

**Thinking Historically:
Research-Based Resources for Teaching and Learning in History**

Both non-specialists and practitioners routinely lament history education's instructional focus on facts and consequent reliance on memorization.¹ As the title of a recent book by historian Peter Stearns illustrates, reformers want history educators to emphasize "meaning over memory."² Many education researchers have taken this call seriously in the last two decades, producing a growing body of work that explores the nature of meaning making in history education. The California History-Social Science Project and like-minded organizations have a crucial role to play in assisting in the creation of classrooms with meaningful history instruction by mediating relationships between education and history scholars on the one hand and practicing teachers on the other.

The major trend in the field of history education, as in education more generally, has been the application of insights from cognitive psychology to an exploration of the nature of critical thinking as a discipline-specific skill. Despite a range of concerns and approaches these scholars share several beliefs.³ Though they use a range of labels that includes "inquiry," "disciplinary," "constructivist," and "sociocultural," these scholars all accept the importance of

¹ For a passionate statement on the need for history education to be selective and purposeful by a prominent spokesman in field, see Sam Wineburg, "Crazy for History," *Journal of American History* 90 (2004): 1404-1414.

² Peter Stearns, *Meaning Over Memory: Recasting the Teaching of Culture and History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

³ This is not to minimize the real differences between the approaches of, for example, Piagetian and Vygotskian theorists, as pointed out by Mark Windschitl, "Framing Constructivism in Practice as the Negotiation of Dilemmas: An Analysis of the Conceptual, Pedagogical, Cultural, and Political Challenges Facing Teachers," *Review of Educational Research* 72 (2002): 131-175. Windschitl also distinguishes between "social constructivism," "sociocultural" perspectives and "sociohistorical" perspectives. He notes, however, that "their implications for the design of learning environments are similar" (165).

some version of a constructivist model of student learning. Equally important and closely related, “they believe that knowledge and skill are structurally organized and domain specific.”⁴

Assumptions about the discipline-specific nature of learning have especially influenced history education in recent years, pushing critical thinking in history beyond the generalized conclusions of Bloom’s taxonomy. According to David Pace

In the last twenty years, the call...to focus on critical thinking has led to a laudable effort on the part of [teachers] to move the focus of courses to the higher levels of Bloom’s classification of learning behaviors. But efforts to help students learn at the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation may be impeded by a mismatch between the kinds of thinking actually required in specific classes and generic formulas for encouraging higher-order thinking. In fact, the notion of a unified ‘critical thinking’ runs counter to an important strand in current thinking about teaching that stresses the disciplinary nature of knowledge. In the last twenty years, a number of major researchers have stressed the importance of shaping instruction to match the specific conditions of each academic field.⁵

This disciplinary approach is exemplified in *How Students Learn: History in the Classroom*, which acknowledges early on that a disciplinary approach is fundamentally linked to questions of epistemology. Researchers contrast the epistemology of experts with that of novices, offering explanations for the differences between the two. These scholars point out that students bring well-formed, though potentially erroneous, epistemologies to the classroom. Educators need to uncover and then to engage critically these epistemologies in their instruction, introducing students to more sophisticated disciplinary perspectives.

Much of the initial research into student thinking was conducted in the United Kingdom in association with the Schools History Project in the 1980s. Out of this work, scholars like Peter Lee have defined the disciplinary thinking of history as embracing two types of concepts:

⁴ William D. Rohwer, Jr. and Kathryn Sloane, “Psychological Perspectives,” in *Bloom’s Taxonomy: A Forty-Year Retrospective*, ed. Lorin W. Anderson and Lauren A. Sosniak (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 60.

⁵ David Pace, introduction to *Decoding the Disciplines: Helping Students Learn Disciplinary Ways of Thinking*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 1.

substantive and procedural (or “second-order,” as Lee typically labels the second type).

Substantive concepts are those common, generic nouns (hence “substantive”), like “revolution,” that lie behind particular events like the American Revolution and the French Revolution.

Substantive concepts provide the categories for the “stuff” of history. Jacques Haenen and Hubert Schrijnemakers demonstrate how this approach can aid students’ organization of historical content and their ability to process it in more sophisticated ways.

