Quickwrites as a Tool for Assessing Students' Historical Thinking
(Bruce Lesh, author of Why Won't You Just Tell Us the Answer?)

"It's as if a DBQ and an exit ticket had a baby!"

To alleviate the disconnect between instruction and assessment

Elements of a History Lab:
1. A Central Question that doesn't have just one answer
2. Source work—Historical sources are evaluated and information applied to understanding
3. Employment of literacy skills (Sam Wineburg)
4. Developing, refining, defending an evidence-based answer to the guiding historical question

Text/Context/Subtext

Many times students engage only with the text, which is a two-dimensional rendering of history. It is important to introduce and examine context and subtext, and analyze how that affects the reading and understanding of the document(s).

Source Work Terms:

Text: what is visible/readable—what information is provided by the source?

Context: What was going on during the time period? What background information do you have that helps explain the information found in the source?

Subtext: What is between the lines? Must ask questions about:
• Author—who created the source and what do we know about that person?
• Audience—For whom was the source created?
• Reason—Why was this source produced at the time?
• Style—How does the author use language and rhetorical devices to convey meaning?

For example: Wounded Knee: Necessary Battle or Avoidable Massacre?

Assessments should reveal change in student learning over time

Non-traditional History Assessments:
• Measure the thinking behind a student's analysis of evidence via short answer
• Involve aggregating (weighing) evidence
• assess specific historical thinking concepts
  ○ periodization, interpretation, causation, synthesis, etc.

Assessments need to be rooted in a task
[Beyond the bubble.standford.edu]
[www.umbc.edu/che/arch/]

Give sentence stems and require 5-7 sentence response
Also serve as feedback

Pros:
• quick and easy to read and grade
• isolates specific history skill
• not an essay
• embedded within the content being studied
• allows students to wrestle with application of skills
• Picking a sentence stem allowed students to write about something in which they are confident

Laminated tools sheet can be put on students' desks
Quick Writes Sheet

Pick 1, and answer in 5-7 sentences. Be specific and use examples from our discussion and the evidence we used.

• The context of __________source impacted the information gained from that source because...

• The subtext of __________source impacted the information gained from that source because...

• The two most important pieces of evidence were...because...

• The two least important pieces of evidence were...because...

• The two pieces of evidence that most complemented each other the most were...because...

• The two pieces of evidence that contradicted each other the most were...because...

• The two pieces of evidence that presented the most difficulty were...because...

• The evidence whose subtext challenged the information provided in the text was...because...

• The least useful/reliable piece of evidence was...because...

• ________provided the following challenges because....

• A useful piece of evidence to have would have been....because....
"They kept up dancing until fully 100 persons were lying unconscious."

Read the following and:
1. Circle information that helps you to understand the context (time period the source was created).
2. Underline information that helps you to understand the subtext (information about the author/author's purpose for creating the source).
3. Take notes (to the left of the source) on what the source indicates why if the participants in the Chinese Cultural Revolution willing participants or blind followers.

**Source F: E.B. Reynolds, Special United States Indian Agent—Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota**

**Background Information:** Reynolds was appointed to his position on the reservation as a reward for his support of Republican President Benjamin Harrison. Called a patronage position, Reynolds had no qualifications for the job other than his party affiliation. Prior to taking the position, Reynolds had never been on an Indian Reservation. Reynolds was bewildered by the complex realities of the reservations; He viewed the Ghost Dance as an affront not only to civilization, but also to his own personal authority to control the reservations.

"I deem it my duty to call the attention of the Department to the extremely disaffected and troublesome state of a portion of the Indians on their and other Sioux reservations.

The coming new order of things as preached to these people during the past seven months is to return to earth their forbearers, the buffalo, the elk, and all the other game the complete restoration of their ancient habits, customs, and power, and the annihilation of the white man. This movement [Ghost Dance Movement]...is continually gaining new adherents, and they are daily becoming more threatening and defiant of the authorities.

This...may be in measure be attributed to the scant supply of rations, to which my attention has been called to daily by the Indians, and especially the reduction in the quantity of beef...

...The religious excitement aggravated by almost starvation is bearing fruit in this state of insubordination: Indians say they had better die fighting than to die a slow death of starvation, and as the new religion promises their return to earth...they have no fear of death...

