash judgment towards an appreciation of the fundamental difference between past and present.

In setting our sight on the historical problem space, we must recognize that classroom discussions of any sort are rare. In their seminal study on classroom discussion in over 100 eighth and ninth grade English classes, Nystrand et al (1997) found on average 50 seconds of discussion per class in eighth grade, and less than 15 seconds in ninth grade classrooms (p. 42). Furthermore, only in honors classes were these discussions likely to center on literature. Given this context, a valuable intermediate goal of classroom discussion in history would be for it to focus on the past and for students to substantiate their claims with textual evidence.
I propose a quasi-developmental trajectory to describe the continuum between students’ incoming notions about the past and their engagement with texts in the historical problem space. In doing so, I draw from research on the development of historical thinking, which has identified two intertwined trajectories for growth, one that describes students’ relationship to historical texts, and one that describes students’ perceptions of the continuity between past and present. Students initially regard historical texts as straightforward records of past events; in a subsequent developmental stage, they view accounts as pieces of testimony that should be accepted as truth or should be discarded. However, disciplinary thinking requires that students view historical documents as pieces of evidence that must be interrogated as one builds an account of what occurred in the past (Lee, 2005; Lee & Ashby, 2000, Wineburg, 1991a, 2001; Shemilt, 1983). Students move along a different trajectory when asked to explain unusual historical customs or behaviors towards a stage that scholars have called “contextual historical empathy” (Ashby & Lee, 1987; Shemilt, 1984). Assuming continuity between past and present, students initially occupy an evaluative stance towards historical actors, either judging them as stupid or morally deficient or imputing motivations without regard for contextual circumstances. At higher levels, students acknowledge an increasingly complex historical context that shaped the behaviors and worldviews of historical actors (Dickenson & Lee, 1984; Lee, Dickenson, & Ashby, 1997).

This study combined and modified these two developmental trajectories of historical thinking to account for student claims in text-based discussion about the past. Figure 1 lays out a model that includes four levels to account for student claims.
in whole-class discussion: in level 1, students evaluate historical actors without regard for the documentary evidence; in level 2, students regard the documentary evidence as given, without considering the author’s perspective, purpose, or context; in level 3, students acknowledge the author’s perspective and context, but these factors are perceived as static and descriptive, so as to render the author wholly untrustworthy, or the historical context uniformly backwards. The model also includes a fourth level, which does not appear in prior developmental models, in which students demonstrate an awareness of their own subjectivity as historical actors and as readers of historical documents (cf. Gadamer, 1979). This historical consciousness tempers their rush to judgment and brings them to the heart of the historical problem space. Students who recognize that their personal experiences shape and limit their understanding of the past, are best positioned to see the complexity of the past. In the words of E.H. Carr, “the historian who is most conscious of his own situation is also more capable of transcending it, and more capable of appreciating the essential nature of the differences between his own society and outlook and those of other periods and other countries” (1967, p. 54).

Figure 1: Developmental Trajectory for Student Argumentation in Text-Based Historical Discussion
Method

I examined teacher and student verbal participation in whole-class discussion. Over the course of the six-month RLH intervention, I observed five treatment classrooms twice per week and videotaped once per week, for a total of 20 videotaped lessons per teacher, 100 videotaped lessons total. Field notes were taken during observations and are occasionally referenced to paint a fuller picture of the teachers’ instruction over the six-month intervention.

Participants

The Reading like a Historian Project (Wineburg & Reisman, 2007) included five treatment classrooms from five different San Francisco high schools. The schools represented a cross-section of the city’s public high schools. One 11th grade classroom from each of the schools in Table 1 participated in the curriculum intervention. The teachers ranged in age, years of experience, and background in history.

Table 1: School Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total School Enrollment</th>
<th>Percent Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Percent 11th graders at or above proficient on ELA</th>
<th>Treatment Teacher</th>
<th>Years Teaching/Teaching History</th>
<th>Undergraduate Degree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>Mr. Peters</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>U.S. History</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>Ms. Clay</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Business</td>
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<tr>
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<td>62</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>Ms. Addams</td>
<td>7/5</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>Ms. Hudson</td>
<td>24/10</td>
<td>Art History</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>Ms. Smith</td>
<td>17/17</td>
<td>U.S. History</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criteria for discussion

Videotaped classroom lessons were analyzed and instances of whole-class discussion were identified using four criteria: 1) the teacher needed to pose the Central Historical Question explicitly at the start of the discussion; 2) students must have read at least two documents prior to the discussion; 3) the discussion had to include at least three distinct student turns, each of which qualified as an argument (see below for argument criteria); 4) the discussion needed to have lasted at least four minutes. These criteria were far more stringent than those used in prior research on discussion (cf. Nystrand et al, 1997). However, they maximized the probability that the discussions would contain instances of substantive text-based discussion about the past.

Data Analysis

Nine discussions satisfied all four criteria and were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were parsed into teacher and student turns. For teachers, a turn began

‡ Nystrand et al (1997), for example, define discussion as “the free exchange of information among students and/or between at least three students and the teacher that lasted at least half a minute” (Italics added, p. 36).

‡ Numbers on the left indicate the place of the turn in the whole-class discussion, which begins when the teacher initially poses the Central Historical Question. ‘T’ indicates teacher, students are identified with ‘S’ followed by a number, according to the order of their turn in the particular excerpt. Ss indicates multiple student voices simultaneously. I indicate when I have deleted turns and these turns only contain irrelevant material (e.g., student side talk or teacher disciplinary talk) or redundant material (e.g., arguments that are elsewhere included in another segment, or students clarifying question before responding). I use italics to indicate the speaker’s use of special emphasis. An equal sign at the start of a turn indicates “latching,” that no time elapsed between the end of the preceding turn and the start of the new turn. A dash marks suddenly cut-off speech. Material enclosed in parentheses is my best guess as to the content of inaudible utterances. Double parentheses include transcriber’s comments. Ellipses outside brackets indicate a pause within the speaker’s utterance. Ellipses inside square brackets indicate deleted material inside a turn.
either at the start of the discussion (with the initial posing of the Central Historical Question) or after a student spoke and ended when another student spoke. For students, a turn was defined as a complete thought; in other words, if teachers pushed students to elaborate, explain, or substantiate their claims, all student speech surrounding that idea was counted as a single turn.

Analysis of student and teacher participation occurred in different stages. First, a summary chart was created for each transcript that tallied the number of student participants, the total word count of each student turn, and the number of historical arguments made by students. In order to qualify as an argument, the student turn had to contain both a claim and a warrant (cf. Toulmin, 1958). The latter was sorted into six categories that corresponded to the developmental trajectory outlined in the conceptual framework: moral, projection, textual, sourcing, contextualization, and historical subjectivity. When a single student turn straddled multiple categories of argument, a primary code was assigned (Waern, 1988; Wineburg, 1998). Table 2 includes examples of each category of student argument:

*Moral argument:* Students evaluate historical actors on moral grounds, according to contemporary value judgments.

*Projection argument:* Students attribute mental states to historical actors or surmise about their motivations (cf. Hallden, 1997) without referring to documents or historical context.

*Textual argument:* Students substantiate claims with direct references to the documents. However, quotes are lifted without attention to source or context.
Sourcing argument: Students substantiate their claims by questioning the trustworthiness of a document, given the author’s perspective.

Contextualization argument: Students demonstrate an awareness that historical actors existed in a different time, one that might have been characterized by different values.

Historical subjectivity argument: Students demonstrate an awareness of their own subjectivity as historical agents when they define the terms and criteria by which to evaluate historical actors.

Table 2: Examples of Types of Student Argument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Argument</th>
<th>Discussion Topic</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Were Texans justified in declaring independence?</td>
<td>“We don’t have the right to treat people like that and just take over saying that it’s our land, because it’s just like saying Sandy’s pencil is my pencil and I’m just going to take it, even though that’s not true.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projection</td>
<td>Was Booker T. Washington a sell-out?</td>
<td>“[Booker T. Washington] just probably just tricked them, because like he was just saying that to talk all down about black people but he probably still was (one of the) black people at heart, so then after he got the money, and built the school it was all good, after they gave him the money.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>Did President Wilson have good reasons for entering WWI?</td>
<td>“[Zinn] said that the [Lusitania’s] cargo wasn’t innocent, it was full of ammunition . . . and there was prosperity that came from doing business with the British, too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sourcing</td>
<td>Were Texans justified in declaring independence?</td>
<td>“It’s like he’s trying to suck up to the Mexicans so that they will allow the Americans that want to move in to move in, so Document A seems like it’s just a suck up letter.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Contextualization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was Abraham Lincoln racist?</td>
<td>“Well, I think that [Lincoln] is racist because he says that there’s a physical difference and that the white is superior, but . . . I think it’s just because he’s been raised to believe that whites are like higher in rank than blacks.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Historical Subjectivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the New Deal a success?</td>
<td>“The New Deal wasn’t based on social change it was based on financial change. [. . .] I hate to say that because I’m black! But at the same time the New Deal was based on [. . .] economics [. . .], [FDR] wasn’t thinking about ‘okay, how is lynching going on in Texas,’ or something like that, he was thinking about ‘how’s the banks in Texas, or how’s the banks in California.’”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Analysis of teacher participation involved two phases. First, teacher turns were divided into two moves: “generic” and “historical”. Classified as **generic** were any moves that are not particular to historical discussion, but rather encouraged student participation or basic elaboration on a point (e.g., “Does anyone have anything to add?”). Historical moves focused on the discipline (see examples below). When a single turn straddled multiple codes, both codes were assigned. Under generic, three codes were assigned:

- **Conceptual press**: Teacher pushed student to elaborate or provide a reason for claims. (If a teacher requested specific *textual* evidence, it was coded under historical discussion).

- **Broadcasting**: Teacher restated student comment in a louder voice.

- **Participation**: Teacher asked for volunteers or cold-called on students.

Five codes were generated to capture teachers’ historical discussion moves:

- **Pose CHQ**: Teacher posed the Central Historical Question.
**Question about a specific document:** Teacher directed student attention to a particular document and asked an interpretive question about it. Also included instances of teacher *uptake*, when a student referred to a specific document and a teacher followed up with a question (e.g., What do people think of Suzanne’s interpretation of Lincoln’s speech?).

**Request for textual evidence:** Teacher asked student to substantiate claim with textual evidence.

**Expose discussion structure:** Teacher framed students’ claims and elicited student comments to expose the structure of the discussion. Instances of this code fell into two categories: either teacher *revoicing* (cf. O’Connor & Michaels, 1993) or re-articulating a student claim so that it more clearly represented a particular side of the discussion (e.g., “So you’re arguing that the New Deal was a success because more people were employed?”), or teacher requesting or providing a *counter-argument* (e.g., “Does anyone disagree with Devon’s claim that the New Deal was a success?”)

**Stabilize content knowledge:** Teacher authoritatively (most often through an I-R-E sequence) reviewed content knowledge relevant to the discussion at hand (e.g., “What did the Missouri Compromise say?”; “And where is Texas located?”; “So would it be a free or slave state if it joined the union?”).

**Reliability**

Two coders tested inter-rater reliability. The first coder, the author, generated the coding scheme; the second coder was blind to the study’s hypotheses. Reliability tests were conducted on three discussion transcripts (33% of the total data set because only nine discussions fulfilled all the four criteria). Inter-coder agreement was 84%,
κ=0.84. Disagreements were resolved by discussion, and the remaining transcripts were coded by the author.

Results

Overview of the Classrooms

The nine discussions that satisfied all criteria occurred in three of the five participating classrooms: Ms. Clay in School 2, Ms. Addams in School 3, and Ms. Smith in School 5. These schools and teachers represented a range of classroom contexts. Schools 2 and 5, where Ms. Smith and Ms. Clay taught, were large, comprehensive high schools, where approximately half of 11th graders achieved a score of proficient on the English Language Arts exam. In School 3, by contrast, only 12% of 11th graders scored proficient on the same exam, and nearly two-thirds of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. Ms. Smith had been teaching for 17 years, almost three times the number of years that Ms. Clay and Ms. Addams had spent in the classroom. Ms. Smith, furthermore, held an undergraduate degree in history, whereas Ms. Addams majored in American Studies and Ms. Clay studied business (see Table 1).

The three teachers’ approaches to history instruction and to the curricular materials differed. Ms. Addams and Ms. Smith hardly lectured and rarely assigned students the textbook, whereas Ms. Clay placed a strong emphasis on historical chronology and facts and relied on lecture as the primary medium for imparting information. Videotapes and field notes suggest that both Addams and Smith frequently engaged students in discussions that fell short of the criteria established in this paper. Ms. Clay, by contrast, led few whole-class discussions that were not
accounted for in this study. Finally, Ms. Clay often supplemented the curriculum with activities and lectures that addressed content not included in the RLH materials (the intervention only required that teachers use the materials 50% of instructional time), whereas Ms. Smith and Ms. Addams relied almost exclusively on the Reading Like a Historian materials and rarely supplemented the curriculum.

Table 3 summarizes the topic, central question, and descriptive features of these nine discussions. Ms. Smith’s discussions totaled 42 minutes; Ms. Clay’s discussions totaled 53.5 minutes; and Ms. Addams’s discussions totaled 30 minutes. The paucity of substantial whole-class text-based discussion is surprising given that RLH lessons included explicit directions for such instruction, and given that the videotapes covered anywhere from 1,000 to 1,800 minutes of instruction per teacher (depending on whether the lesson occurred in a single or block period). I discuss the absence of whole-class discussion below. Furthermore, in all nine of these cases the Central Historical Question was *evaluative* (i.e., requesting that students judge historical actors) rather than *interpretive* (i.e., requesting that students examine textual evidence). This finding is also striking given that the majority of Reading Like a Historian lessons pivot around an *interpretive* Central Historical Question.

Quantitative differences between teachers are reported below, followed by qualitative analyses of discussion transcripts.
Table 3: Discussions fulfilling all four criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/ Central Historical Question</th>
<th>Length (in minutes)</th>
<th>Total Student Arguments/ (Total Participating Students)</th>
<th>Average Words per Student Turn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher = Ms. Smith</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were Texans justified in declaring independence from Mexico?</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22 (13)</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was Abraham Lincoln racist?</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18 (10)</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was Booker T. Washington a sell-out?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher = Ms. Clay</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were Texans justified in declaring independence from Mexico?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32 (14)</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did President Wilson have good reasons for entering WWI?</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32 (23)</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the New Deal a success or failure?</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9 (12)</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher = Ms. Addams</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were Lewis and Clark respectful to the Native Americans they encountered on their journey?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13 (9)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was Abraham Lincoln racist?</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13 (16)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did President Wilson have good reasons for entering WWI?</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>15 (8)</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Participation

Analysis of the discussion transcripts reveals differences in the length and quantity of student participation in each teacher’s classroom. Students in Ms. Addams’s and Ms. Clay’s classes contribute arguments at a slightly higher rate than students in Ms. Smith’s class (1.4 arguments per minute for Ms. Clay and Ms. Addams, versus 1.07 arguments per minute for Ms. Smith), though students in Ms. Smith’s class take considerably longer turns.

In terms of the quality of student arguments, there was a similar distribution pattern in all three classrooms. Moral and projection arguments constitute approximately 40-50% of total student arguments, and textual arguments constitute...
anywhere from 30-50% of the remaining arguments. It is not entirely surprising that we would find that the majority of student arguments fall into the categories of moral and projection, especially given the fact that the Central Historical Question in all of these discussions was evaluative. However, it is somewhat surprising that such a substantial number of arguments are textual, given that such a practice does not typify social studies instruction. Below I discuss what teachers did to promote textual substantiation of claims. Figure 2 shows the distribution of arguments across the three discussions in each teacher’s classroom.