Research on substantive concepts has not received nearly as much attention as research on procedural concepts. This imbalance is unfortunate, as attention to substantive concepts offers tremendous promise for improving instruction. Substantive concepts can help teachers create more coherent teaching units, focus on major patterns, make comparisons, and connect learning to present circumstances. Also, teachers can integrate substantive concepts into their instructional planning relatively easily. The use of substantive concepts assists students’ thinking without being enormously time-consuming to implement—a boon to time-conscious, standards-driven teachers.

Much more frequently, the study of historical thinking has concentrated on procedural concepts. In contrast to substantive concepts, procedural concepts are the tools—sometimes implicit or ad hoc—that historians use to make meaning of the “stuff” of history. Rather than simply defining “revolutions,” for example, historians ask how they came about (that is, they consider issues of “change”); they try to understand the actions of revolutionaries in their own terms, rather than by the standards of today (they engage in acts of “empathy”); and they consider why revolutions mattered (they pose questions of “significance”). See, for example, Davis, et al., whose entire book explores the nature of empathy in philosophical and historical scholarship and its implications for history education.

The most common subject for studies of procedural thinking has been student use of primary sources. It is not hard to see why. Reading sources is the *sine qua non* of historical work and the discipline-specific activity that most distinguishes history from other fields.

Furthermore, reading primary sources offers the possibility of making history exciting for both students and their teachers. It also focuses on a core academic skill: careful reading of text. As studies like Sam Wineburg's have demonstrated, however, even knowledgeable students who read primary sources often do so in an epistemologically naïve manner.

This is not to say that teachers should reduce the use of primary sources in the classroom. Indeed, the final crucial component of the scholarship on history education has been the use—either implicit or explicit—of sociocultural theory to advocate a mediated process for engaging students in discipline-based work. Earlier educational theorists dismissed the possibility that younger students possessed the kinds of higher-order thinking skills associated with reading primary sources critically. But more recent studies, like those of Keith Barton, Linda Levstik, and Bruce VanSledright, have demonstrated that students in elementary grades can engage in this kind of work. Inspired by the insights of Lev Vygotsky, sociocultural theorists have argued that the keys to student success are a social, rather than an individual, learning environment and a mediated process where teachers create cognitive tools with and for students to assist their learning.

Because words understanding in powerful ways, including academic understanding, researchers have often considered language itself to be one of the most important cognitive tools in the classroom. Consequently, they given substantial attention to the ways students understand historical texts—both primary and secondary. A number of studies examine the rhetorical and structural architecture of historical discourse, revealing why such texts are difficult for students

to comprehend. Some linguists, like Mary Schleppegrell, have used these insights to construct tools that assist students in understanding difficult historical text.

One final point deserves mention. Socio-cultural theory emphasizes open-ended inquiry and constructivist conceptions of knowledge. These views are a direct challenge to history as rote memorization. Indeed, the inquiry model fundamentally emphasizes “meaning over memory,” and, in so doing, reflects the thinking and activity of history practitioners. In that sense, argues Peter Seixas, effective history teachers “occupy a key position between two communities organized around history knowledge and learning,” mediating the historical knowledge of the academic community to the classroom community.

The central professional task they face is the construction of historical presentations for students. Sufficient contact with the historians’ community (through seminars, journal reading, and conferences) and sufficient opportunity to work with each other would constitute the foundations of their own community of inquiry as a basis for a specialized historical knowledge...What differentiates this historical knowledge from that of historians is its more central concern with the problems of presentation to members of a community beyond itself. These concerns might, if addressed by teachers well-versed in the new historical scholarship, be of great interest, in turn, to historians hoping to extend their reach beyond their own community.⁶

Seixas’s description of the mediating role of skilled history teachers clearly reflects the fundamental objective of the California History-Social Science Project. In an endnote immediately following the above quote, Seixas highlights the CHSSP as one example of a number of organizations that already embrace his model. Clearly, the CHSSP and its like-minded peers are well-positioned to extend the work of historical thinking that research indicates is possible at all levels of K-12 education.