...The indications are unmistakable; these Indians have within the past three weeks traded horses and everything else they could trade for arms and ammunition..."
The Subtext of Source F by E.B. Reynolds

Impacted the information gained from the source because Reynolds had no qualifications or prior experiences on a Reservation before he became an Indian Agent at a Reservation in South Dakota. Also Reynolds was only put in the position as a reward for his alliance to the Republican Party. This made Reynolds more judgemental of the Indians because he had never seen them before. Also, he was a bad leader so he tried to blame everything on the Indians by saying that he felt threatened by the
The two pieces of evidence that contradicted the most were sources C and D because one source had extensive knowledge of Lenders & the other had never seen one before, one was trying to save his job & the other trying to prove himself. One was a soldier, the other a loyal Republican. Boyer had no experience with anything west of probably Ohio, so he had no idea what was going on or how to deal with Wilde culture or how to deal with fighting. He knew how to handle things because he had fought in the civil war & the Indians for decades. He knew how to deal with Wilde culture or how to deal with fighting. He had no idea what was going on or how to deal with Wilde culture or how to deal with fighting. Wilde culture or how to deal with fighting. He had no idea what was going on or how to deal with Wilde culture or how to deal with fighting.
The two pieces of evidence that contradicted the most were Source C: D.F. Royer and Source E: General Ruger. In Source C, Royer has never seen an Indian before, let alone a Ghost dance so when he traveled west and saw the dance, he was scared out of his mind. He depicted the Indians as insane. He said they had guns anthem and once the Americans got there and asked the Indians to stop they took out their guns and were ready to fight. In Source E, General Ruger has been fighting the Indians for years and says that they, the Indians, were harmless. Just preaching for better life. And that the Indians wouldn't have to do that if the U.S. would have treated the treaties.
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<tr>
<th>Historical Reading Skills</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Students should be able to...</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
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</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? 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. | This author probably believes...  
I think the audience is...  
Based on the sourcing information, I predict this author will...  
I do/don't trust this document because... |
| **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 | I already know that____ is happening at this time...  
From this document I would guess that people at this time were feeling...  
This document might not give me the whole picture because... |
| **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 | I think the author chose these words because they make me feel...  
The author is trying to convince me... (by using/saying...) |
| **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 | This author agrees/disagrees with...  
This document was written earlier/later than the other, so... |
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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sourcing (Subtext)</th>
<th>Contextualizing (Context)</th>
<th>Corroboration (Contradictions and Compliments)</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Identification:</strong> Fully understands the meaning and content of sources. <strong>Attribution:</strong> Cites all authors and all original dates of primary and secondary sources. <strong>Perspective:</strong> Evaluates the reliability of sources based on the author’s perspective and when and why they were produced.</td>
<td>Connects the historical setting of sources to the author’s argument. Uses that setting to interpret the sources within the historical context as opposed to a present-day mindset.</td>
<td>Constructs an interpretation of events using information and perspectives in the required number of sources. Identifies consistencies and inconsistencies among various accounts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Identification:</strong> Mostly understands the meaning and content of sources. <strong>Attribution:</strong> Cites most authors and most original dates of primary and secondary sources. <strong>Perspective:</strong> Examines the reliability of sources based on the author’s perspective and when and why they were produced.</td>
<td>Connects the historical setting of sources to the author’s argument. Uses that setting to interpret the sources within the historical context as opposed to a present-day mindset. May attempt an interpretation of some sources with a present-day mindset or with a limited application to the historical context.</td>
<td>Explains similarities and differences by comparing information and perspectives in the required number of sources.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Identification:</strong> Understands the meaning and content of sources with appropriate scaffolding and support. <strong>Attribution:</strong> Cites some authors and some original dates of primary and secondary sources. <strong>Perspective:</strong> Attempts to evaluate the reliability of sources.</td>
<td>Attempts to determine the historical setting of sources without fully understanding the historical context.</td>
<td>Identifies similarities and differences in information in the required number of sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Identification:</strong> Attempts to understand the meaning and content of sources with the appropriate scaffolding and support. <strong>Attribution:</strong> Cites few authors and few original dates of primary and secondary sources. <strong>Perspective:</strong> Does not adequately examine reliability.</td>