Figure 2. Percent Distribution of Student Arguments in Three Classrooms

We see far fewer arguments in the higher levels. Addams’s students do not make sourcing arguments or demonstrate an awareness of their subjectivity. The distribution of the remaining student arguments in Smith’s and Clay’s classroom are almost parallel with one exception: Clay’s discussions contain five instances of
arguments where students demonstrate awareness of their subjectivity; Smith’s have zero. In short, only students in Clay’s class demonstrate awareness of their subjectivity.

**Teacher Participation**

The teachers’ participation across discussions differed more dramatically than student argumentation. (The three generic discussion moves were ultimately collapsed into one category called *Generic Discussion* for the analysis). Smith had far fewer turns across all three discussions than the other two teachers (.7 teacher turns per minute for Smith, versus 2.2 teacher turns per minute for Clay and 2.3 teacher turns per minute for Addams). Smith’s involvement in discussion was minimal compared to the other teachers; she did not ask students to substantiate their claims with evidence nor did she stabilize students’ content knowledge, and she rarely exposed the structure of the discussion or asked questions about specific documents.

Clay and Addams were, on average, far more active participants in their classroom discussions. Addams requested that students substantiate their claims with textual evidence, and exposed the structure of the discussion through revoicing and offering or requesting counter-arguments; she did not, however, ask questions about specific documents nor did she stabilize students’ content knowledge. Clay’s involvement included both generic and disciplinary moves. Compared to the other teachers, Clay’s participation was distinguished by the high number of generic moves, and by the number of times she asked questions about specific documents and stabilized content knowledge. Figure 3 shows the distribution of teacher participation across all three discussions.
Comparing Clay and Smith

A comparison of Clay’s and Smith’s Texas Independence discussion helps isolate differences in student argumentation and teacher facilitation, given that many contextual variables are similar. Students in Clay and Smith’s students are similar demographically, especially when compared to Addams’s class (see Table 1). Both teachers led the discussion with students sitting in a circle after having read all five of the lesson’s documents. Smith’s discussion lasted 23 minutes; Clay’s lasted 21 minutes. Again, Smith’s students participated less frequently, contributing a total of 22 arguments, compared to 32 arguments from Clay’s students. Moreover, we see that Clay’s discussion included two higher-level arguments—a contextualization argument and a subjectivity argument, whereas Smith’s did not. Figure 4 compares student arguments in Smith and Clay’s Texas discussions.
A comparison of teacher participation in the two Texas discussions isolates some of the discursive moves that may have led to more sophisticated student argumentation in Clay’s class. Clay was far more active in all categories. The most dramatic differences were in the categories of generic discussion, questioning a specific document, and stabilizing content knowledge. Figure 5 compares teacher participation in the Texas discussion.

Figure 5. Comparison of Teacher Participation in Texas Discussion
From this comparison, it appears that the students in Smith’s classroom were quite willing to engage in historical discussion without much prompting. The question becomes, then, what did Clay gain from her extensive effort? The answer, in the case of the Texas discussion, seems to be increased student participation and a handful of higher-level arguments. We now turn to qualitative analysis to take a closer look.

**Qualitative Analysis**

Several features distinguished Clay’s facilitation style from Addams’s and Smith’s, in particular, questioning a specific document and stabilizing content knowledge. In this section, I identify how questioning a specific document and stabilizing content knowledge work to bring students into the historical problem space. I contrast these efforts with counter-examples, in which teachers move students away from the historical problem space.

*Texas discussion in Ms. Clay’s class: Initiating Students to the Historical Problem Space*

In the eighth week of the intervention, students in Ms. Clay’s read five documents prior to their discussion about whether or not Texans were justified in declaring independence: (A) Excerpt from letter written by American in 1823 requesting permission from Mexico to settle and pledging loyalty and good behavior (Ripley, 1923); (B) Excerpt from letter written by a Mexican Tejano to military commander in 1826 complaining of Anglo-Americans’ disregard for Mexican laws (de la Teja, 1997); (C) Excerpt from 1836 Texas Declaration of Independence; (D) Excerpt from Colonel Juan Seguín’s eulogy for the defenders of the Alamo (Seguín, 1837); (E) Excerpt from 1836 Abolitionist’s pamphlet arguing that Texas
independence was intended to expand slavery (Lundy, 1836). The excerpt below occurs mid-way through the 21-minute discussion in Ms. Clay’s class (see first endnote for legend of diacritical marks):

Figure 6: Texas discussion in Ms. Clay’s classroom

42 S1: In Document B, [. . .] it talks about how they weren’t being equal. Like, you were the people that moved over there, it’s not like they’re supposed to adjust for you. You’re supposed to adjust for their country. So, it’s like, how can you be upset? [. . .] When they say something like, um, “they deny us of worshipping our almighty” and “they demanded we give up our arms” ((refers to Document C)) so that’s not their country, so you can’t be angry that you go to a different part or a different country and they deny you like certain stuff because it’s their laws.

43 S2: And then also in Document A it says that ‘oh yeah we’re going to go to your country and be a good service to you, we’ll follow by your rules, and we’ll be, like, a help to you.’ And they ended up doing the total opposite, so they just contradicted everything they said in Document A, making Document A false.

44 T: I think what’s interesting about Document C is that it’s entitled the “Texas Declaration of Independence,” right? So, I think the fact that they put out a Declaration of Independence and complained about all these things, and that Mexico still wouldn’t let them have their way, proves that they’re totally justified. I mean, the Americans had a revolution, they put out a Declaration of Independence, we all said the King was bad, we didn’t say they weren’t justified, so how can the Texans not be justified?
S2: But the Texans have no right to claim independence on land that does not belong to them, if the land is not theirs—

S4: =There’s more of them there

S2: =There’s more of them there because they brought more of them there—just because you bring more people—it’s like, if I bring my whole family from Nigeria to America and there’s more Nigerians in San Francisco, San Francisco doesn’t turn into Nigeria. ((Laugher.)) It’s still San Francisco. ((Laugher.))

S: That’s a good one.

T: I’m waiting for your classmates. Come on—what do we think? I’ll start calling on people. . . . Yes, thank you.

S5: I think Document D . . . I think it says that some Mexicans didn’t like the government, because it’s a Mexican who supported the Texas revolution, so I don’t think it was entirely wrong that the Americans, um, wanted Texas to have independence.

T: Comments on that one? So the General was Mexican and he’s siding with the Texans, in Document D.

[Skip 7 turns.]

S6: Maybe it’s because, uh, he was like, uh, getting benefits from the Americans because he fought with them and they said nice things about him.

T: Okay, so did you guys write that you trusted that as a source?

Ss: No.

[Skip four turns.]
T: S7 what do you think?

[Skip seven turns.]

S7: [The Declaration] justified the revolution when the government ceased to protect the lives of its citizens, the citizen has a right to rebel. . . to create a new government, just like the American Revolution.

T: What do we think? He’s pointing to the first line of the Declaration, it sounds just like the words of who? Who says you have a right to rebel if you don’t agree?

S8: Thomas Jefferson.

T: And who did he take that from?

Ss: John Locke.

T: John Locke, right? So what do we think? Where’s Tony, you always have something to say. What do you think, Tony?

S9: Well, in Document E, the American points out that a big part of the reason that the people in Texas want to revolt is because they want to keep their slaves and the Mexican government doesn’t allow slaves, so that is kind of part of the beginning of part of Document C, where they say “the government had ceased to protect the lives, liberty and property of the people,” so the Americans in Texas considered their slaves property, so then, in their definition, I mean, interpretation of it, the government has stopped doing that, but from the Mexican point of view, forbidding slavery, they’re protecting the lives of other people. So then, a big part of this is how you interpret the definition of something.
What we see in this exchange is a dramatic shift in how students perceived Texas independence. The discussion began with a decidedly anti-Texan stance. S1’s indignation in turn 42 (“it’s not like they’re supposed to adjust for you!”) had already been articulated by four classmates, all of whom substantiated their claims with moral warrants that Texans were unjustified. One dissenting voice, S4 (who repeats his claim in turn 46) argued that Texans were justified in declaring independence because they outnumbered Mexicans in the region. This argument, too, relies on a moral warrant. Although it refers to a historical fact—and in that sense nods to the historical context of 1836—it evaluates historical actors according to the student’s (unexamined) moral standards (i.e., if you outnumber a native population, you have a right to declare independence).

S9’s comment in turn 79 represents a dramatic turn, and shows us what student thinking looks like when it begins to grapple with the paradox of the past/present divide, with the awareness that contemporary definitions and understandings prevent us from fully understanding the past. Though S9 does not explicitly refer to himself, his awareness of his subjectivity is clear. He moves beyond an understandable contemporary abhorrence of slavery to recognize that the Texans viewed slaves as property and therefore believed the Mexican government was overstepping its power in its attempt to abolish slavery. S9 neither condones nor condemns the Texans for their stance. Rather, he attempts to see the world through their eyes, and recognizes that his understanding of the past is conditioned by contemporary definitions.
If S9’s comments represent the achievement of a kind of understanding that is all too rare in history classes, the analytic problem is to understand how such thinking comes about in classroom discussion. Ms. Clay trained students’ attention on the documents in complex disciplinary linguistic moves. Initially, her comments focused on encouraging student involvement. However in turn 35 (prior to the excerpt above), she explicitly pushed the students to support their claims with documentary evidence: “it’s even more effective if when you make your point you say, ‘if you look at Document C, this tells me that. . . .’” S1 was the first to reference the documents in turn 42. S5’s comment in turn 50 was the first point where a student used a textual warrant to tentatively suggest (“so I don’t think it was entirely wrong. . . .”) that the issue of Texas independence might not be clear cut.

Once students began drawing on the documents, Clay followed up by incorporating the referenced documents in subsequent questions to the whole class (turns 44, 51, 59, 74). These instances, at first glance, simply appear to be examples of *uptake* (cf. Nystrand et al., 1997), when a teacher acknowledges and validates a student comment by incorporating it into subsequent discussion; consequently, they were coded as examples of teacher *questioning a document*. However, a closer look revealed that Clay’s questions served multiple functions in promoting disciplinary discussion and went well beyond simply bringing students’ attention to the documents. In two examples, Clay acknowledged a student’s textual reference and offered a counter-example that went against the grain of class’s consensus and exposed the structure of the discussion: in turn 44, she suggested that the Texans *were* justified because they faced similar circumstances as the American colonists, and in turn 51,
she revoiced a student’s interpretation that Colonel Juan Seguín’s support of the Texans lent credence to their claims. Furthermore, in turns 44 and 74, Clay simultaneously acknowledged a student’s textual reference and stabilized relevant historical knowledge that helped students see that the Texans were consciously casting their struggle in the language of the American Revolution. The I-R-E sequence in turns 75-78 further stabilized the historical context.

These combined linguistic moves transcended the sum of their parts and effectively worked to bring students into the historical problem space. Together, Clay’s efforts constituted the disciplinary move of *contextual framing*, when the teacher’s questions and comments work to situate the document in its historical context by highlighting the disjuncture between past and present. In these instances of “contextual framing,” Clay signaled to students that reading responsibly required interpreting the documents in light of the time and space in which they were created. When students mined the documents for quotes to support their claims, Clay linguistically reframed the document. For example, when S1 criticized the grievances in the Texas Declaration in turn 42 (“When they say something like, um, ‘they deny us of worshipping our almighty’ . . . so that’s not their country, so you can’t be angry . . .”), Clay gently suggested that she had missed the larger point (“I think what’s interesting about Document C is that it’s entitled the ‘Texas Declaration of Independence’”). Contextual framing threw into bold relief critical elements of the historical context that students had overlooked in their rush to judgment. The effect was to steer students away from their tendencies to make sweeping generalizations about the past, and to encourage them to enter the world of the 19th century.
Table 4: Examples of *contextual framing* in Clay’s Texas discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student reference to document (turn)</th>
<th>Clay’s question (turn)</th>
<th>Additional disciplinary function beyond generic uptake</th>
<th>Why example of <em>contextual framing</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“When they say something like, um, ‘they deny us of worshipping our almighty’ . . . so you can’t be angry . . . because it’s their laws.” (42)</td>
<td>“I think what’s interesting about Document C is that it’s entitled the ‘Texas Declaration of Independence,’ right? So, I think the fact that they put out a Declaration of Independence and complained about all these things, and that Mexico still wouldn’t let them have their way, proves that they’re totally justified.” (44)</td>
<td>Questioning document/ Uptake: Follows up on student reference to Document C Expose discussion structure/ Counter-argument: Challenges classroom’s anti-Texan stance</td>
<td>• Frames document as echo of Declaration of Independence • Parallel to American Revolution allows students to consider document as sincere expression of Texans’ grievances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“. . . it’s a Mexican who supported the Texas revolution, so I don’t think it was entirely wrong that the Americans, um, wanted Texas to have independence.” (50)</td>
<td>“Comments on that one? So the General was Mexican and he’s siding with the Texans, in Document D.” (51)</td>
<td>Questioning document/ Uptake: Follows up on student reference to Document D Expose discussion structure/ Revoicing and counter-argument: restates student interpretation that document supports Texans and counters classroom’s anti-Texan stance</td>
<td>• Frames comment as high-ranking Mexicans “siding” with Texans • Comment blurs students’ understanding of conflict; reality of Mexican sympathizers tempers students’ critique of Texans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Counter-examples: Missed opportunities**

We can better understand each of Ms. Clay’s moves in light of counter-examples. Students in the other two classrooms supported their arguments with textual references, but both teachers often missed opportunities for stabilizing the context and directing students’ attention towards a specific document. Neither Addams nor Smith moved students beyond the binary posed by evaluative questions towards an awareness of their own biases and blinders.
In the two examples that follow, Addams and Smith facilitate discussions about the question: Was Abraham Lincoln racist? Materials for this lesson were drawn from empirical work on historical thinking (Wineburg, 1998; Wineburg, 2001) that demonstrated professional historians’ ability (and pre-service teachers’ relative inability) to move beyond the limits of their contemporary worldviews to imagine the implications of Lincoln’s social and political context. Students read four documents prior to the discussion: (A) Excerpt from Stephen Douglas’ address to Lincoln during their first debate in their campaign for the U.S. Senate on August 21, 1858, in Ottawa, Illinois (Lincoln, 1989, pp. 504-505); (B) Excerpt from Lincoln’s response to Douglas in the same debate (Lincoln, 1989, p. 512); (C) A letter from Lincoln to Mary Speed, a friend, on September 27, 1841 (Lincoln, 1989, p. 74); (D) Excerpt from the writing of John Bell Robinson, a pro-slavery spokesperson (Robinson, 1863; cf. Wineburg, 1998, for copies of documents). The lesson was designed as a structured academic controversy, or SAC, (Johnson & Johnson, 1988), a lesson structure in which students initially argue one or another side of a controversial issue, but ultimately abandon their respective positions and attempt to arrive at consensus. By using the SAC framework, the lesson sought to encourage students to abandon the yes/no binary posed by the question—and reinforced by the classroom culture of debate—and arrive at a nuanced consensus that acknowledged the historical context that shaped Lincoln’s thought.

As the quantitative results showed, Ms. Addams pushed students to support their claims with textual evidence; however, textual arguments were often seen as ends in themselves. In the following discussion, which occurred in the eleventh week of the intervention, Addams asked each small group to report their conclusions about
whether or not Lincoln was racist. She insisted that students support their claims with
evidence from the documents, and she duly recorded each group’s claim and the
documentary quote they used to substantiate it. Yet, after all the groups reported,
Addams was unsure how to proceed.