What follows is a sampling of recent research that is designed to provide resources for a range of individuals and groups interested in history-social science education. These sources are

⁶ Peter Seixas, “The Community of Inquiry as a Basis for Knowledge and Learning: The Case of History,” *American Educational Research Journal* 30 (1993): 319-20.

a combination of abstract and particular, theoretical and practical. The emphasis falls, however, on readings that are brief, accessible, and/or easily implemented. In any case, the aim was to provide only materials that had some clear potential usefulness in the classroom. Hopefully they will assist in stimulating thought and discussion that will advance the quality of K-12 history-social science instruction. After surveying the results of the last two decades of history education research, a sampling of which is included in the bibliography below, Keith C. Barton notes that this “body of research provides educators with an understanding of the potential disparities between students’ ideas and the content of the curriculum and it reassures them that these can be addressed through classroom instruction.” However, it has yet to “provide much insight into exactly how that transformation can be accomplished.” Barton concludes that the “greatest need in the area of research on students’ ideas about history is for long-term classroom studies of how students’ ideas change as a result of instruction.”⁷ In the coming years, those who use these resources may in turn contribute to a growing database that documents teachers’ experiences working with discipline-specific, inquiry-based history instruction and how that work shapes student learning. Such explicit, replicable models will allow students throughout California—and the nation—to obtain the richest, most rigorous history education available.

⁷ Keith C Barton, “Research on Students’ Ideas About History,” in *Handbook of Research in Social Studies Education*, ed. Linda S. Levstik and Cynthia A. Tyson (New York: Routledge, 2008), 248.

Books

Barton, Keith C., and Linda S. Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good*.

The authors adopt a sociocultural perspective to analyze history education. They argue for democratic participation as a key rationale for teaching history in public schools and for the importance of research in determining the most effective pedagogical strategies. The book is organized around the four “stances” or types of actions they believe that students are expected to perform when they “do history:” identify, analyze, respond morally, and display their understanding.

Committee on How People Learn: A Targeted Report for Teachers. *How Students Learn: History in the Classroom*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2004.

This book provides conclusions from the most thorough research on cognition in history. It focuses on a disciplinary approach to history learning, contrasting the thinking of experts with that of novices, including their common misconceptions. The book discusses the importance of both substantive (abstract generic nouns) and second order (processes) concepts.

Davis, O.L., Jr., Elizabeth Anne Yeager, and Stuart J. Foster. *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Sciences*. This collection includes contributions from well-known scholars of historical thinking like Peter Lee, Bruce A. VanSledright, and Linda Levstik. It focuses on the overlapping, sometimes contradictory, definitions of “emphathy” or perspective-taking in history. Chapters address the challenges of teaching historical understanding, appreciation of context, and the ability to see multiple perspectives.

Holt, Thomas. *Thinking Historically: Narrative, Imagination, and Understanding*. New York: The College Entrance Examination Board, 1990.

This short booklet, commissioned by the College Board, offers clear definitions of what it means to think historically. More importantly, it offers several specific examples from an experienced instructor at the University of Chicago of attempts to teach students to think historically.

Students were asked to analyze historical sources and to create their own narrative accounts based on those sources. The examples include primary sources used in classroom activities as well as reflections by the author.

Leinhardt, Gaea, et al., eds. *Teaching and Learning in History*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1994.

This is a collection of articles based on research into teaching and learning in history. Articles include chapters on a variety of second-order concepts such as the following: why elementary students don't make sense of accounts of history, student reasoning in causation, students as authors in the study of history, and teacher coaching of students in historical reasoning.

Levesque, Stephane. *Thinking Historically*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.

This expensive book by a Canadian publisher provides a coherent synthesis of the scholarship on teaching and learning history produced by Peter Lee, Peter Seixas, Sam Wineburg and others. It begins by providing an overview of the development of history as a professional discipline. The remainder of the book deals in turn with each of five key "procedural" concepts at the heart of thinking historically: significance, continuity and change, progress & decline, evidence, and empathy. Each chapter offers some reflections on implementing the particular concept in classroom instruction.

Levstik, Linda S., and Keith C. Barton. *Doing History: Investigating with Children in Elementary and Middle Schools*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005.

Beginning with constructivist assumptions about student learning, the authors argue for an inquiry-based classroom for elementary and middle school history instruction. After laying a theoretical foundation in the first few chapters, the remainder of the book provides selected case studies of inquiry lessons by real classroom teachers. Rather than attempting to provide an exhaustive or abstract treatment of the subject, the authors offer suggestive exemplars of effective teaching.

Stearns, Peter, et al., eds. *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

This book is an important collection of articles from American, British, and Canadian scholars on various topics in history teaching and learning. Topics include constructing a world history course, the progression of student historical understanding, and teaching students to construct arguments. An important article by Bob Bain discusses the use of research to shape history instruction. Bain argues for a Vygotskian, socio-cultural model of learning that emphasizes the co-creation of cognitive tools and the social reading of texts to mediate learning.