<td>Demonstrates no attempt to understand the historical setting of sources.</td>
<td>Demonstrates little to no attempt to examine sources for corroborating or conflicting evidence.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Close Reading Strategies</th>
<th>Strategies/Procedural Concepts</th>
<th>Procedural Concepts</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identification:</strong> Fully understands the meaning and content of sources. <strong>Attribution:</strong> Cites all authors and all original dates of primary and secondary sources. <strong>Perspective:</strong> Evaluates the reliability sources based on the author's perspective and when and why they were produced.</td>
<td><strong>Corroboration:</strong> Constructs an interpretation of events using information and perspectives in multiple sources. Identifies consistencies and inconsistencies among various accounts.</td>
<td><strong>Claim:</strong> Formulates a plausible interpretation, argument, or claim based on the evaluation of evidence found in a variety of primary and secondary sources.</td>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Justifies claims using appropriate direct evidence from a variety of reliable sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identification:</strong> Mostly understands the meaning and content of sources. <strong>Attribution:</strong> Cites most authors and most original dates of primary and secondary sources. <strong>Perspective:</strong> Examines the reliability of sources based on the author's perspective and when and why they were produced.</td>
<td><strong>Contextualizing:</strong> Analyzes the author's thesis, determines the viewpoint and evidence to evaluate the claims; may highlight what the author leaves out.</td>
<td><strong>Claim:</strong> Applies prior and new knowledge to determine the historical setting of the sources. Uses that setting to interpret the sources within the historical context as opposed to a present-day mindset.</td>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Generates a reasonable interpretation, argument, or claim based on an evaluation of the evidence found in selected primary and secondary sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identification:</strong> Understands the meaning and content of sources with appropriate scaffolding and support. <strong>Attribution:</strong> Cites some authors and some original dates of primary and secondary sources. <strong>Perspective:</strong> Attempts to evaluate the reliability of sources.</td>
<td><strong>Corroboration:</strong> States the author's claims and evidence presented to prove those claims. <strong>Critical Reading:</strong> Determines the author's viewpoint. <strong>Evidence:</strong> Notes how language is used to persuade.</td>
<td><strong>Claim:</strong> Identifies similarities and differences in information in multiple sources. <strong>Contextualizing:</strong> Attempts to determine the historical setting of sources without fully understanding the historical context.</td>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> States an interpretation, argument, or claim that may or may not be based on evidence found in selected primary and secondary sources.</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Critical Reading:</strong> Attempts to identify the author's claims, viewpoint, or evidence.</td>
<td><strong>Procedural Concepts:</strong> Demonstrates little to no attempt to examine sources for corroborating or conflicting evidence. <strong>Evidence:</strong> Demonstrates no attempt to understand the historical setting of sources.</td>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Does not state an original claim, argument, or interpretation.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Identifies all authors and all original dates of primary and secondary sources.</td>
<td>Analyzes multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences.</td>
<td>Formulates a plausible interpretation, argument, or claim based on an evaluation of the evidence found in a variety of primary and secondary sources.</td>
<td>Justifies claims using appropriate direct evidence from a variety of reliable sources.</td>
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<td>Evaluates the reliability of sources based on the author's perspective and when and why they were produced.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Identifies most authors and most original dates of a variety of primary and secondary sources.</td>
<td>Identifies similarities and differences by comparing information and perspectives in multiple sources.</td>
<td>Generates a reasonable interpretation, argument, or claim based on an evaluation of the evidence found in selected primary and secondary sources.</td>
<td>Justifies claims using some appropriate direct evidence from a variety of reliable sources.</td>
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<td>Examines the reliability of sources based on the author's perspective and when and why they were produced.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Identifies some authors and some original dates of primary and secondary sources.</td>
<td>Attempts to identify similarities and differences in two or more sources.</td>
<td>States an interpretation, argument, or claim that may or may not be based on the evidence found in selected primary and secondary sources.</td>
<td>Justifies claims using generalizations or limited appropriate direct evidence.</td>
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<td>Attempts to evaluate the reliability of sources.</td>
<td>Attempts to determine the historical setting of sources.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Does not attempt to evaluate the reliability of sources.</td>
<td>Demonstrates no attempt to understand the historical setting of sources.</td>
<td>Does not justify or support claims using appropriate direct evidence.</td>