Figure 7: Lincoln discussion in Ms. Addams’s classroom

111  T: Okay, Jennifer, why do you think he’s not racist? Since we have mostly racist
up here. Why do you think he’s not?
112  S1: Because. They got more evidence! On the paper.
113  T: Okay, like?
114  S1: I don’t feel like arguing about it. I just know that I’m right and they’re
wrong.
115  T: Oh. Does that work? You said you want to be a lawyer. If you go up to the
judge and you’re like I just am right and you’re wrong, is that going to work?
[Skip six turns].
122  S1:[. . .] ’cause he was like, uh, he never he never really said nothing about being
racist like people, where’s that at? He said [in Document B] he ain’t “never
said anything to the contrary. There is no reason in the world why the Negro is
not entitled to all the natural rights of the Declaration of Independence—the
right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much
entitled to these as the white man.”
123  T: He is as much entitled to what? ((Writing on board.))
124  S2: White man
125  S1: As the white man.
In this excerpt, Addams made several notable discursive moves. She asked for a student to provide a counter-argument and then pressed the same student to explain her reasoning. The analogy to the courtroom was particularly appropriate not only because of its personal resonance for the student, but also because a lawyer’s effort to build a case from courtroom testimony resembles a historian’s effort to build an argument about the past from the documentary record (cf. Collingwood, 1946). That there were over 100 turns in a discussion lasting eleven and a half minutes demonstrates how hard Addams worked to get students to elaborate on their claims. Yet, after the student provided a piece of textual evidence, the discussion screeched to a halt. Rather than turn students’ attention to the document S1 cited and ask for an alternative interpretation, Addams turned to the board and tallied votes. Vote-counting effectively precluded entry to the historical problem space.

Ms. Smith struggled as well to move students beyond the binary, even though her students were quite skilled at textual argumentation and nearly entered the historical problem space on their own. In the ninth week of the intervention, students engaged in a sophisticated historical discussion about whether Lincoln’s status as a
politician invalidated his claims about slavery. The following excerpt begins three minutes into the 14-minute discussion:

Figure 8: Lincoln discussion in Ms. Smith’s classroom

14  S1: I don’t think he is a racist because like I don’t know he is a politician so he’s most likely lying partially to get the votes, but like his main argument is like they do deserve equal rights as the white man, and so that’s why he’s not racist.

15  S2: I disagree with Lisette because even though he was in a political state of saying that he isn’t racist or whatever, but when he was writing his letters, he referred to black people as “creatures” and that wasn’t a political thing, he was just talking to one of his friends.

16  S1: Wait, which document is that?

17  S2: That’s Document 3.

18  S3: I also disagree with Lisette because on the same thing—if he’s a politician, he basically has to lie to get votes, so it could be his real thoughts are that slaves are unequal in every way shape and form and that they should—and that he was racist.

19  S4: I’m going to disagree with Brian because at the time most of the people didn’t like black people and so at that time I would think if you wanted to be elected then you wouldn’t choose to side with the slaves. And he also refers [in Document B], he says that “I agree that the Negro is not my equal in many respects, certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment” and he says that and it can be seen as racist, but at the time, it’s
true, because black people weren’t educated and they weren’t allowed to be educated, so that is why they weren’t as intellectual and they were a completely different skin color, and people viewed them as that, because you don’t see a black man and say ‘oh, he’s white’ —you see him and you see he’s black, so you can tell the color difference, but I don’t think that that makes him racist.

[Skip two turns.]

22 S4: [. . .] when he calls him black like ’cause he says “they’re certainly not in color” —they’re not equal in color, and but you see two different people, even if someone was the same race but they’re different colors, you can see the color difference, and I’m not saying that you automatically say—“oh, this person’s this, this person’s that,” but you can alw—like you can see the color difference in people.

23 T: Can I ask you a question? What does racism mean? What does it mean to be a racist?

24 S5: To judge humans, like judging somebody by their race.

25 S6: =Discrimination against minorities.

26 T: So as long as you’re not discriminating, as long as it’s only in your head, it’s okay, you’re not racist?

27 S5: No, it can be in your head, too, and you’d still be racist cause you’re thinking it.

28 S2: It’s like grouping people into one group, and like, not —

29 S7: Thinking you’re superior to other people.
S2: It’s like uh discrimination against a specific group of people.

T: Tina, where are you at?

S8: Um, I think he is racist because in Document 2, he states that he “as well as Judge Douglas, is in favor of the race to which he belongs having the superior position.” He’s not saying, like, I’m smarter than him so I’m superior, he’s saying, just because I’m this race, I’m superior.

That Smith’s students needed only minimal prodding to engage in sophisticated and self-sustained textual interpretation and argumentation speaks volumes about her teaching. Smith’s students demonstrated many markers of academic discussion: they used textual warrants to substantiate their claims (turns 15, 19, 22, 32), they held each other accountable to the texts (turns 16-17), they positioned their claims in relation to their classmates’ propositions (15, 18, 19). Their disagreements remained reasoned and civil, constrained to their respective interpretations of the texts. The excerpt above further demonstrated that they viewed the documents as human constructions. They appreciated that Lincoln’s words should not be taken at face value, and they considered and evaluated the context in which he was speaking. These practices were the result both of Smith’s vigilant insistence on a respectful classroom culture, and her enthusiastic embrace of the curriculum’s “habits of mind,” in particular, sourcing and backing claims with textual evidence.

Yet, students’ interpretations were limited by their contemporary biases. Yes, Lincoln was a politician, but can we apply modern, cynical ideas about political campaigning to speeches from 1858? What was at stake for Lincoln as he debated Douglas? Certainly not the popular vote, as senators at the time were elected by state
legislators. S4 came the closest to transcending her contemporary biases when she began to argue that Lincoln was not racist because he was simply pointing out the obvious when he said “the Negro is not my equal in many respects, certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment.” She teetered on the edge of the historical problem space as she began to grapple with the reality of the 1861: “it can be seen as racist, but at the time, it’s true, because black people weren’t educated and they weren’t allowed to be educated. . . and they were a completely different skin color.” Although Lincoln’s words ring as unambiguously racist to our ears, S4 began to imagine the mentalité of ante-bellum America. Had she been encouraged to continue her line of reasoning, she might have argued that Lincoln’s use of the qualifier “perhaps,” in the context of a debate over slavery in 1858 before a pro-slavery audience, represented a radical departure from the views held by many of his contemporaries, such as Douglas and Robinson (Fredrickson, 1971, 1975; Wineburg, 1998). Moreover, S4 might have argued that to levy the accusation of “racism” in this context is to think anachronistically.

Smith did not challenge students to imagine Lincoln’s world and she missed an opportunity to push S4’s interpretation of the text. Rather than encourage S4 to further contemplate the historical context, or to closely examine Lincoln’s word choice, Smith asked for a definition of racism as if it were a stable construct that could be used to measure Lincoln’s belief system. Her questions worked against the goal of getting students to dwell in the paradox of the past/present divide. Though S4 began to consider the meaning behind Lincoln’s words, she was an outlier—the class on the whole was seduced by the tally.
Counter-example: Exposing discussion structure and stabilizing content knowledge

Teachers can challenge the class’s interpretive consensus by posing counter-arguments that expose the structure of the discussion. Clay advanced student thinking in the Texas discussion by posing a counter-argument in turn 44: “I think what’s interesting about Document C is that it’s entitled the ‘Texas Declaration of Independence’ . . . I mean, the Americans had a revolution, they put out a Declaration of Independence, we all said the King was bad, we didn’t say they weren’t justified, so how can the Texans not be justified?” In this instance, Clay moved against the anti-Texan consensus that had been forming in the class. However, the utterance was simultaneously an example of contextual framing, when the teacher situates the document in its historical context. When the request for counter-argument does not simultaneously direct students’ attention to the documents and the historical context, it runs the risk of raising student engagement but at the expense of historical accuracy and knowledge.

The excerpt below demonstrates the perils of advancing counter-arguments without grounding students in the historical context of the documents. It comes from Addams’s discussion about WWI from week 21 of the intervention. The discussion occurred at the start of class, but students had read two speeches by President Wilson the previous day. In the first speech (Wilson, 1914), Wilson explained why the United States should remain neutral, and in the famous second speech (Wilson, 1917), Wilson explained that the United States had to enter the war to “make the world safe for democracy.” The warm-up question asked students to cite and evaluate the reasons President Wilson had given for entering the war. Several students—especially S3 and
S6—adamantly insisted that entering the war was unjustified because “war just kills more people.” In the following excerpt, Addams attempted to get other students, specifically S1 and S2, to pose a counter-argument:

Figure 9: World War One discussion in Ms. Addams’s classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>T: They’re sinking U.S. ships! Does that make sense? They [S3 and S6] are saying, “oh, just let it be.” I’m saying basically we have all these hippies in here right now, right? Like “just let it be, man, like we can’t continue the violence; they’re attacking our ships, but let’s just meditate on that for a second.” What do you think about that? Everyone agrees with this? Reynaldo, talk about it, speak on it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>S1: I believe they killed us, we have to fight back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>T: Okay, fight back, okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>S2: ‘Cause the people were killed [on the <em>Lusitania</em>], they have people that care about them, family. They’re going to be angry—why aren’t we fighting back? They killed my son or something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>S3: But then you kill the other person and then they have that ((inaudible)) so it just doesn’t make sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>S2: This is such an old. . . I don’t really care. This happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>S4: =that’s like that thing “an eye for an eye, the whole world will be”—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>T: Okay, yeah, okay, John.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>S5: Uh. At first they were just neutral because they didn’t want any business with the war, but because they entered because they were losing money, people, and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
like cargo, trying to trade with other countries because of Germany saying they
were going to bomb anyone who enters their waters. So they were just using
that as an excuse to retaliate and enter the war, but the fact that they have to
defend themselves. That’s how every war started, defending themselves.

54  S6: But how do you expect to trade with other countries if you’re going into war?

55  S5: =How do you expect to trade with other countries if Germany’s bombing your
ships?

56  S6: =I understand but still why enter their war? You’re not going to be able to
trade with them.

57  T: Because they’re attack—

58  S6: You’re not going to be able to trade with them. Don’t they have some
resources that we need?

59  S2: =We don’t want to trade with Germany.

60  S5: =We’re not trading with Germany, they’re trading with other countries.

61  T: Well, they were actually sending some supplies to Germany at some point.

62  S6: I think if you—if we was fighting with Germany or whatever country was
trading with Germany they could’ve came and tried to have war with us ‘cause
you know . . .I don’t know . . .((T laughs.)) I’m just saying though, why even
just . .I don’t know. I just think that’s getting into other people’s business. So
what—they bombed our ships—what else do we got? We got plenty more. ((T
laughs.)) That’s an excuse.

63  T: So if someone comes and hits you, you’re just going to be like, ‘whatever’?
By any standard, this was a lively discussion with many indicators of high student engagement: overlapping turns, laughter, spontaneous student speech, and multiple instances of student-to-student interaction. That such high engagement occurred at 8:10 am in the morning among 16-year-old discussing President Wilson’s 1917 decision to enter WWI is particularly impressive. Moreover, to say that the discussion was ahistorical is not to say that it lacked substance and value. Many educators would argue that engaging students in a debate about the morality and purpose of war is more valuable than recounting the particular events of WWI. Finally, the transcript clearly revealed that students in Addams’s class felt comfortable to contribute and engage in a dialogic manner.

Nevertheless, students remained stuck in the present and mostly resisted the historical problem space in this discussion. Rather, they slipped back and forth between engaging with the specifics of WWI and debating whether or not war is ever justified. The abstract philosophical discussion, which skirted precariously at the chasm of a bull session, could only occur by leaving the specific historical context by the wayside. Neither S3 (in turn 49) nor S6 (in turn 62) referred to the historical context; S6 appears to have been confused about the whether or not the United States
wished to trade with Germany. In an earlier segment (turns 31-38) she revealed that she was not aware that President Wilson had initially wished for the United States to remain neutral nor that Germans had sunk the Lusitania, in essence admitting that she had either not read Wilson’s speech or had misunderstood the basic chronology of U.S. involvement in the war. Yet, this confusion did not preclude her participation in the discussion. Addams did not stop the discussion to review and clarify the chronology, a kind of move that would stabilize the context and give the discussion more stable footing. S2 and S5 make several attempts to clarify the chronology (in turns 53, 59, 60), and some exasperation can be detected in their efforts. In turn 50, S2’s comment that “I don’t really care…This happened” suggests a degree of frustration that students with some grasp of the history might experience as the discussion swings into the realm of the airy philosophical. The one point when Addams did clarify content was to counter S5’s claim (in turn 60) that the United States wasn’t trading with Germany, insisting, vaguely, that the U.S. did trade with Germany “at some point.” Though Addams’s assertion is correct—and, in fact, raises important questions about why the U.S. chose to side with England—it adds to the confusion and uncertainty to the discussion.

Furthermore, Addams’s request for a counter-argument did not serve to expose the structure of the historical argument. It should be noted that the full lesson plan included an excerpt from the textbook that discussed the British blockade that preceded Germany’s policy of unrestricted submarine warfare and the Zimmerman Telegram, as well as an excerpt from Howard Zinn’s A People’s History of the United States (1980) that casts doubt on Wilson’s claims and argues that the United States
entered the war at the urging of bankers and industrialists, who fretted that a defeated
Britain would default on its loans. Addams’s students had neither read the textbook
excerpt nor Zinn, so they had neither textual nor historical resources to mount a
legitimate counter-argument to Wilson’s justifications. Therefore, although Addams
attempted to expose the structure of debate by soliciting counter-arguments, the effect
was limited. The only available counter-arguments would be to question the validity
of Wilson’s claims that “neutrality is no longer feasible” and that entering the war
would make the world “safe for democracy”—both tricky hypothetical arguments that
rely on counter-factual reasoning. Such a line of reasoning, at the very least, would
require that the teacher point students’ attention to the document. And so, the
discussion remained flat and the deeper historical questions at the heart of Wilson’s
proclamation went unexplored.

Exposing students’ subjectivity as readers: WWI discussion in Ms. Clay’s class

In Clay’s Texas discussion, questioning a specific document, stabilizing
content knowledge, and contextual framing, helped move students into the historical
problem space, and countered students’ tendencies to rely on generalizations and
presentist judgments. Student S9 moved beyond the binary posed by the Central
Historical Question and argued that one’s evaluation of the Texans depended on one’s
interpretation of the word “property.” In Clay’s discussion about President Wilson’s
reasons for entering WWI, students also entered the historical problem space, but their
awareness of their own subjectivity manifested as a skepticism about the historical
claims they had read.

Clay divided the WWI discussion into three sections. Although Table 3 reports
the total discussion time as 24 minutes, this reflects three distinct discussions over the course of the lesson, all revolving around the Central Historical Question of whether Wilson had good reasons for entering the war. In the first discussion (approximately 5 minutes), students discussed Wilson’s reasons for entering the war and whether they were good. In the second discussion (approximately 7 minutes), students discussed whether they found Zinn’s argument convincing; in the third discussion, (approximately 12 minutes), students discussed which of the three documents—Wilson’s second speech, the textbook, or Zinn—they found most trustworthy and why. To prepare for both the second and third discussion, Clay first had student discuss the questions in small groups. In the second discussion, students had unanimously said that they found Zinn’s argument convincing. The segment below is from the third discussion. Ms. Clay’s repeatedly asked students to consider the source note for the Zinn excerpt, which read: “Howard Zinn is a historian and activist who is best known today as the author of A People’s History of the United States, a book that tells American history from the perspective of minorities, women, and poor people, and that is very critical of the United States government.”