VanSledright, Bruce A.. *In Search of America's Past: Learning to Read History in Elementary School*. New York: Teachers' College Press, 2002.

In this short book, VanSledright shares his experiences teaching US history to fifth-graders using an inquiry model where students read primary sources critically and created accounts based on conflicting evidence. VanSledright narrates his challenges and triumphs in an entertaining way.

The book provides compelling evidence for students' ability to think and express themselves in sophisticated and abstract ways at much younger ages than previous research suggested possible.

Wertsch, James. *Mind as Action*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

This book consolidates many conclusions from the author's previous research into socio-cultural conceptions of learning. Essentially a philosophical presentation of Vygotskian approaches to teaching, the book's main contribution is its thoughtful discussion of the variety of ways that "cultural tools" can assist learning. Wertsch challenges traditional Vygotskian notions that the successful use of such tools necessarily implies that those who use them will "internalize" them and that the tools will consequently disappear. Instead he argues that adoption of a tool may lead to more thoughtful, conscious, and visible use over time.

Wiesner-Hanks, Merry. *Historical Comparisons*. This booklet was commissioned jointly by the American Historical Association and the College Board and is designed to assist Advanced Placement teachers and undergraduate survey course instructors. It provides a thoughtful model for the systematic use of both geographical and chronological historical comparisons as a tool organically co-constructed by teacher and students.

Wineburg, Sam. *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

This book has become the most well-known work on history cognition. It is a collection of articles based on various studies of elementary, middle, and high school classrooms that attempt to uncover student thinking and the preparation and practices that make for effective history instruction. The most well-known chapter delineates the basic epistemological differences

between experts and novices in disciplinary history through a comparison of the ways that members of each group read primary sources.

Articles and Chapters

Ashby, Rosalyn, Peter Lee, and Alaric Dickinson. "How Children Explain the 'Why' of History: The Chata Research Project on Teaching History." *Social Education* 61 (1997): 17-21.

The article explores the progression in students' thinking about the second-order, or procedural, concepts of "explanation" and "evidence." It offers a sequence of the development of student explanation that begins with simpler descriptions based on intentional actions to more complex, multi-faceted conceptualizations. The sequence of evidentiary explanations begins with younger students' failure to distinguish between information and evidence and culminates, likewise, in more complex descriptions.

Bain, Bob. "They Thought the World was Flat?" In *How Students Learn: History in the Classroom*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2004.

One important chapter in *How Students Learn: History in the Classroom*, cited above, is an extended case study of inquiry-based instruction in action. Bob Bain engages ninth-grade world history students in changing historiographical representations of Columbus's voyages over time. In doing so, he models the use of the procedural concepts of "evidence" and "accounts" in an engaging, effective way.

Barton, Keith C. "Research on Students' Ideas About History." In *Handbook of Research in Social Studies Education*. Edited by Linda S. Levstik and Cynthia A. Tyson, 239-258. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Barton's chapter is a useful source to consult for an overview of the field of history education research. A compendium of research conclusions from the last twenty years, it is organized around three topics: students' knowledge of the past, their ideas about evidence and explanation (including historical accounts and the interpretation of evidence and explanations of the actions of people in the past), and the social contexts of students' understanding. In addition to summarizing the major conclusions of empirical research, it provides a bibliography of over 200 studies.

Coffin, Caroline. "Constructing and Giving Value to the Past: An Investigation into Secondary School History." In *Genre and Institutions: Social Processes in the Workplace and School*. Edited by Frances Christie and J.R. Martin, 196-230. London: Cassell, 1997.

This article, while fairly technical, provides useful insights for reading history texts and writing historical accounts. Coffin argues that history texts use abstract rhetorical modes of discourse that are unfamiliar to students, who tend to rely on more concrete recounting of past events. Teachers need to apprentice students in understanding disciplinary modes of discourse and in using the linguistic and rhetorical strategies these modes employ in their own writing.

Eggin, Suzanne, Peter Wignell, and J.R. Martin. "The Discourse of History: Distancing the Recoverable Past." In *Register Analysis: Theory and Practice*. Edited by Mohsen Ghadessy, 75-109. London: Pinter Publishers, 1993.