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<td>• In support of this...</td>
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<td>• In fact...</td>
<td>• This is supported by...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• For instance...</td>
<td>• First...Second...</td>
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<td>• As evidence...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• And...</td>
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<td>Justifying and Explaining your position along a common line of reasoning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Obviously...</td>
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<td>• It is clear that...</td>
<td>• In the same way...</td>
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<td>• [Source/author] suggests/promoted/argues...</td>
<td>• Pursuing this further</td>
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<td>• For this reason...</td>
<td>• In light of the...</td>
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<td>• In addition...</td>
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<td>• Clearly, then...As a result of...</td>
<td>• ... was caused by...</td>
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<td>• Because of...</td>
<td>• In effect...</td>
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<td>• [Term/name/idea, etc.] was responsible for...</td>
<td>• [event] was brought about by...</td>
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<td>• [Term/name/idea, etc.] made possible...</td>
<td>• As might be expected...</td>
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<td>• [evidence] leads to...</td>
<td>• [event/idea/person] gave rise to...</td>
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<td>• For this reason...</td>
<td>• Accordingly...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Therefore...</td>
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<td>Comparing and Contrasting Evidence</td>
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<td>• In a similar way...</td>
<td>• Nevertheless...</td>
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<td>• Also...</td>
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<td>• Similarly...</td>
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<td>• Equally</td>
<td>• However...</td>
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<td>• As well...</td>
<td>• On the other hand...</td>
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<td>• In the same manner...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• In contrast...</td>
<td>• Conversely...</td>
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<td>• Whereas...</td>
<td>• In comparison...</td>
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<td>Providing Alternative Points of View/Changing your line of Reasoning</td>
<td>• On the other hand...</td>
<td>• Conversely...</td>
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<td>• However...</td>
<td>• Even though...</td>
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<td>• But...</td>
<td>• Although...thought, however...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Yet...</td>
<td>• Despite the fact that...</td>
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<td>• Nevertheless...</td>
<td>• Arguably...</td>
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<td>• On the contrary...</td>
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<td>To Signal a Conclusion</td>
<td>• Therefore...</td>
<td>• Without question...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• This...</td>
<td>• For the reasons above...</td>
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<td>• Hence...</td>
<td>• In other words...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• In final analysis...</td>
<td>• As demonstrated...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Indeed...</td>
<td>• Undoubtedly...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• In short...</td>
<td>• In sum...</td>
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<td>Conversation Skill</td>
<td>Statements to Make</td>
<td>Responses</td>
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</table>
| Elaborate and Clarify | - Can you elaborate on...?  
- What do you mean by...?  
- Can you tell me more about...?  
- What makes you think that...?  
- Can you clarify the part about...?  
- How so?  
- How/why is _______ important?  
- How does _______ connect to _______?  
- I am a little confused about...? | - I think it means that...  
- In other words...  
- I believe that...  
- An analogy for this might be...  
- It is important because...  
- It’s similar to when... |
| Support Ideas with Examples | - Can you give me an example from the source?  
- Can you show me where in the source it says that?  
- Are there more cases of ______ happening?  
- What is the evidence that supports your argument? | - For example...  
- In the source it said that...  
- One example was...  
- For instance...  
- According to...  
- On one occasion...  
- In this situation...  
- To demonstrate...  
- In fact...  
- Indeed... |
| Build on/Challenge Someone’s argument | - What do you think about the idea that...?  
- How does this connect to the idea that...?  
- I agree with your argument that...but how do you deal with the fact that...?  
- I think your argument about...is wrong because...  
- How can...be true...if you consider...? | - I would add that...  
- I want to expand on your point about...  
- I want to follow up on your idea that...  
- Then again, I think that...  
- Another way to look at this could be...  
- Yet I wonder also if...  
- What struck me about what you said was... |
| Paraphrase | - So you are saying that...  
- Let me see if I understand you...  
- Am I right in hearing you say that...  
- In a nutshell, are you arguing that...  
- In other words...  
- What I am hearing is...  
- Essentially you think that...  
- It sounds like you are saying that... | - No, I am saying...  
- Yes, I am saying... |