Figure 10: World War One discussion in Ms. Clay’s classroom (Part 1)

| 103 | S1: I agree with Zinn because it seems like he just lists facts in his argument, and Wilson, like in his speech and stuff, he’s just like telling people what they want to hear, you know like democracy and like they’re taking our rights away, America, you know— |
| 104 | T: Okay. |
S1: He wants—he’s telling people what they want to hear so that they want to go
to war and like if his economic reasons for going to war were legitimate, he
would have told people, he wouldn’t have hidden them from the people in his
speech.

T: Um, a lot of you seem to agree with Zinn, thinking about what Jackson
sourced for us on Zinn, how might Zinn also be talking about what people
want to hear? Jackson, what did you tell us, who was his audience, his
intended audience?

[Skip one turn.]

S2: Um ((inaudible)) the perspective of minorities, women and poor people. So I
guess it’s . . . I don’t know.

T: So how might Zinn also be talk—So, if Michael’s argument, which was a
valid one, that Wilson was saying that people want to hear about democracy
and things, how might Zinn also be speaking to his audience as well? Sure,
Catherine.

S3: Because Zinn’s talking to the poor people, the minorities, and the women,
people who are not going to prosper from the war, so he’s trying to get them to
be against the war, so that no one prospers.

T: Okay, so, uh, against the war so that no one prospers, can you explain that to
me?

S3: Like, if we didn’t go the war, the rich wouldn’t get any money, and the poor
still wouldn’t get any money anyways, so Zinn’s trying to tell them all the bad
things about how the rich is going to get all the money, and we’re not going to
get any money, either way they wouldn’t get money, even if they went to the war or not.

113 T: Okay, and when is he writing this again?

114 S4: This is in 1980, so it’s after the fact, so it doesn’t matter if they disagreed or agreed because it already happened.

115 T: So let me ask you, Juan, he might not be speaking to poor people during World War 1, but who is Zinn speaking to in the 1980s?

116 S4: =poor people

117 S5: To the general public

118 S6: =To everyone

119 T: Okay, so he’s speaking to everyone, but why might he give that perspective that Catherine just pointed out, right? He’s giving the perspective that’s basically speaking to the poor people and that the rich people had, you know, they would have made money, and that was his thinking of why they went to war. Why does that matter in the 1980s and today and the fact that people, that it’s selling out to go to Central High School next week to hear this guy?

120 S7: Because we’re in a war.

121 T: Okay, keep going James.

122 S7: So, it’s sort of the same thing before and now.

123 T: What do you mean?

124 S7: Like nothing really changed—there’s still, like, rich people still get money.

Like, with oil, like, rich people still get money from that—

[Skip three turns.]
T: So let’s talk about, again, who the audience that he’s writing to and why that might affect […] Thinking about when we talk about what might be missing from that person’s argument, right? So Zinn gives one perspective, Michael pointed out that Wilson gives one perspective, what else do you think about who Zinn was writing to? Why are all of you so convinced by his argument?

S3: Because we are the minority people.

T: So why would that convince you?

S3: Because he’s telling us what we want to hear.

Compared to her facilitation of the Texas discussion, Ms. Clay was far more deliberate here about pushing students to consider their own subjectivity relative to the historical texts they have read. As it happened, Howard Zinn was scheduled to speak at a local school the following week. When students were informed of this at the start of class, they were palpably excited: few of the documents they had read over the course of the year were written by a contemporary author. And yet, the students did not consider that Zinn’s perspective might have particular resonance for them as high school students in San Francisco in 2009. Clay posed the question four distinct times (in turns 106, 109, 119, 128) and each time students struggled to grasp her point. These questions were examples of contextual framing, as Clay tried to direct students’ attention to Zinn’s historical context. Yet, the students labored to see Zinn’s argument as a human construction and themselves as subjective readers with political preferences, just like President Wilson’s audience in 1917.
This newfound awareness of their subjectivity unsettled the students. Ms. Clay continued her questioning by asking students whether Zinn’s contemporary perspective makes his claims untrustworthy:

Figure 11: World War One discussion in Ms. Clay’s classroom (Part 2)

138  T: Okay. So does that mean you trust it and there’s no fault in his argument either, because he’s saying what you want to hear?

139  S5: There could be fault but I believe what he’s saying ’cause why would he have to lie? He’s speaking to the people, uh the poor people. Anyway, nobody’s paying him to write this or whatever, or giving money to write this perspective, I mean, he’s writing it from his own ordeals, or what he researched.

[Skip two turns.]

142  S8: We don’t really know—

143  T: Okay, what do you mean, Amanda, you don’t really know?

144  S8: You keep on trying to trick us! Like—

((Class laughs.))

145  T: I do?!!

146  S8: Anything we say you’re like, you contradict what we’re saying so now we’re thinking we’re being like—

[Skip two turns.]

149  T: I’m not contradicting, I’m pointing out the textbook said it was the bombing, you know, it was blowing up these ships, and in the beginning we said it was revenge—
S8: We don’t know—we don’t know for sure, like, why they went to war because both of them could lie for their benefit, telling like, different stories, you know, so we don’t really know what the truth is.

At Clay’s pressing, S5 and S8 quickly retreated into the two epistemological corners of historical knowledge: the first view, grounded in the past, sees history as the “objective compilation of facts,” and the second view, grounded in the present, sees history as “the subjective product of the mind of the historian” (Carr, 1961, p. 34). S5 grasped for steady ground in turn 139: Zinn must be telling the truth because “why would he have to lie?” His only motivation to lie would be financial gain, which S5 dismissed. One either tells the truth or tells lies. Missing from S5’s understanding is that historical argumentation relies on the interpretation of evidence and the historian’s imaginative reconstruction of the past. Rather, for S5, Zinn’s facts come from “his ordeals, or what he researched,” so they must be true. Meanwhile, S8 descended into a spiral of relativism, realizing that Zinn, like Wilson and the textbook, could “lie for their benefit,” and therefore, we can never “know what the truth is.” Yet, Ms. Clay did not allow the conversation to end. She rejected S8’s assertion that we can never know the truth, and reminded students that certain events happened:

Figure 12: World War One discussion in Ms. Clay’s classroom (Part 3)

T: Okay, […] you have all these different sources, one thing that we know is that what did happen?

S: The ship blew up.

S: We went to war.
166  T: The U.S. goes to war, right? The same kind of thing that we ((inaudible)) so regardless of all these different perspectives, we know that the U.S. went to war. Any other comments about this before we move on? Anything that anyone has not had a chance to say? Yes?

167  S9: Like in the textbook it says that the British captured the telegram, but couldn’t the British lie to the U.S. about it because they wanted ((inaudible))?

[Skip seven turns.]

175  T: Okay, so maybe [the Americans] could help the British win the war, I think that’s a really valid point, that none of the things that we looked at addressed, right. The validity of the Zimmerman note, right. Was it really “sent secretly” or did they capture it or did the British, I mean—you know, I think there’s definitely some potential questions there . . . Is there anything else anybody else would want to know more about? Anything else you’d want to look at? Sure, Sam.

176  S10: How Zinn got all these numbers and like –

177  T: So where Zinn got his facts. Absolutely. Right. I mean he’s writing this in 1980, it’s a long time later, where did he get this information that was never put out. Totally. Maybe if you go next Thursday you could raise your hand and ask him that. ((Laughter.)) So Sam would like to know where Zinn got his information, anything else anybody else would like to know about the causes of WWI that’s not provided here? Yes, James.

178  S7: How did they know that the Germans attacked the ships?
T: How did they know the Germans attacked the ships? So what kind of evidence would you want to see?

[Five turns of students suggesting genres of evidence].

Clay tied up the discussion by asserting that certain historical facts were irrefutable and then she opened the floor to further comment. What followed was a singular moment in the entire six-month study across five classrooms, I think, when students launched into a spontaneous series of inquiries into the textbook’s claims. As the questions teetered into the realm of conspiracy theories, Clay brought students back to consider the evidence they would need to support a counter-claim. The final segment of the conversation, in effect, reversed the tone of S8’s relativism and S5’s simplistic distinction between truth and lies. Buoyed by their newfound awareness of their subjectivity, students began to question the basis of the historical claims made by both the textbook and Zinn. In doing so, they positioned themselves as legitimate arbiters of others’ truth claims.

Discussion

In our excitement over students’ accomplishments in Ms. Clay’s WWI discussion, we might be forgiven for overlooking the paper’s larger finding: only three discussions—from over 100 videotaped lessons—including moments where students grappled with their subjectivity and entered the historical problem space. To explain the rarity of this phenomenon, we must begin with ourselves. We all struggle to see ourselves historically, to recognize that our beliefs, our institutions, our values—our very reality—do not belong to some eternal, universal truth, but rather, to a particular socio-historical moment. Our struggle to get a fix on our own historicity shapes how
we understand the past. We ignore the foreign and incomprehensible in an effort to render the past familiar and recognizable. We do this so that we may see ourselves. As Wineburg writes, the “familiar past entices us with the promise that we can locate our own place in the stream of time and solidify our identity in the present” (2001, pp. 5-6). We need look no further than the rhetoric of the Tea Party to appreciate the powerful human desire to see the past through contemporary eyes, especially a past populated with heroes and villains, all agents in their destiny (Lepore, 2010).

Historian Gordon Wood argues that this tendency masks a particular American fear: “We do not want to learn about the blindness of people in the past or about the inescapable boundaries of our actions. Such a history . . . is apt to remind us of our own powerlessness, of our own inability to control events and predict the future” (2008, p. 14). Whether national proclivity or human need, the urge to draw a continuous line from past to present has proven hard to resist. Presentism is our mental state at rest.

The culture of social studies classrooms further militates against the development of historical consciousness. Distancing themselves from the dry, didactic, monotony of traditional historical study, social studies reformers historically have trumpeted relevance, problem-solving, and student engagement. Throughout the 20th century, the call for relevance has taken different shapes, from approaches that emphasized social justice and student empowerment, to approaches that purport to address “multiple intelligences” and hands-on learning. The Reading like a Historian curriculum, with its emphasis on student inquiry and knowledge construction, appeared to follow in these traditions, and was especially embraced by those
participating teachers who were already accustomed to opening their classrooms to discussion, to encouraging student participation and engagement.

Yet, engagement and participation sometimes came at the expense of historical accuracy and intellectual rigor. Indeed, all nine discussions that fulfilled the criteria pivoted around *evaluative* Central Historical Questions that asked students to judge historical actors. These questions had purchase with students; the invitation to pass judgment lowered the initial threshold for participation. The problems arose when teachers were challenged to move students beyond the binary and to emphasize the disjuncture between past and present. Such goals stood in contrast to typical social studies goals that emphasized relevance and engagement, for they required teachers to correct students’ misconceptions and redirect discussions that were tinted with presentism. These competing goals precluded student entry into the tough intellectual terrain of the historical problem space. Indeed, this study showed that it was easier to achieve statistically significant results on reading comprehension, than to create classroom conditions where students acknowledged their historical subjectivity.

But we must pause and put the problem in its appropriate context. Classroom discussion, in general, is rare. Despite the efforts towards reform, history instruction continues to be characterized by recitation and lecture. That only three of five teachers who used the intervention materials led substantive text-based discussions suggests that the curricular materials, alone, were insufficient to spark and sustain whole-class discussion. At the very least, teachers had to be social aware and attuned, they had to relinquish the notion that they possessed all authoritative knowledge, and they had to create a safe classroom environment that welcomed participation and
dialogic interaction. All three teachers established such a climate.

Furthermore, the fact that between one-third and one-half of all student arguments were substantiated by textual warrants suggests a high standard for classroom discourse in all three classrooms. As Addams’s transcripts revealed, such arguments were often the result of relentless teach prompting. At the same time, especially in Smith’s case, much of the groundwork for student argumentation in discussion was laid behind the scenes. All three teachers, for example, assigned essays over the course of the intervention that required students to substantiate their arguments about a given topic with evidence from historical documents. All three teachers regularly referred to the strategies of historical reading—sourcing, contextualization, close reading, and corroboration—and acknowledged when students applied them correctly. All three teachers held students accountable for reading, interpreting, and answering questions about multiple documents in each lesson.

I do not mean to suggest, then, that teacher participation during whole-class can or should be grounds to evaluate the class as a whole. Nor do I mean to compare and rank these three teachers on the basis of three discussions totaling less than 130 minutes of instruction. Rather, by identifying certain discursive features of successful historical discussion, I hope to begin a conversation about what constitutes good text-based discussion in history class.

*Pedagogical content knowledge*

One of the central questions of this paper is ‘what characterizes the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers who lead students into the historical problem space?’ Pedagogical content knowledge refers to “the particular form of
content knowledge that embodies the aspects of content most germane to its teachability,” which, in this case, is knowledge about how to teach history to adolescents (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). All three teachers possessed pedagogical content knowledge, as evidenced by their students’ ability to argue about the past with historical texts. However, because Ms. Clay’s students were the only ones to enter the historical problem space, I will focus on the elements of her pedagogical content knowledge that may have contributed to higher levels of student argumentation.

Subject matter knowledge in disciplinary historical discussion

Clay’s relationship to subject matter knowledge differed from Addams’s and Smith’s in several ways. Of the three teachers, only she consistently lectured and assessed students on factual recall. She connected Reading Like a Historian lessons with narrative arcs that allowed students to locate each topic chronologically and spatially in the unfolding story of American history. Clay did not permit discussions to stray from the facts and she corrected anachronistic thinking. Ironically, Clay’s undergraduate degree in business made her the only treatment teacher who was not trained in the humanities, and she had taken the fewest history classes of the five teachers. Indeed, her emphasis on factual knowledge and chronology may have stemmed from an effort to compensate for lack of training in the subject. The effect, however, was that her students were constantly reminded of the difference between past and present.

Clay was also the only teacher to interrupt discussion with I-R-E sequences that reviewed content knowledge. While some have criticized “triadic dialogue” sequences as "inauthentic" (Lemke, 1990), others have recast I-R-E sequences as
potentially useful under certain circumstances. Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) distinguished between "high" and "low" teacher evaluation, and Wells (1999) found instances when the "third move" of the sequence served to follow-up on, rather than evaluate, student thinking, and scaffold the joint construction of knowledge. O'Connor (2001) distinguished between exploratory talk, when the teacher might hesitate to correct a student's misconception, and summative talk, when the teacher could undertake a review of a concept in order to solidify students' knowledge.

Clay's I-R-E sequences, however, met none of these conditions. She posed closed, "display" questions that barely required answers, in the midst of what would be considered "exploratory" discussion. The following brief exchange occurred during the first week of school, when students discussed whether Thomas Jefferson opposed the slave trade:

S1: We wrote that Thomas Jefferson didn’t want to end the slave trade because if he did he would have like fought against [the removal of the anti-slavery grievance in the Declaration of Independence], like he would have fought against the fact that it was taken out.

T: Okay so that’s true, maybe he should’ve done something but is Jefferson the only one who writes the Declaration?

Ss: No.

T: No, so I’m trying to think about what happens here. There’s all these men sitting around and they want to get this passed, because what is the purpose of getting the Declaration?

S: Complain.
T: Complain to who?
Ss: The king.

T: The king. Right. And so if they want to get this out and they have all these people agreeing, can Jefferson simply say I’m not going to sign this until we get that in there?
Ss: No.