Like Coffin's article, this piece focuses on the discursive features of history text. But it highlights much more specifically the rhetorical features by which historical events and structures are reported in abstract, depersonalized ways known to linguists as "grammatical metaphor." The authors describe some of the common forms of abstraction: actions become nominalized; existence is posited for inanimate objects; events are placed in static settings (eras), and temporal sequence often disappears; and classes of people are treated as historical actors. The article points out an important gap between student and expert understanding of text, but leaves it to others to bridge the gap.

Haenen, Jacques, and Hubert Schrijnemakers. "Suffrage, Feudal, Democracy, Treaty... History's Building Blocks: Learning to Teach Historical Concepts." *Teaching History* 98 (2000): 22-29.

This article addresses the gap between the conceptual vocabulary of teachers and that of their very different pupils. It then offers ways of classifying historical concepts for the purposes of teaching and suggests ways of developing and assessing 'deep' and enduring understanding in students.

Haenen, Jacques, Hubert Schrijnemakers, and Job Stufkens. "Sociocultural Theory and the Practice of Teaching Historical Concepts." In *Vygotsky's Educational Theory in Cultural Context*, ed. Alex Kozulin, et al. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

The authors apply insights from Vygotsky to provide tools and assistance to high school students in their understanding of historical concepts. The article provides some practical (and replicable) examples from a unit on the new imperialism.

Hallden, Ola. "Conceptual Change and the Learning of History." *International Journal of Educational Research* 27 (1997) 201-210.

This paper investigates explanations of the past that students offer in the classroom, concluding that they tend to personalize—even to personify—historical explanations, even when teachers emphasize structural factors. The author argues that students' inability to understand and use structural explanations stems from their unfamiliarity with the larger theoretical context of the discipline of history.

Lee, Peter. "History Teaching and Philosophy of History." *History and Theory* 22 (1983): 19-49.

This article, while somewhat dated, is in many ways the starting point for the research produced by British, Canadian, and Australian scholars that defines the current field of teaching and learning in history. Lee argues that teaching history means teaching substantive concepts like "revolution," "democracy," and "industrialization" and second-order concepts (or procedural concepts, as Levesque describes them) like "evidence," "cause," "empathy," and "change." Teaching history is also fundamentally about teaching skills and abilities. The second half of the article examines the second-order concept of empathy at length and considers implications for teaching.

Lee, Peter, Alaric Dickinson, and Rosalyn Ashby. "'Just Another Emperor': Understanding Action in the Past." *International Journal of Educational Research* 27 (1997) 233-244.

Like Hallden's paper, this article presents conclusions from research on children's explanations, but provides more optimistic conclusions. Investigating a range of students from elementary school (third grade) through high school (ninth grade), the authors conclude that there is a discernable progression in students' explanations of the past, based on their deepening

understandings of human thought and behavior, of appropriate sources of information for explanations, and of the criteria of acceptable explanations.

Leinhardt, Gaea. "Instructional Explanations in History." *International Journal of Educational Research* 27 (1997) 221-232

This article begins by distinguishing several different types of explanation. It then provides a model of the goals and actions for effective instructional explanations in history, offering two examples of effective explanation in the classroom.

Pace, David. "Decoding the Reading of History." In *Decoding the Disciplines: Helping Students Learn Disciplinary Ways of Thinking: New Directions for Teaching and Learning, Number 98, Summer 2004*, ed. David Pace and Joan Middendorf. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

This book is focused on applying the results of the *How Students Learn* research to undergraduate instruction. The book emphasizes that "critical thinking" and "understanding" look different in each discipline area. In this chapter, the author describes his effort to help students read a historical text in order to gain appropriate discipline-based understanding.

Pressley, Michael, and Peter Afflerbach. "An Introduction to Protocol Analysis of Reading." *Verbal Protocols of Reading: The Nature of Constructively Responsive Reading*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1995.

Sam Wineburg's work on the differences between expert and novice thinking regarding primary sources was built on capturing the thoughts of each group through "think aloud" activities. This chapter provides details on appropriate protocols for conducting "think aloud" exercises. In

addition to Wineburg's use, this protocol is a good way for teachers to model their thinking about documents.

Schleppegrell, Mary, Stacey Greer, and Sarah Taylor. "Literacy in History: Language and Meaning." *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 31 (2008): 174-187.