### Discussion Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion Trait</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participated by making relevant statements</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements exhibited preparation/accuracy</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriately challenged the accuracy, logic, or clarity of statements made by others</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used logical reasoning</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked pertinent, purposeful, and penetrating questions</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO POPCORNING</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made eye contact with group</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listened actively while not actively talking</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectfully allowed others to finish; did not interrupt</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborated and clarified</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported argument with examples</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built on or challenged others ideas</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrased others arguments</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
History Labs: A Guided Approach to Historical Inquiry in the K-12 Classroom

**TEMPLATE**

**History Lab Title:** (can be a variation of the overarching question)

Grade Level:

Duration of the History Lab: An investigation can be as brief as one class period or take multiple days.

Curriculum Alignment:

- **Common Core Standards Alignment:** History Labs demonstrate and build the literacy skills (reading and writing) that are emphasized in the Common Core Standards.

- **National Standards Alignment (optional):** [National Center for History in the Schools (UCLA)]
  - Standards in Historical Thinking
  - Content Standards

Overarching Question:
- The essential question that guides the History Lab and addresses a curricular indicator.

Focus Question/s: Teacher-generated topic question or questions to more closely guide the historical investigation. The focus questions should relate back to the overarching question.

History Lab Objectives: (SWBAT or other)

Topic Background:
- Important information on the historical context of the History Lab topic for background knowledge.

Materials:
- Tools, resource sheets (with bibliographic citations), graphic organizers, rubrics, etc.

Historical Sources with Annotations:
- Summarize the text, context, and subtext for each source utilized.
- Explain carefully how each source fits into the History Labs procedure and helps to answer the overarching question.

Procedures:
1. Initiate the History Lab
2. Frame the History Lab
3. Facilitate the History Lab
4. Present information and interpretations
5. Connect to the overarching question
6. Assess student understanding of content and process

Be explicit in questioning and provide potential responses.
Steps in a Teacher-Generated History Lab

I. Introduce the overarching question, based on a curricular indicator, which will guide the History Lab:
   - The question should be thought-provoking and encourage inquiry and discussion.
   - The question should address the curricular content.
   - The question should deepen students' understanding of history as an interpretive discipline, by emphasizing historical thinking skills, such as causality, change and continuity, turning points, multiple perspectives, significance, impact, and context.

II. Initiate the History Lab:
   - Access prior knowledge. Students can read from narratives, poems, journal entries, or accounts, listen to excerpts from speeches, or examine maps, broadsides, or political cartoons. This activity should engage students and set the context for the History Lab.

III. Frame the History Lab:
   - Facilitate the framing of topic focus questions that relate to the (larger) overarching question. Teachers can direct this step, depending on the ages and ability levels of their students, or have students take the lead.
     - Ensure that students have identified the relevant questions. If necessary, lead students to important questions they have not considered.
   - Have students identify sources of information that would provide answers to the focus questions.

IV. Model the historical process:
   - Model the process of analyzing a historical source. Use a focus question as an example.
     - Identify the “who, what, when, where, and why” information.
     - Determine context, subtext, and relevance of the source to the focus question.

V. Facilitate the History Lab:
   - Have students choose focus questions to investigate.
   - Provide students with relevant historical sources.
   - Have students work in cooperative groups or independently to generate interpretations from the source materials.
     - Have students cite information from the sources as evidence to support their interpretations.
     - Multiple interpretations may emerge.

VI. Present information and interpretations:
   - Individuals or representatives from groups will present their interpretations and defend the sources that provided the evidence for their decisions. In a debate format, students can also refute the interpretations of their fellow students or historians.
   - Discuss the ways in which the interpretations are related. Look for commonalities and differences.
   - The teacher will facilitate the discussion to ensure that the interpretations are supported by solid factual information and reasoning.

VII. Address the overarching question:
   - Students will synthesize the information gained during the History Lab to address the overarching question.
   - Student responses can be oral, written, or expressed through a variety of products.

VIII. Assessment:
   - Assess students' understanding of the historical content and historical thinking skills (process).
History Labs Glossary

Analysis – Close examination of the parts of something in order to identify the relationships between those parts or between each part and the whole.

Focus Questions – Teacher-generated topical questions to address the overarching question.

History Lab – A set of inquiry-based learning experiences that address an indicator within the history curriculum

Indicator – Statement that describes what students will know and be able to do over an extended period of time.

Objective – Statement that describes what students will know and be able to do during a discrete period of time, generally a class period.

Overarching Question – The question that guides the History Lab and addresses the indicator on which it is based.

Source Work Terms

Text – What is visible/readable – What information is provided by the source?

Context – What was going on during the time period? What background information do you have that helps explain the information found in the source?

Subtext – What is between the lines? Must ask questions about:

- Author - Who created the source and what do we know about that person?
- Audience - For whom was the source created?
- Reason - Why was this source produced at the time?
- Style - How does the author use language and rhetorical devices to convey meaning?