T: Maybe he could have done that, but is it that easy?
Ss: No.

This interaction did not qualify as a discussion. Indeed, it could be argued that Clay squelched student participation by launching an I-R-E sequence just as students began to formulate their views on Jefferson. However, the exchange reveals Clay's insistence on historical accuracy. By marking certain aspects of the past irrefutable, Clay effectively constrained the ground from which students could evaluate historical actors. In doing so, she lent the discussions a degree of substance and historical legitimacy.

Pedagogical knowledge in disciplinary historical discussion

In addition to stabilizing the context in I-R-E sequences, Clay pedagogical moves directed students’ attention to the documents in discursive moves that highlighted the historical context and the distinction between past and present. In both the Texas and WWI discussions, Clay asked questions about specific documents, forcing students to reckon with the texts before them. These questions demanded that students do more than simply lift quotes from the page without regard to source or context. In particular, Clay used contextual framing to draw students’ attention to the
historical contexts that produced such documents. Haroutunian-Gordon (2009), in her work on literary discussion with fourth graders, wrote about interpretive discussion that “the motive is to understand the text as the expression of some idea or ideas that may or may not agree with the discussants’ beliefs” (italics added, p. 1). In disciplinary historical discussion, one could say instead, “the motive is to understand the past as having produced a text that expresses ideas that may or may not agree with the discussants’ beliefs.” By insisting on the difference between past and present, Clay helped students note their own subjectivity in defining the terms upon which to evaluate historical actors and texts. Students, in turn, allowed themselves to face the paradox of the past/present divide, and to withhold judgment in the face of difference.

Implications

In many history classrooms, student engagement has become a proxy for substantive learning. Students see discussion or debate, in this context, as a welcome departure from the monotony of lecture and memorization. The discussion segment of the Document-Based Lesson was designed to dismantle the binary between the substantive “stuff” of historical facts, and the subjective banter of presentist historical debate. Effective disciplinary discussion has the potential to produce substantive historical learning, as students appreciate the distance between past and present, and face the limitations and insufficiency of their own cognitive architecture. This study has shown that such moments are extremely rare, but nonetheless attainable. Given the range of problems facing public schools, it may seem absurd to encourage teachers to pursue this disciplinary Holy Grail. That this same intervention found effects on historical thinking strategies, factual knowledge, and reading comprehension,
demonstrates that much can be gained short of an awareness of subjectivity. Yet, it is the cultivation of humility, caution, and reason that will allow us to tackle our most enduring social problems.
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Pittsburgh.


PAPER THREE

THE “DOCUMENT BASED LESSON:” BRINGING HISTORICAL INQUIRY INTO HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY CLASSROOMS WITH ADOLESCENT STRUGGLING READERS
“Fifth grade was when we started with the [text]books. And it was pretty much, answer the red square questions, explain a little, red square questions, explain a little . . . It was just like, if the red square question was here, you knew [the answer] was somewhere around that area right there. And you could just look for the answer and copy it down and you got full credit for it. So you didn't have to read. I don't know if they cared or not, but that's the way everybody did it.” – Rosa, 8th grader, describing textbook work in social studies class (Greenleaf, Shoenback, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001, p. 101).

Whatever our personal experience in history class, we share a collective memory of boredom. The American experience in history has been characterized by dusty textbooks, rote memorization, and teachers who droned—like Ben Steiner in Ferris Bueller’s Day Off—about tariff bills in the Great Depression. Despite a century of efforts to infuse the history classroom with relevance, problem-solving, active learning, and engaging resources, the same forms of instruction have persisted, unfazed. The reasons for this “persistent instruction” (Cuban, 1982) lie in the real and often pedestrian realities of school: 50 minute periods, classes teaming with 35 or more students, pressure to prep students for exams that test factual recall, teacher exhaustion. Students’ literacy levels pose an additional challenge to history instruction reform, as calls to design instruction around primary sources run up against the reality that 25% of the nation’s 8th and 12th graders scored below ‘Basic’ on the National Assessment of Educational Progress exam in reading (Grigg, Donahue, & Dion, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Social studies reformers, whether promoting the use of primary sources or encouraging teachers to tie content to
contemporary problems, have mostly overlooked the realities and myriad demands of instruction. The result is a graveyard of failed reforms (Hertzberg, 1981; Jenness, 1990).

The most vigorous effort to reform history instruction occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. The New Social Studies movement, inspired by Jerome Bruner’s *The Process of Education* (1960) and funded by post-*Sputnik* federal largesse, hoped to revolutionize instruction by designing curriculum that emphasized discovery learning and inquiry, and by positioning students as creators of knowledge. The movement, however, was short-lived (Dow, 1991; Bruner, 1983; Brown, 1996). Some approaches, like Man: A Course of Study (MACOS), an interdisciplinary approach to social life that leaned heavily on anthropological research, met with political resistance from critics who suspected designers of ulterior motives tied to secular humanism and cultural relativism (Dow, 1991). Yet, even approaches that focused on traditional topics in the history curriculum failed to take hold.

The Amherst History Project, for example, designed curriculum around student investigations of open-ended historical questions. Each curricular unit included multiple, conflicting primary sources that engaged students in the core epistemological debates that animate the discipline. The project partnered with universities and enjoyed federal grant support (Brown, 1996; Hertzberg, 1981). Yet, ten years later, when the National Science Foundation funded three studies to evaluate the status of the new curriculum, reviewers found few traces of inquiry-based instruction in American classrooms (Wiley & Race, 1977; Ponder, 1979; Shaver, Davis & Helburn, 1978). By the late 1970s, history instruction in secondary schools largely consisted of
survey courses dominated by lecture and expository teaching, where students were expected to memorize facts (Beyer, 1994; Goodlad, 1984; Silberman, 1970).

My purpose in this article is to describe yet another attempt to change the social studies classroom. But unlike previous attempts, which set out to revolutionize classroom life by endowing both teacher and student with fundamentally different roles, we began with the premise that instructional reform had to accommodate what Tyack and Tobin (1994) termed the intractable “grammar of schooling.” We examined the folkways of schooling—50 minute periods, textbooks, seatwork, lecture and recitation—and tried to work with them, rather than against them, to fundamentally enhance students’ intellectual experience. Our hope was to bridge between the lofty and heady ideals of the New Social Studies and the well-documented constraints of public school teaching in large urban districts.

This work emerges from a five-school six-month intervention in San Francisco, “Reading like a Historian,” which found main effects for student learning across four quantitative measures: historical thinking, factual knowledge, general reasoning, and reading comprehension (see Appendix; Reisman, 2011b). The purpose here is to describe the pedagogical practices that were at the heart of the intervention, in particular, a lesson structure that we call the Document-Based Lesson. The Document-Based Lesson organized existing “activity structures” (cf. Gump, 1967; Stodolsky, 1998), or forms of social organization that typify social studies classrooms (e.g., lecture, recitation, seatwork, group-work, whole-class discussion), into a predictable and repeatable sequence that engaged students in the processes of historical inquiry. Moreover, by providing classroom-ready materials and activities
that married content knowledge and disciplinary inquiry, the Document-Based Lesson attempted to reconcile the fundamental tension in history instruction between depth and coverage.

This essay begins by revisiting the strengths as well as the shortcomings of the New Social Studies. I go on to describe the theoretical and intellectual moorings that informed the creation of the Document-Based Lesson and then illustrate the approach with two examples. I end by addressing unanswered questions and challenges to the Reading Like a Historian approach.

The New Social Studies and the Amherst History Project

A number of forces converged in the early 1960s to create an unprecedented moment in educational reform. Sputnik launched a stream of federal funding for education that resulted in innovative reforms in math and science that eventually made their way into the social studies (Bruner, 1983; Dow, 1991). Scholars from a range of disciplines showed renewed interest in the problems of curriculum and devoted themselves to developing classroom materials that reflected the forms of inquiry in the social sciences. By 1967, over 50 national curriculum projects had been established and were working on curriculum materials in geography, history, economics, public policy issues, and world affairs (Hertzberg, 1981). Two centers—one at Amherst and one at Carnegie-Mellon—worked with local schools and teachers to develop history curriculum using primary sources. While dealing with a range of content, these projects all shared a commitment to designing instruction around discovery and inquiry. Reformers wished to put raw materials in students’ hands so that they might engage in the processes of scholarly investigation and induce the deep principles and
underlying structure of each discipline. Instruction would be driven by the student’s innate curiosity, as teachers guided them to higher levels of sophistication.

The Amherst History Project, directed by historian Richard H. Brown, was unique among the New Social Studies in its exclusive focus on American history. Though Brown’s tenure as director began in 1964, the Amherst History Project (AHP) had been underway for five years at that point, and consisted of small groups of teachers writing curriculum units during summer sessions at Amherst College near Northampton, Massachusetts. An infusion of federal grant money 1964 ushered in a new phase for the project, and between 1965-1970 the joint offices at Amherst and the Newberry Library in Chicago ran twenty-one week-long workshops for classroom teachers, who designed many of the materials in collaboration with professional historians (Brown, 1996). The units embodied the key principles of inquiry and discovery shared by all the New Social Studies projects. As Brown said in a 1965 address to the National School Boards Association, “If the goal of formal education is to equip one to educate himself through life—and who would dispute that that is its goal?—it makes infinitely more sense to train the student to be a sophisticated and careful inquirer than it does to fill him full of facts” (1965, p. 446).

To this end, AHP units did not concern themselves with chronology as much as in-depth inquiry about a particular historical question. They relied on the principle of “post-holing” to guide curriculum design. The metaphor comes from fence-building: just as a rancher chooses the best location to dig into the ground and plant a post, teachers would decide when to pause in their chronological journey and allow students to “dig” into a particular historical topic (Brown, 1996; Beyer, 1994). The
dense curricular units, covering topics ranging from the Battle of Lexington to the dropping of the atomic bomb, constituted at least a week of instruction, during which students would read packets of primary sources and ponder the nature of historical knowledge (Bennett, 1970). Speaking in 1965, Brown revealed that this organizing principle was not ideal: “We are frankly interested in the possibility that a history course might move more effectively not from A to Z but from the inside out, with a student starting somewhere, perhaps anywhere, and moving backward and forward in time in truly inductive fashion, as inquiry leads him” (p. 447).

This was not to be the case. The developers woefully underestimated the intransigence of historical chronology as the organizing principle of classroom instruction (Sheurman & Reynolds, 2010). Reflecting on the project thirty years later, Brown admitted as much: “We left it entirely to the teachers to deal with such knotty problems as what should link the post-holes, what to do once a unit was completed, or what the relationship was between the units and the narrative of American history that could be found in the text or elsewhere” (p. 272). Despite the reformers’ intent to revolutionize the history classrooms, the units quickly became supplementary materials that were rarely used (Brown, 1996; Shaver, Davis & Helburn, 1978).

Furthermore, perhaps as a reaction to the behavioristic slant of typical classroom materials, AHP designers were wary of being overly prescriptive toward teachers. In contrast to efforts in physics reform that strove to create “teacher proof” materials (cf. Bruner, 1983; Dow, 1991), these history reformers deliberately prepared “non-package packages” that left decisions about pedagogical strategies largely in the hands of teachers (Brown, 1996). The result was that teachers had little support as
they attempted to implement the materials in contexts that were less than ideal.

The materials themselves would have challenged even the most seasoned teacher. The ambitious units not only introduced students to the extensive primary and secondary literature on a given topic, but also asked them to consider the nature of historical knowledge. For example, the first of three sections of “What Happened on Lexington Green?,” a 55-page workbook about the first battle of the American Revolution, consisted of 23 different primary sources, all designed to help students answer the question of who fired the first shot between Massachusetts minutemen and British regulars on April 19, 1775. The next section included seven textbook excerpts and nine passages by professional historians. The final section began with extended excerpts by Walter Lippman and Carl Becker and abstract questions about the nature of facts; these were followed by nine additional readings—ranging from Howard Fast’s *April Morning* to Plato’s “Allegory of a Cave”—which raised questions about the nature of social science methods and, ultimately, reality. The workbook asked, “If the historian does function more as an artist, can he ever know that he is not creating a past, a reality that never existed? In short, then, what is reality and how does one find it?” (Bennett, 1970, p. 49). The authors were indeed in search of reality, but not necessarily the reality of the average classroom—with thirty or more students reading at a variety of levels.

Design Principles of the “Document-Based Lesson”

The Amherst History Project made a compelling case for historical inquiry. Instead of closed “red box questions,” students would engage in vigorous open-ended investigations. Instead of bland textbook prose, they would encounter the lively
voices of historical actors in original sources. Instead of memorizing facts, they would learn that facts are constructed and fragile. Yet project developers underestimated the powerful forces that dictate the reality of classroom instruction and prevent innovation from taking root. State curricula, 50-minute periods, and textbooks shape and constrain what teachers do. Myriad efforts to reform these structures have foundered on these entrenched structures (cf. Cuban, 1982, 1986). To effect change, reformers must acknowledge classroom constraints, accommodate them, and work creatively to infuse the school day with intellectually stimulating experiences. The design principles underlying the Document-Based Lesson sought to address these very challenges, and it is to these principles that we now turn.

_Daily classroom-ready materials_

We began our work with the premise that “post-holing” might be good in theory but deeply flawed in practice. Teaching is a daily activity that requires daily materials. Each day, the average teacher prepares five lessons for approximately 160 students. Harried teachers have little time to design curriculum materials based on heady principles. A recent study comparing comprehensive school reform programs found that providing daily instructional materials and clear directions for implementation produced the greatest instructional change (Rowan & Miller, 2007; Correnti & Rowan, 2007). Given the demands on teachers’ time, this finding seems self-evident. The Reading like a Historian curriculum provided teachers with orderly, classroom-ready, chronologically sequenced lessons that did not require them to make extraordinary efforts outside the school day.

_Predictable “Activity Sequence”_
We further helped teachers bring historical inquiry into their classrooms by introducing the element of predictability, which we achieved by creating a singular but flexible Activity Sequence. In defining the Activity Sequence, we drew on the work of ecological psychologists (cf. Gump, 1967; Kounin, Friesen, & Norton, 1966; Kounin & Sherman, 1979) who, in the 1960s, began studying how certain classroom activities and arrangements shaped teacher and student behavior. These early studies used the “activity segment”—the particular instructional format, materials, participants, and behavioral expectations at a given moment—as their unit of study. To the extent that multiple activity segments occur simultaneously, the “activity structure” described the major divisions of classroom activity in a lesson (Stodolsky, 1989).

The most salient feature of classroom instruction to emerge from this body of work is its predictability. Whereas the early studies of Kounin and Gump examined classroom activity independent of subject matter, Stodolsky (1998) found that subject matter often predicted the type and range of activity structures that teachers employed. Comparing fourth-grade math and social studies classrooms, Stodolsky found considerably more variation in social studies instruction, but this diversity mapped onto distinct disciplines. Whereas psychology, anthropology, and interdisciplinary topics were often taught using group-work and problem-solving (indeed, some of the classrooms in her sample were using the New Social Studies MACOS materials!), history and geography instruction predominantly relied on the textbook and teacher-centered lecture and recitation (Stodolsky, 1998, p. 74).

In our design of the Document-Based Lesson, we capitalized on the predictability that teachers and students have come to expect of social studies. We
recruited the same “activity structures” that have characterized history instruction for decades: lecture, recitation, teacher-led discussion, and seatwork. Our Activity Sequence consisted of three distinct activity structures that appeared in the same order in each lesson: (1) establishment of background knowledge, (2) historical inquiry with multiple documents, and (3) discussion. This sequence of activities remained constant from lesson to lesson, although the specific activity segments often varied. Figure 1 illustrates the variation in activity segments in three sample lessons.