This recent article highlights the results of Mary Schleppegrell's work with the California-History-Social Science Project at Davis. Like Coffin and Eggins, Wignell, and Martin, Schleppegrell has been influenced by Australian linguist M.A.K. Halliday's work on functional grammar and is therefore attentive to abstract discourse of history texts. Unlike those other two articles, however, this one showcases strategies implemented by Schleppegrell and the CHSSP staff at Davis to assist students in working with difficult texts. It provides some practical ideas that readers could begin to implement on their own.

Seixas, Peter. "The Community of Inquiry as a Basis for Knowledge and Learning: The Case of History." *American Educational Research Journal* 30 (1993): 305-324.

Seixas contrasts the role that professional communities of historians and of history educators play in the construction of knowledge in their respective fields. While historians construct knowledge for peers, he argues, history teachers organize knowledge for others—their students. Nevertheless, because the interests of the two groups overlap, dialogue between them would benefit both.

Seixas, Peter. "Mapping the Terrain of Historical Significance." *Social Education* 61 (1997): 22-27.

Seixas addresses the second-order concept of “significance” in this article. He explores the understandings of historical significance that children bring to the classroom and attempts to answer the following questions: Are there differences in the ways high school students approach the question of historical significance? Are some explanations better than others? If so, by what criteria? What implications might such differences have for instruction?

Seixas, Peter, and Carla Peck. “Teaching Historical Thinking.” *Challenges and Prospects for Canadian Social Sciences*, ed. Alan Sears. Vancouver, Canada: Pacific Educational Press, 2004.

This useful chapter comes from a book that is relatively difficult to find in the US given its focus on Canadian education. It briefly describes several key second-order, or procedural, concepts in historical thinking: “significance,” “evidence,” “change,” “progress,” “empathy,” and “agency.” In doing so, it covers some of the same ground as *How Students Learn* and Levesque’s *Thinking Historically*. In contrast to those two, however, it is very short and to the point, while offering several examples of questioning strategies for each of the concepts. These examples could easily be adopted in the classroom.

Stearns, Peter. “Education: The Central Mission of the Humanities.” *Meaning Over Memory: Recasting the Teaching of Culture and History*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

Historian Peter Stearns argues that the purpose of history courses is to “teach skills and convey insights about how people and societies function.” To that end, he advocates overhauling history courses, beginning with K-12 education, in the following ways: rethinking topics to answer basic questions about how societies function and how they change over time; intentionally and explicitly using theory to enable students to analyze information and issues more effectively; in a

related vein, using organizing questions to guide the exploration of historical questions and build coherence; and effectively assessing student learning to emphasize “meaning over memory.”

Van Drie, Jannet, and Carla van Boxtel. “Developing Conceptual Understanding Through Talk and Mapping.” *Teaching History* 110 (2003): 27-32.

The authors demonstrate the teaching of concepts and concept making using the example of “communism” in a high school classroom. This is a brief, practical article with helpful examples.

Van Sledright, Bruce A., “What Does It Mean to Think Historically...and How Do You Teach It?”

This short article addresses the question of teaching historical thinking by focusing on reading primary sources in the classroom. VanSledright argues that assessing historical sources involves four overlapping skills: identification, attribution, perspective judgment, and reliability assessment. He provides several suggestions about how to help students build these skills, though the brevity of the article does not allow him to develop these suggestions.

Voss, James F. and Jennifer Wiley. “Developing Understanding While Writing Essays in History.” *International Journal of Educational Research* 27 (1997) 255-265.

This study concludes that students who construct arguments in response to a history writing prompt understand content better than those who simply write narrative accounts. The paper reinforces assumptions about the importance of rigorous, inquiry-based writing tasks for effective learning of history.

Wells, Gordon. "Dialogic Inquiry in Education: Building on the Legacy of Vygotsky."

Vygotskian Perspectives on Literacy Research. C.D. Lee and P. Smagorinsky, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

This article applies Vygotsky's ideas to propose a model of education based on inquiry. While Wells's focus is not on history in particular, the issues he addresses (including the role of dialogue between students and between teacher and students) is very applicable to the inquiry-based history classroom.

Wineburg, Sam, and Daisy Martin. "Reading and Rewriting History"

In this brief article, the authors describe an example of a unit they created for fifth-graders which required students to investigate both primary sources and secondary accounts of Pocahontas's alleged rescue of John Smith. The article models the rigorous use of evidence with elementary students. It concludes by advocating a culminating activity that moves beyond poster-making to include an "old-fashioned" well-written, well-substantiated essay.