Figure 1: Examples of Variations of “Activity Segments” in Activity Sequence of the Document-Based Lesson (50-minute class period)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Approx. duration (minutes)</th>
<th>Example 1: Great Awakening Lesson</th>
<th>Example 2: John Brown Lesson</th>
<th>Example 3: Battle of Little Bighorn Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background Knowledge</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>• Video clip</td>
<td>• Powerpoint lecture</td>
<td>• Lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Powerpoint lecture</td>
<td>• Timeline</td>
<td>• Textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Inquiry</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>• Teacher modeling</td>
<td>• Individual seatwork on</td>
<td>• Small group-work with guiding questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Small groups fill graphic</td>
<td>guiding questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>organizer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>• Whole-class</td>
<td>• Whole-class</td>
<td>• Whole-class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Background knowledge.* Each lesson began with a review of relevant background knowledge, which was presented to students in a range of recognizable formats—including lecture, video, and textbook questions. This information acquainted students with the period under investigation and, in some cases, refreshed their memory of the historical context. The content was intentionally selected and
limited to information that would prepare students to engage with the historical documents (Reisman & Wineburg, 2008). In that sense, we primed students’ background knowledge in the same way that an elementary teacher activates students’ prior knowledge before reading a story. Whether reading a letter by Thomas Jefferson or a story about a trip to the zoo, the processes of comprehension and meaning-making are facilitated by recognition and familiarity.

Simultaneously, however, the background knowledge in the Document-Based Lesson often did double-duty, serving as an epistemological straw man by offering students an incomplete or flawed account of a particular event. Though the more dramatic examples came from popular movies or textbook excerpts, we ultimately hoped students would come to view any single account as necessarily incomplete. We designed our lessons to complicate simplistic narratives and to emphasize the intertextuality of disciplinary historical reading (cf. Hexter, 1971; Mink, 1966). As students read additional perspectives and gathered new information from historical sources they were encouraged to remain critical of the original account that launched the lesson and to be prepared to challenge it.

Historical inquiry. In each lesson, students read between two and five primary documents that shed light on a historical question from several perspectives. Students worked individually or in small groups to answer questions or to fill in graphic organizers about readings. Documents were deliberately selected to offer conflicting interpretations, and were intentionally sequenced to force students to change their minds and revise their hypotheses. For example, because Document A of a lesson on John Brown presented the abolitionist as a deeply principled and moral man (and not a
“misguided fanatic,” as Abraham Lincoln reportedly claimed), we selected a Document B that would offer a conflicting perspective: Frederick Douglass, in his autobiography, claimed to have advised Brown to abort the raid on Harper’s Ferry, warning that such a radical step was dangerous and doomed, and would effectively destroy the moderate achievements of the Underground Railroad. These conflicting accounts forced students to evaluate truth claims, consider context, and make reasoned judgments as they constructed an account of the past.

Whole-class discussion. Finally, students engaged in whole-class discussion about the central historical question, using evidence from the documents to substantiate their claims. These discussions were opportunities for students to develop their historical knowledge as they articulated their shifting claims, reexamined the available evidence, and interrogated their classmates’ reasoning (Wells, 1999; Brown & Campione, 1994).

In sum, the Document-Based Lesson rejected the classic dichotomies of classroom reform that pit textbooks against primary sources, content coverage against depth, passive learning against active engagement, and the accumulation of knowledge against the development of skills. Whereas the Amherst History Project developers hoped to banish the textbook, we incorporated it into most lessons. Whereas Richard H. Brown dreamed of a day when history instruction would relinquish its dependence on chronology and start “somewhere, perhaps anywhere, and moving backward and forward in time,” we respected the historical chronology of the survey class and encouraged teachers to draw narrative connections between lessons.
Furthermore, rather than heap scorn on the discourse pattern of schooling known as “IRE” (cf. Meehan, 1979; Cazden, 2001), in which the teacher initiates a conversational exchange, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates, we recruited this structure and attempted to use it to our advantage. Teachers remained active leaders of classroom activities throughout each lesson, often relying on IRE sequences to review students’ content knowledge and to redirect discussion to the documents and to the historical context (Reisman, 2011a). In short, rather than attempting to revolutionize classroom life, we sought to embed historical inquiry into its well-worn structures. The novelty of the Document-Based Lesson lay in its rearrangement of the familiar into a repeatable instructional order (see Figure 2).
Disciplinary reading instruction

Perhaps the most radical element of the Document-Based Lesson was its attempt to address students’ literacy development and reading comprehension at the same time as teaching them new historical content. Recent reports on literacy in the
United States place the kinds of materials developed by the Amherst History Project far beyond the comprehension skills of the average high school student (Grigg, Donahue, & Dion, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Indeed, teachers in urban classrooms, intent on covering the material, have been known to read the textbook aloud to students who struggle with basic comprehension (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999). Some social studies curriculum publishers have addressed the crisis in literacy by trying to circumvent it, creating activities that invite students to draw knowledge posters, compose songs, or engage in role-plays.

Teachers understandably hesitate to use original primary source materials, which, given their arcane syntax, unfamiliar vocabulary, and unconventional spelling, are doubly taxing to struggling readers. The Document-Based Lesson tackled the challenges of adolescent literacy head on.

To make the documents visually and cognitively accessible to students below grade level, we took the radical step of physically tampering with them—a decision that many archivists would consider unthinkable, but one that we considered essential. Reports on adolescent literacy maintain that students need exposure to a variety of texts in order to develop the advanced literacy skills that pave the way to tertiary education (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007). Yet, recent surveys of 12th graders found that many have gone through four years of social studies without encountering a single text besides the classroom textbook (cf. Fitzhugh, 2004). Our adaptations put students in touch with diaries, letters, speeches, and government reports—rich supplements to the intellectually thin gruel of the classroom textbook.

We modified documents according to three principles of adaptation: focusing,
simplification, and presentation (cf. Wineburg & Martin, 2009). Each source was first excerpted so that students only read the portion of the document that shed light on the historical question under investigation. We then simplified vocabulary, conventionalized spelling and punctuation, and reordered sentences into straightforward sentence-verb constructions. In all our adaptations, we attempted to preserve the document’s original language and tone. The extent of the modifications abated over the course of the year, as students became more comfortable reading primary sources and as increasingly modern documents required fewer adaptations. Finally, we took care to present documents in ways that would invite, rather than intimidate, struggling readers. Documents were no longer than 250 words, written in large font and surrounded by comforting white space. Though originals were available to all students, these adaptations were the only way struggling readers could be exposed to the voices of Thomas Jefferson, Emma Goldman, Henry Frick, and Frederick Douglass.

Yet, primary sources, alone, cannot generate disciplinary historical inquiry. In her evaluation of Teaching American History programs, Westhoff (2009) found that many teachers used sources either to illustrate points in the textbook or to promote interpretations that were decidedly ahistorical. In one lesson that Westhoff observed, students were encouraged to assume that Marcus Garvey’s “Declaration of the Rights of Negro Peoples of the World” represented the perspective of all African Americans in the 1920s; in another, teachers asked students to rewrite the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments from a modern-day perspective. Far from historical
inquiry, these activities sometimes reinforced students’ notions of an undifferentiated past that could be immediately accessed and understood through a single text.

To avoid the kind of presentism that Westhoff found, we departed from the familiar. We cast social studies teachers in the role of reading instructors. Explicit strategy instruction (cf. Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Harris & Graham, 1996; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Nokes & Dole, 2004)—a method familiar to Language Arts teachers, but utterly foreign to history and social studies classrooms—maintains that cognitive acts such as reading strategies remain invisible unless they are brought to the surface and named (cf. Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989; Collins, Brown, & Holm, 1991). Just as apprentices observe experts as they learn their craft, students must repeatedly see teachers practice the strategies of disciplinary reading. Over time, the approach emphasizes a gradual shift of cognitive responsibility, as students begin to practice disciplinary reading with teacher guidance, in small groups, and ultimately, individually. Initially, however, students must see the teacher think aloud while reading historical documents, particularly if they have never seen anyone read in this way.

This activity structure puts teachers in front of the class, not as authoritative lecturers, but—more vulnerably—as readers. Rather than encouraging interactive student participation, cognitive modeling requires that teachers first model expert reading without falling back on the more familiar activity structure of recitation. In this sense, the activity runs counter to the culture of social studies classrooms, where student participation is often viewed as a sign of engagement. Cognitive modeling, in contrast, draws a clear distinction between novice and expert practice by displaying
sophisticated strategies with clarity and precision, so that students can internalize and begin to practice them. Student participation, in this context, would blur the line between expert and novice and distract from the central purpose of the activity: the demonstration of expert historical reading. Without question, this activity initially felt strange to both teachers and students. Yet, in the absence of such explicit instruction, students tend to view primary sources as they do the textbook—authoritative accounts that require no interrogation.

In the Document Based Lesson, the teacher demonstrated the strategies of disciplinary historical reading using an overhead projector and a marker. Our curriculum highlighted four strategies of expert historical reading: *sourcing* (considering the document’s source and purpose), *contextualization* (placing the document in a temporal and spatial context), *corroboration* (comparing the accounts of multiple sources against each other), and *close-reading* (considering an author’s use of language and word choice) (Wineburg, 1991a, 1991b, 1994; Martin & Wineburg, 2008). The teacher, for example, underlined the source note on Emma Goldman’s account of the 1892 Homestead strike and asked if it was reliable, given that it was written in 1931 and given that her fellow anarchist Alexander Berkman decided to murder plant manager Henry Frick. The teacher later practiced *close reading* on Henry Frick’s account, which was published in the newspaper seven days after the strike. The teacher circled the words that painted a negative image of the strikers, and wondered aloud whether the people who read the newspaper sympathized with Frick or with the strikers. Sorting through the conflicting claims in both documents, the teacher modeled the strategy of *corroboration*, and asked what—if anything—could
be gleaned from these accounts about the events of the Homestead strike. Explicit strategy instruction using cognitive modeling effectively initiated both teachers and students into the processes of historical inquiry.

These three design principles: available classroom-ready materials, a predictable “Activity Sequence,” and disciplinary reading instruction, guided our development of all the Document-Based Lessons in the Reading like a Historian curriculum. In the following section, I illustrate these principles with two examples.

Example 1: First Great Awakening

Overview

The First Great Awakening, an evangelical revival movement from the mid-18th century, appears in the History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools for 11th grade. Tucked away in Standard 11.3, which mandates that students “analyze the role of religion played in the founding of American, its lasting moral, social and political impacts, and issues regarding religious liberty,” is a second bullet that asks students to “analyze the great religious revivals and the leaders involved in them, including the First Great Awakening, the Second Great Awakening, the Civil War revivals, the Social Gospel Movement, the rise of Christian theology in the nineteenth century, the impact of the Second Vatican Council, and the rise of Christian fundamentalism in current times” (p. 48). An 11th grade textbook covers the Great Awakening in the following passage:

The Great Awakening

In the 1730s and 1740s, a religious revival called the Great Awakening swept through the colonies. In New England and the Middle Colonies, ministers called for “a new birth,” a return to the strong faith of earlier days. One of the outstanding preachers of the Great Awakening was
Jonathan Edwards of Massachusetts. People found his sermons powerful and convincing.

The English preacher George Whitefield, who arrived in the colonies in 1739, helped spread the religious revival. During a two-year tour, Whitefield electrified worshipers in churches and open fields from New England to Georgia. The Great Awakening led to the formation of many new churches, especially in the Southern backcountry. (Appleby, Brinkley, & McPherson, 2000, p. 113)

Lest teachers worry that this short passage would fail to prepare students for the state assessment, the following question appeared on the 2006 Grade 11 U.S. History-Social Science Standards Test (California State Department of Education, 2008, p. 12):

**The First Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s was primarily a**

A movement to increase colonial loyalty to the British monarchy.

B revival of evangelical religion that spread through the colonies.

C process of assimilating immigrants into colonial American culture.

D period of economic prosperity brought about by colonial trade.

The correct answer, of course, is B, though it would be a stretch to claim that this question measures students’ capacity to “analyze the great religious revivals and the leaders involved in them.”

Missing from the question and the textbook’s lifeless rendition are the very contextual factors that render the First Great Awakening a pivotal historical movement. Students have no opportunity to visualize a revival, to hear the religious fervor of a farmer who believed his soul had been saved. Nor are they asked to consider how the social and economic conditions of the colonies in the 1740s made a message of salvation especially attractive to poor whites and slaves. The textbook
offers no evidence to convince students why people found Jonathan Edwards  
“powerful and convincing,” or how Whitefield “electrified” worshipers. Nor does the  
passage mention that these early rebellions against Anglicanism and  
Congregationalism sowed anti-authoritarian seeds that would burst forth in the  
American Revolution. Our Document-Based Lesson, on the other hand, tried to  
present the Great Awakening as a historical inquiry that developed students’  
disciplinary literacy while immersing them in the rich historical context of the 1740s.  

*Background knowledge*

Whitefield may have electrified audiences in 1740, but the fact moves few  
students in 2010. If the goal of inquiry is to engage students in the pursuit of  
knowledge, the seeming irrelevance of the First Great Awakening presented a  
formidable obstacle. In designing the background knowledge portion of the lesson,  
we sought, as quickly as possible, to populate the 1740s with real people. We began  
the lesson with a three-minute video clip from the PBS series *Africans in America*  
(Bagwell, 1998) that highlighted the appeal that the Great Awakening’s message of  
salvation held for workers and servants. The clip’s short montage of paintings and  
etchings helped students visualize the fervor of the revivals and the sheer numbers that  
attended. We followed the video with a three-slide Powerpoint lecture that placed the  
Great Awakening in the broader historical context. The lecture established three  
points: 1) prior to the Great Awakening, the Anglican and Congregationalist Churches  
dominated religious life in the colonies; 2) the Great Awakening resulted in the  
growth of Presbyterianism, Methodism, and Baptism; 3) the Christianity promoted in  
the Great Awakening promised that anyone could be “born-again;” church leadership
need not decide who deserved salvation. In both the video and the lecture, we tried to emphasize the appeal of the Great Awakening to the ordinary colonist.

All told, the establishment of relevant background knowledge occupied less than ten minutes of class time. Obviously, much more could be said about the Great Awakening. Yet, our primary goal was to prepare students to engage in inquiry—to cultivate an interest when, before class, none existed. We were confident that students’ historical knowledge would continue to develop over the course of the lesson. The relationship between background knowledge and inquiry-based reading is iterative. Students need background knowledge to understand the references in historical documents, but the same historical documents shed light on and potentially expand their understanding of the background knowledge. British researchers Dickenson, Gard, and Lee describe the relationship between background knowledge and documentary evidence as a paradox: “Knowledge in history is acquired only through evidence, but only where there is prior knowledge of the past can any particular piece of evidence be used as such” (1978, p. 10). The way out of the paradox is to see historical inquiry as an ongoing dialogue with the work of other historians. In preparing the Document-Based Lesson, we provided students with the minimum information they needed to engage with the documents, while recognizing that the act of inquiry would build additional historical knowledge.

*Historical inquiry*

We built the Great Awakening investigation around a question that students would find immediately accessible: “Why was George Whitefield so popular?” We hoped to channel adolescents’ heightened awareness of social status into legitimate
questions about the beliefs and experiences of colonists in the 1740s. Although the question focused on a single historical figure, the materials in the lesson pointed students to the broader context of the 1740s. Three documents appeared in the Great Awakening lesson, each no longer than 225 words. The first, written by Ben Franklin, presented Whitefield through the eyes of his admiring yet skeptical, friend. Franklin (1793) attended one of Whitefield’s sermons, silently vowing to resist his plea for donations. But instead he astounded himself by emptying his pockets “wholly into the collector’s dish, gold and all” in response to Whitefield’s mesmerizing oratory, which Franklin estimated could be heard clearly by over thirty thousand people. In Franklin’s account, Whitefield emerged as a powerful and effective speaker who used his gifts to convince the most reluctant listener to open his pockets (see Figure 3).
I happened soon after to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me, I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the coppers. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and I determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably, that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all . . .

He had a loud and clear voice, and articulated his words and sentences so perfectly, that he might be heard and understood at a great distance, especially as his audiences, however numerous, observed the most exact silence. He preached one evening from the top of the Courthouse steps, which are in the middle of Market-street, and on the west side of Second-street, which crosses it at right angles. Both streets were fill'd with his hearers to a considerable distance. Being among the hindmost in Market-street, I had the curiosity to learn how far he could be heard, by retiring backwards down the street towards the river; and I found his voice distinct till I came near Front-street, when some noise in that street obscured it. Imagining then a semi-circle, of which my distance should be the radius, and that it were fill'd with auditors, to each of whom I allow'd two square feet, I computed that he might well be heard by more than thirty thousand. This reconcil'd me to the newspaper accounts of his having preach'd to twenty-five thousand people in the fields, and to the ancient histories of generals haranguing whole armies, of which I had sometimes doubted.

Source: The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, 1793. Ben Franklin was a good friend of George Whitefield, though he did not agree with his religious beliefs.
In the second document, a Connecticut farmer named Nathan Cole described his experience of finding salvation and becoming born-again after hearing Whitefield speak: “And my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound; by God’s blessing my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me” (Cole, 1740, in Walker, 1897, pp. 89-92). The document portrayed the colonists listening in “trembling fear,” fearing damnation and desperate for salvation. Whereas in Cole’s eyes, Whitefield “looked almost angelic,” the third and final document offered a critical view of Whitefield from an Congregationalist minister. Nathanael Henchman who wrote a letter to Whitefield accusing him of sowing “the pernicious seeds of separation, contention and disorder among us” and destroying “not only at the peace and good order, but the very being of these churches” (Henchman, 1745/2000). The minister’s letter highlighted the rebellious spirit of Whitefield’s preaching, and placed the movement in the context of previously unchallenged authority of the Anglican and Congregationalist churches.

By design, the lesson’s three documents pointed students in different directions as they began to consider the reasons behind Whitefield’s popularity in the 1740s in the American colonies. Whereas Franklin’s account suggested a dynamic speaker who mesmerized enormous crowds, Cole’s account suggested that these audiences were also spiritually lost and seeking redemption. The minister further complicated the picture by suggesting that Whitefield stirred the colonists’ latent rebelliousness. Woven together, the three perspectives create a compelling picture of the colonies in the 1740s.

To help students gain entry to these complex documents, the inquiry began
with teacher modeling how to read the Franklin document historically. The teacher placed a transparency of the Benjamin Franklin document on the overhead, and began reading and thinking aloud as students observed. The source note on the Benjamin Franklin document read: “Source: The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, 1793. Ben Franklin was a good friend of George Whitefield, though he did not agree with his religious beliefs.” The teacher thought aloud:

The first thing we want to do is source the document to see what I can find about the author’s perspective. I see that this was written in 1793, over 50 years after the Great Awakening, so I’m not sure how reliable this is. Maybe Franklin’s memory of hearing Whitefield differs from what actually happened. I know that memory is often inaccurate. It’s hard to predict what Franklin will say about Whitefield: on the one hand, they’re friends, so he probably won’t say bad things. On the other hand, I know that Ben Franklin really believed in Enlightenment ideas and reason, so I don’t think he would have bought into the whole revival aspect of the Great Awakening. I don’t really know what to predict at this point.

In this example, the teacher questioned the reliability of the document, given that it was written 50 years after the event, and surmised that Franklin may not have completely subscribed to Whitefield’s religious views. The teacher also modeled doubt and uncertainty about drawing any concrete conclusions and maintained this critical stance while continuing to read the body of the document. The teacher reasoned that despite the document’s inevitable embellishments and inaccuracies, certain characteristics of Whitefield’s allure emerge from the account. Returning to
the central historical question, the teacher concluded: “Based on this document, I would say that George Whitefield was popular because he was a really exciting speaker who could get huge crowds to listen to him.” From their desks, students observed how to evaluate a document’s reliability and how to glean important information about the historical context while remaining circumspect about the author’s claims.

The remaining documents in the lesson gave students the opportunity to practice the strategies they just saw modeled. Students worked in small groups to fill in a graphic organizer that prompted them to source each document, identify its main ideas, and formulate a hypothesis in response to the central historical question (see Figure 4). The small group arrangement allowed students to tap the support of their peers as they strove to comprehend and interpret each document. As students worked, the teacher circulated to offer assistance and monitor student comprehension. Despite the appearance of traditional seatwork, this activity structure in fact comprised an essential component of the explicit strategy instruction model. Without the opportunity to practice and receive teacher feedback, students are unlikely to internalize new ways of thinking.
**Hypothesis 1:** According to Document A, why was George Whitefield so popular?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document A</th>
<th>Source: author, type of document, date</th>
<th>Summarize: main idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben Franklin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis 2:** According to Document B, why was George Whitefield so popular?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document B</th>
<th>Source: author, type of document, date</th>
<th>Summarize: main idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nathan Cole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis 3:** According to Document C, why was George Whitefield so popular?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document C</th>
<th>Source: author, type of document, date</th>
<th>Summarize: main idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nathanael Henchman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

In the final segment of the lesson, the teacher brought student attention back to the central historical question and led a whole-class discussion about the reasons for Whitefield’s popularity. In particular, the teacher prompted students to consider whether they believed Franklin’s claim that Whitefield was “benevolent” or the minister’s assertion that he was “dangerous.” Students were required to support their claims with textual evidence, and to consider the historical context of the 1740s in evaluating each author’s claims. Finally, as they compared the 1740s to the present, students considered the role of religion in contemporary society, including the legacy of colonial evangelism. In the course of a single fifty-minute class period, students moved far beyond the dry textbook prose to envision a world where itinerant preachers moved throngs of thousands to beg for salvation and where the keepers of tradition feared the dissolution of society.

This lesson flowed across five distinct activity segments—video, Powerpoint, teacher model, small group-work, and whole-class discussion. Yet, as opposed to traditional classrooms, where a change in activity generally indicates a significant shift in focus or concern (Stodolsky, 1998), the activities in this lesson all shared the purpose and end goal of initiating students into the practices of historical inquiry. The particular activity structures arranged student attention and behavior in familiar and recognizable patterns: students initially focused on the teacher during the background knowledge segment and the modeling, then they turned to each other as they read the documents and answered questions. During the final whole-class discussion, students listened both to their classmates and the teacher as they reconciled the documents’
conflicting claims and attempted to build an account of the past. Examined independently, most of these activities would have struck students as familiar. Together, they constituted a radical shift in students’ relationship to historical knowledge.

Example 2: Battle of Little Bighorn

Overview

On June 25, 1876, the U.S. Seventh Cavalry, led by General Armstrong Custer, suffered a crushing defeat against the joined forces of Arapaho, Northern Cheyenne, and Lakota people, near the Little Bighorn River in what is now Crow Agency, Montana. Once glorified as “Custer’s Last Stand,” the battle has been endlessly scrutinized by historians, who hold competing interpretations about the numerical strength of Native Americans fighters, the movement of Custer’s troops, and of the veracity of the legacy of Custer’s heroic “last stand.” Each of these questions points the historian to the documentary (and, more recently, archeological) record to verify and evaluate competing truth claims. Given the nature of eyewitness testimony, and the fact that Custer and all his men were killed, we can be certain that such questions will forever remain unsettled.

The Document-Based Lesson on the Battle of Little Bighorn sidestepped the debates over the specific maneuverings of the day, and had students focus, instead, on the escalating tensions between the Lakota Sioux and the U.S. government. The lesson was designed as an Opening Up the Textbook (OUT) activity (cf. Wineburg, 2007; Martin, 2008). An OUT employs the ubiquitous classroom textbook for the purposes of historical inquiry. Rather than seek to banish the textbook, the OUT
activity recognizes its centrality in many social studies classrooms, and asks students to consider how selected primary sources either expand, challenge, or corroborate the textbook’s account (cf. Bain, 2005). Contemporary textbooks are notoriously evasive, preferring vague causal sequences and passive prose to active constructions with human agents (Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Oteíza, 2004; Paxton, 1999). Although most English teachers would wince at such writing, textbooks publishers have the unenviable task of writing history that appears to have no bias. One of the primary goals of an OUT is to train students to read textbook prose critically in order both to discern the publisher’s perspective and to recognize that information has been omitted from this made-for-school narrative.

Background knowledge

Thanks to Hollywood movies and popular culture, we can expect students to arrive in the classroom with some knowledge of the relationship between the U.S. government and Native Americans, even if they have never heard of General Custer (Seixas, 1993). In sharp contrast to the racist narratives that characterized cowboy-and-Indian movies of the 1950s, contemporary movies, like Dances with Wolves, are likely to portray Native Americans as noble victims whose livelihoods were decimated by insatiable American greed. This historical correction, while appropriately acknowledging a past riddled with unfathomable injustice, nonetheless collapses centuries of history and renders the Native American experience fixed, monolithic, and doomed. The Document Based Lesson sought to disturb these simplistic narratives, and to help students recognize the complexity and uncertainty of any given moment in history.
Because we assumed that students arrived in class with a fixed historical narrative about Native Americans, we deliberately chose a textbook excerpt that challenged their narrative to provide the background information for the lesson. We hoped that the contrast between students’ assumptions and the textbook account would provide enough friction to ignite the historical inquiry. After providing a three-minute lecture that situated the Battle of Little Bighorn in the context of the Indian Wars in the decades following the Civil War, the teacher posed the lesson’s central question: “Who was responsible for the Battle of Little Bighorn?” and asked students to read the textbook passage.

The account of the Battle of Little Bighorn typifies the textbook’s effort to walk a historical tightrope (see Figure 5). Causal sequences are implied but not made explicit, critical details are omitted, and no mention is made of the raging historical debates that have disputed every claim about the battle, including its very name.

Figure 5: Textbook excerpt for Battle of Little Bighorn Document-Based Lesson

**Battle of Little Bighorn**

For years the Lakota Sioux conducted raids against white settlers who had moved into Sioux lands. In response, the U.S. government ordered all Lakota Sioux to return to their reservation by January 31, 1876. They refused. The situation was turned over to the military.

About 2,000 Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho gathered near the Little Bighorn River. The leader of the Sioux, Sitting Bull, conducted a ceremonial sun dance. He reportedly had a vision of a great victory over soldiers.

The brash leader of the U.S. Army troops, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, predicted victory as well. On June 25, 1876, Custer led his troops into a headlong attack against superior numbers. Custer and his troops were quickly encircled and slaughtered. The Battle of Little Bighorn was a tremendous victory for the Sioux—but a temporary one. Now the U.S. government was even more determined to put down the Indian threat to settlers.

In pairs, students answered the following four questions: 1) According to the textbook, what caused the conflict between the Lakota Sioux and the U.S. government? 2) Who started the Battle of Little Bighorn? 3) Why did Custer lose? 4) Do you think this account is an accurate description of the Battle of Little Bighorn? Why or Why not? These questions highlighted the passage’s elusive prose. According to the passage, the Lakota Sioux were responsible for the conflict with the U.S. government, but students quickly note that the textbook story could have begun earlier, before the Lakota Sioux were forced to live on reservations. In the guise of a traditional textbook exercise, students were brought face to face with the central dilemma of narrative construction: where to begin the story?

**Historical inquiry**

Students read two primary sources that shed light on the circumstances leading up to the Battle of Little Bighorn. The first document was a military report, submitted to President Grant by J.D. Cameron, the Secretary of War, on July 8, 1876, less than two weeks after the incident. The report claimed that military action was not directed at the Sioux, in general, but at certain hostile elements who “roved at pleasure, attacking scattered settlements. . . stealing horses and cattle, and murdering peaceful inhabitants and travelers.” The original document proceeded over the course of nearly four single-spaced pages to explain that Indians were in violation of the 1868 treaty that delineated reservation lands, and that the military, therefore, decided to send troops to “whip them into subjection.” The Secretary alluded to an intriguing piece of historical context when he insisted that the “accidental discovery of gold on the western border of the Sioux reservation, and the intrusion of our people thereon, have
not caused this war.” In the 160-word modified version of the document (see Figure 6), we omitted Cameron’s account of the military’s deliberation (which we deemed less relevant to the central historical question), but maintained the reference to the discovery of gold and to Cameron’s insistence that military operations were “in the interest of the peaceful people of the Sioux Nation.” Although a substantial portion of the document was omitted and sentences were reordered to ensure coherence, the modified document preserved the original language and sentiment of the actual letter.
Figure 6: Secretary of War, J.D. Cameron, letter regarding events leading up to Battle of Little Bighorn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Modified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Sioux or Dakota Nation of Indians, embracing various tribes, as the Yanktons, Yanctonnais, Brules, Oglalalas, Minneconjous, Sans Arcs, Two Kettles, &amp;c., have long been known as the most brave and warlike savages of this continent. They have for centuries been pushed westward by the advancing tide of civilization, till in 1868 an arrangement or treaty was made with them by a special commission named by Congress, whereby for certain payments and stipulations they agreed to surrender their claim to all that vast region which lies west of the Missouri River and north of the Platte, to live at peace with their neighbors, and to restrict themselves to a territory bounded east by the Missouri River, south by Nebraska, west by the 104th meridian, and north by the forty-sixth parallel, a territory as large as the State of Missouri. The terms of this treaty have been liberally performed on the part of the United States, and have also been complied with by the great mass of Sioux Indians. Some of these Indians, however, have never recognized the binding force of this treaty, but have always treated it contempt, have continued to rove at pleasure, attacking scattered settlements in Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and Dakota, stealing horses and cattle, and murdering peaceful inhabitants and travelers. On the 9th of November, 1875, United States Indian Inspector E. C. Watkins made an elaborate report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in which he uses this language: &quot;I have the honor to address you in relation to the attitude of certain wild and hostile bands of Sioux Indians in Dakota and Montana that came under my observation during my recent tour through their country, and what I think should be the policy of the Government toward them. I refer to Sitting Bull's band and other bands of the Sioux Nation under chiefs or &quot;head-men&quot; of less note, but no less untamable and hostile. These Indians occupy the center, so to speak, and roam over Western Dakota, and Eastern Montana, including the rich valleys of the Yellowstone and Powder Rivers, and make war on the Arickarees, Mandans, Gros Ventres, Assinaboines, Blackfeet, Piegans, Crows, and other friendly tribes on the circumference. From their central position they strike to the East, North, and West, steal horses, and plunder from all the surrounding tribes, as well as frontier settlers and luckless white hunters or emigrants who are not in sufficient force to resist them.&quot;... The present military operations are not against the Sioux Nation at all, but against certain hostile parts of it that defy the Government. No part of these operations are on or near the Sioux reservation. The accidental discovery of gold on the western border of the Sioux reservation, and the settlement of our people there, have not caused this war. The young Indian warriors love war, and frequently leave the reservation to go on the hunt, or warpath. The object of these military operations was in the interest of the peaceful people of the Sioux Nation, and not one of these peaceful Indians have been bothered by the military authorities. Very respectfully, J. D. CAMERON, Secretary of War</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, July 8, 1876</td>
<td>To the PRESIDENT:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There have been certain wild and hostile bands of Sioux Indians in Dakota and Montana. I refer to Sitting Bull's band and other bands of the Sioux Nation. These Indians continue to rove at pleasure, attacking scattered settlements, stealing horses and cattle, and murdering peaceful settlers and travelers. The present military operations are not against the Sioux Nation at all, but against certain hostile parts of it that defy the Government. No part of these operations are on or near the Sioux reservation. The accidental discovery of gold on the western border of the Sioux reservation, and the settlement of our people there, have not caused this war. The young Indian warriors love war, and frequently leave the reservation to go on the hunt, or warpath. The object of these military operations was in the interest of the peaceful people of the Sioux Nation, and not one of these peaceful Indians have been bothered by the military authorities. Very respectfully, J. D. CAMERON, Secretary of War</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: The President of the United States asked the Secretary of War, J.D. Cameron, for a report of the military actions leading up to the Battle of Little Bighorn.
The second document students read was a 1922 interview by Dr. Thomas Marquis, a historian, who asks Kate Bighead, a Cheyenne Indian, to recount the events at Little Bighorn (Bighead, 1922/1992). Bighead explained that she first encountered Custer (“Long Hair”) and the Seventh Cavalry in 1868, when her camp was attacked and burned and her people were moved to a reservation. She explained that “when gold was discovered white people came and the Indians were moved again.” She and her brothers left the reservation and eventually joined groups of Sioux led by Chief Crazy Horse and later, Sitting Bull. According to Bighead, “six tribes lived peacefully for several months” until their peace was disrupted by soldiers in the summer of 1876.

Without adequate scaffolding, most students would flounder in their efforts to tie these documents to the central question. Arranged in small groups, students answered guiding questions that targeted discrete historical reading strategies and helped students interpret each document (see Figure 7). For example, sourcing questions asked students to identify who wrote each document, when, and what purpose it served. A contextualization question asked students to consider why Cameron would have mentioned the discovery of gold. Corroboration questions asked students to compare the accounts in each of the primary sources and the textbook. The questions highlighted the numerous ways the documents complicated the textbook account. The military report corroborated the textbook’s assertion that the Sioux conducted raids against white settlers, but Kate Bighead insisted the tribes were living “peacefully.” On the other hand, Cameron’s allusion to the discovery of gold and white encroachment on native lands raised new questions about the motivation behind the
military actions. While engaged in seemingly typical seatwork, students practiced the strategies of disciplinary reading and confronted deep epistemological questions about the nature of historical knowledge.

Figure 7: Guiding questions for Little Bighorn Lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battle of Little Bighorn Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Name ____________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cameron Report</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) <strong>Sourcing:</strong> Who wrote this report? What was his purpose? When was it written?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) <strong>Contextualization:</strong> According to this document, what was the cause of conflict between Indians of the Sioux nation and the U.S. Government?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) <strong>Contextualization:</strong> Why would Cameron write: “The accidental discovery of gold on the western border of the Sioux reservation, and the settlement of our people there, have not caused this war?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) <strong>Close Reading:</strong> How does Cameron describe the Sioux Indians who he believes are attacking white settlements?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) <strong>Corroboration:</strong> What are the similarities and differences between this report and the textbook?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kate Bighead Interview</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) <strong>Sourcing:</strong> What type of document is this? When was it written? Why was it written?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) <strong>Contextualization:</strong> According to Kate Bighead, what caused the conflict between the U.S. government and Native American tribes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) <strong>Corroboration:</strong> What are two differences between this account and the Cameron report?</td>
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<td>4) <strong>Corroboration:</strong> Which of the 2 documents – the Cameron report or the Kate Bighead interview – do you think is most trustworthy? Why?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The teacher helped students sort through the documents’ competing claims in the whole-class discussion at the end of the lesson. Should they trust Cameron, who as Secretary of War, would have been held responsible for the massacre of U.S. soldiers? On the other hand, could they trust Kate Bighead’s account, considering the interview was conducted 46 years after the Battle of Little Bighorn? How old was she in 1876? If she were a child, perhaps she was not aware of the raids on white settlements. Moreover, we know nothing of Dr. Thomas Marquis and how Bighead’s perceptions of him might have influenced her story.

By the end of the lesson, students may have been no closer to answering the central question of “Who was responsible for the Battle of Little Bighorn?” but they had learned quite a bit of history. The documents complicated the textbook account, shattered simple narratives of Westward expansion, and painted the period as a complex and dynamic time. The U.S. government emerged as aggressive and committed to white expansion, but its military action had to be publicly justified. Cameron implied that the pursuit of gold would not have been a valid justification for military action, nor would the indiscriminate persecution of the Sioux. Though historians have demonstrated that both reasons did, ultimately, motivate military action against Native Americans, the Cameron document indicated that in 1876 the political climate was such that it would have been inappropriate to admit as much publicly. The Sioux, meanwhile, emerged as defiant and resistant in the 1870s, refusing to sequester themselves on reservations. Defeat and subjugation were not a foregone conclusion, neither for the Lakota Sioux, nor for the U.S. government.
The Battle of Little Bighorn lesson included a summative activity that teachers assigned for homework: students were to re-write the textbook passage incorporating evidence from both primary sources. The activity brought students full circle, back to the original textbook account, but this time as creators of historical knowledge. As students inevitably struggled to incorporate their newfound knowledge into the limited space and flat prose of the textbook passage, they gleaned the lesson’s core message: history is not a simple story.

Discussion

The Document-Based lesson attempted to reform history instruction by offering teachers a flexible activity structure that fit the 50-minute period of a large comprehensive public high school. Rather than uproot the conventional norms and structures that define classroom life, we preserved the traditional role of the teacher and the signature activities that stand as landmarks of social studies instruction. The classroom textbook, lecture, recitation, seatwork, and teacher-led whole-class discussion all found their way into the Document-Based Lesson. Using this familiar foundation, we constructed a predictable, repeatable Activity Sequence that inverted students’ relationship to historical knowledge. Whereas in traditional history classrooms, students are expected to accept and memorize an established historical narrative from a single text (typically, the classroom textbook), in Reading Like a Historian lessons, students were expected to interrogate, and then reconcile, the historical accounts in multiple texts in order to arrive at their own interpretations.

Limitations
Like earlier efforts (cf. Brown, 1996), however, our attempt to bring inquiry into the history classroom ran up against real limitations in teacher knowledge. This weak link became especially evident in the final discussion portion of the Activity Sequence, which relied heavily on teachers’ grasp not only of chronology and historiography, but also of the deep paradox that characterizes historical knowledge: the recognition that at precisely those moments when we come closest to understanding the past, it remains irretrievable and fundamentally unknowable. Successful discussions were characterized by the teacher’s capacity to steer students away from presentist judgments and towards an awareness of their own subjectivity as historical actors. In the course of our six-month intervention in five classrooms, only a handful of discussions included student comments that reflected this degree of historical consciousness (Reisman, 2011a). The finding was particularly surprising considering that the lessons’ documents were intentionally selected to highlight the disjuncture between past and present and to disturb students’ simple narratives about the past.

This limitation raises important questions about the training required to prepare teachers to implement the materials in the Reading Like a Historian curriculum. Achieving a deep grasp of subject matter knowledge takes more than the four days we devoted to teacher training prior to our intervention and the extensive bank of curriculum materials we provided. State subject-matter requirements for teacher certification exacerbate the problem, as few states mandate coursework in history, let alone an undergraduate degree (Ravitch, 2000). At the same time, we hold no illusions about “teacher-proof” materials. Teachers will always be instructional
gatekeepers, and their comprehension of both the methods and the larger purpose of any approach directly affects the fidelity of its implementation. As Reading Like a Historian materials continue to make their way into classrooms and open the door to historical inquiry, we must consider how best to prepare teachers to recognize and surface the deep epistemological questions that underlie each lesson.

A second limitation lies in the absence of usable assessments that measure disciplinary historical thinking. As long as state assessments continue to measure recall and identification of discrete facts, teachers will continue to privilege memorization over the processes of inquiry and textual interpretation. It is incumbent upon those of us engaged in teaching and learning of history to see the problem of valid assessment as tantamount to that of curriculum and instruction.

**Implications**

Social studies instruction will always be saddled with multiple goals and susceptible to crippling dichotomies. Civic participation, global citizenship, social justice, historical literacy, multicultural education, and disciplinary inquiry all vie for attention in the social studies classroom. Inevitably, these turf wars resurrect familiar dichotomies that put reform efforts into warring camps. The Reading Like a Historian curriculum attempted to resolve the classic dilemmas between breadth and depth, and between factual knowledge and exploratory inquiry. In the Document-Based Lesson, factual historical knowledge *enabled* disciplinary historical inquiry.

Furthermore, the Document-Based Lesson directly addressed the challenges of adolescent literacy. Teachers with classrooms of students reading far below grade level can choose a range of activities from today’s curriculum supermarket that
deemphasize reading and writing. Yet, to avoid the problem of literacy is to shirk responsibility. The difference between basic comprehension and high-level analysis is the difference between disenfranchisement and opportunity. Research shows that reading can no longer be relegated to the Language Arts classroom if students are to be prepared to tackle the complex texts they will encounter in college (National Institute for Literacy, 2007). The Document-Based Lesson, with its modified documents and emphasis on explicit disciplinary strategy instruction, offered teachers a way to improve students’ literacy while developing their content knowledge.

The Document-Based Lesson also raised important questions about the role of repetition and habituation in classroom instruction. Much of the rhetoric we hear today about varying and differentiating instructional formats stands in contrast to the predictability and repetition of the Activity Sequence of the Document-Based Lesson. Yet, it is precisely these qualities that contributed to students’ development of disciplinary habits. Thus, teachers would often ask students before they started to read a document, “What’s the first thing we do when we read a document?” to which students would respond in unison, “Source!”§ Such synchronized chanting does not sit well in many education circles. Again, in the crude dichotomies that characterize educational discourse, one must labor to find space between constructivists, who believe students set their own pace for learning and meaning-making, and behaviorists, who view repetitive drill as an effective means of mastering foundational knowledge. By providing students repeated opportunities to practice the strategies of

§ See “Reading Like a Historian” video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWz08mVUIt8
historical reading, the Document-Based Lesson helped them develop the very
cognitive tools that would allow them to make meaning in the process of inquiry.

Finally, our approach also pushed back on the widely-held assumption that
classroom instruction is impervious to change (Elmore, 1996; Cuban, 1993). Indeed,
reform efforts that produce instructional change have been found to share a set of
characteristics: extensive materials to support teacher change, clear and specific
methods for instruction practice, and local facilitators whose job it is to coach teachers
and ensure curricular fidelity (cf. Correnti & Rowan, 2007; Rowan & Miller, 2007).
The Reading Like a Historian approach shared many of the same characteristics. Our
lesson plans included specific, detailed guidelines for implementation. Our
predictable Activity Sequence constituted a structured method that teachers could
easily incorporate into daily instruction. Our extensive materials ensured that
adherence to the approach would not disrupt the chronological flow of high school
history courses. Moreover, the regular presence and accessibility of a researcher who
designed the materials ensured a degree of fidelity that might not have occurred
otherwise. All of these variables closed the distance between the abstract principles of
“inquiry” and “discovery,” and the reality of classroom instruction.

Our approach was meliorative, not revolutionary. We attempted to design
materials that would allow teachers to engage students in disciplinary inquiry without
disrupting the deep structures that define and perpetuate the grammar of schooling.
Given the history of failed reforms, we set our sights on making incremental changes
in how students perceived learning in history. In this goal, we believe we succeeded.
As one 11th grader explained in an exit interview: “Last year, we would have book
work and I would just go through the book, go to the questions, look back into the book, get the answers, and I’d be done in maybe ten minutes. . . . This year it’s like we’re forced to actually think, we’re forced to actually read and really just contextualize everything. It just makes your mind work much more than it did in the past.”
Appendix

The study represented the first large-scale extended curriculum intervention in disciplinary reading in an urban district. Participants were 236 eleventh graders from five public high schools in San Francisco Unified School District, enrolled in US History. Each school contributed one treatment and one control classroom. The study measured the effects of a six-month documents-based history curriculum on 1) students’ historical thinking; 2) students’ ability to transfer their historical thinking strategies to contemporary problems; 3) students’ retention of factual knowledge about history; and 4) growth in students’ general reading comprehension skills.

The study was a 2X5 quasi-experiment with a set or vector of outcome variables. The effects of treatment condition and schools were examined with multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). We conducted a principal component analysis on three pre-test measures which were highly correlated. A single component with eigenvalues greater than 1 was extracted and we used this composite measure as the covariate, with the four outcome measures as a vector: Historical Thinking Post-Test; Transfer of Historical Thinking Test; Factual Knowledge Test; and Gates-MacGinitie Reading Post-Test.

MANCOVA analysis showed a significant overall effect on all outcome measures for both independent variables: treatment, $F(4,168) = 6.889$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .141$, and school, $F(16, 684) = 4.565$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .096$. There was no school by treatment interaction effect, $F(16, 684) = 1.226$, $p = .242$. Follow up univariate ANCOVA analysis found a significant effect for school on three of the outcome measures: Historical Thinking, $F(4,171) = 3.997$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .085$, Factual
Knowledge, \(F(4,171) = 13.15, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .235\), and Reading Comprehension, \(F(4,171) = 2.65, p = .035, \eta_p^2 = .058\), but not for Transfer. These findings suggest that school context predicts student achievement, regardless of treatment condition.

However, treatment condition was found to have a main effect on all four of the outcome measures: Historical Thinking, \(F(1,171) = 17.37, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09\), Transfer of Historical Thinking, \(F(1,171) = 14.95, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08\), Factual Knowledge, \(F(1,171) = 5.65, p = .019, \eta_p^2 = .03\), and Reading Comprehension, \(F(1,171) = 8.70, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .05\).
References


CONCLUSION: HISTORICAL READING AS CITIZENSHIP
This study tested an approach to history instruction that insists on the value of engaging students in the process of historical inquiry. By focusing on student reading and reasoning about texts, the study stakes a claim in the century-long debate about the importance of history in the secondary school curriculum. History has always been justified on the grounds that it prepares students for democratic citizenship, yet proponents have disagreed about what constitutes effective citizenship (Thornton, 1994). To some, effective citizenship depends on student mastery of a shared historical narrative; historical facts promote a cohesive national identity. To others, citizenship demands an awareness and stake in contemporary social problems; the past is simply prelude the pressing needs of the present, its lessons exist to inform our decisions.

The Reading Like a Historian approach offers a third argument for the importance of history instruction in promoting citizenship. We propose that the three intellectual goals of the curriculum—the ability to read and interpret written text; the ability to evaluate and reconcile competing truth claims; and the ability to temper one’s rush to judgment in the face of competing worldviews—constitute the heart of participatory democracy. History, indeed, presents us with lessons, but these lessons emerge from our effort to understand its disjuncture with the present. Again, to quote the 1902 report to the New England Teachers’ Association: “The thorough comprehension of an individual record, the penetration beneath the surface, behind the forms, to the active life to which the record bears witness, is not an act of memory merely or largely, but an act of interpretation, involving some of the most important
functions of the mind” (Hazen, Bourne, Dean, Farrand, & Hart, 1902, p. 12). How better to prepare students for citizenship than to develop their minds?
References
