

Teaching the Common Core

THE
SOURCE



The Source *California History-Social Science Project* *Quarterly Magazine*

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-Shelley Brooks, Editor

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We're Number 3!



For years I have railed against the marginalization of history and the related social sciences, in this column, in formal presentations, and basically, to anyone who would listen. (My apologies to those of you I've cornered more than once on this topic, especially the woman who cuts my hair and my mom, who really couldn't find an easy way out of earshot). Although the context for each harangue changed, my central questions did not: How did the study of history become so unimportant as to be dropped from the public school curriculum? Why would American schools suddenly stop teaching students how to think critically, argue persuasively, and analyze competing points of view? And why on earth would school leaders reduce instructional time for history, a text-dependent discipline, if they wanted to improve student literacy? Finally, given the fact that this marginalization is most pronounced in schools of color and poverty, what will be the impact on a democratic system dependent upon informed citizenry?

Why would American schools suddenly stop teaching students how to think critically, argue persuasively, and analyze competing points of view?

We began to see this marginalization really take hold in California schools halfway through the last decade. This was a result of the increasingly harsh accountability measures based upon student performance on standardized tests in English and mathematics. By 2008 when we hosted "The History Summit," a series of public conversations on the topic, hundreds of schools across the state had instituted daily calendars that reduced or eliminated history instruction all together for some or all of their students - primarily those in the elementary and middle school grades in economically-challenged communities. Teachers reported that their administrators forbade the instruction of American and world history (as well as other non-tested and therefore of "questionable value" disciplines, like the arts and foreign language). Horror stories began to emerge from the ranks of our elementary teacher leaders, who were now required to

divide their day into two and one-half hours of English language arts (mainly scripted lessons centered on simple narrative or fiction, interspersed with out-of-context vocabulary drills), two hours of mathematics, and an hour of physical education. The monotony of this approach drove the most determined teachers to subvert the process in the most creative of methods: carving out weekly history sessions in their calendars by hanging a “testing – do not disturb” sign on their classroom doors.

That really was the low point, in my mind, of a system gone horribly wrong. I’m not trying to place the blame for the marginalization on any particular legislation, policy, or educational leader. I still agree with the broad goals of the standards and assessment school reform movement – providing equal access to students at every school and holding us all (teachers, administrators, parents, and community members) responsible for their learning. But in the zealous pursuit of that goal (and in a bid to avoid increasingly unpleasant accountability measures), school leaders made what is clear now to be terrible decisions. By focusing on the relatively narrow short-term goal of increased test scores in English language arts and mathematics, these leaders sacrificed some extremely important long-term benefits, namely, the ability of their students to think critically, evaluate an argument, understand the history of our country, and participate as a citizen of our global community.

I’ve been thinking about this a lot lately as we prepared this special issue of *The Source*, focused on the new Common Core Standards that 46 states have already adopted, including California. As many teachers have already noted, the Common Core’s emphasis on expository text, its mention of specific historical documents, and the specific inclusion of a section dedicated to developing literacy in history or social studies, increases the importance of history in the public school curriculum. Clearly, this document still privileges the teaching of mathematics and English, but I can’t help but wonder if our discipline’s new tagline should become, “We’re number 3!” given the attention given to history. Obviously, I’m not so naïve to believe that the publication of this one document, even with its official stamps of approval from a variety of state and federal leaders, can completely reverse the practice of marginalizing

history. But I’m optimistic. It seems as if people are finally listening and understanding that the answer to low test scores in English is not to abandon a literate discipline like history. National leaders, including President Obama, are decrying the narrow curriculum. And former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice even drew a correlation between declining educational performance and our national security. Rice and former NY schools chief Joel Klein co-chaired a report organized by the Council on Foreign Relations in which they recommended that our schools need greater curricular diversity.

It seems as if people are finally listening and understanding that the answer to low test scores in English is not to abandon a literate discipline like history.

The California History-Social Science Project supports the lofty goals outlined in the Common Core standards. We fully understand that there will be many barriers to its implementation in American schools, especially here in California given our ongoing budget crisis. We can’t help but be hopeful, however, that by bringing attention to the very skills that were lost in our recent national obsession with standardized tests of limited value, we can make things just a little better for all of our kids.



A former high school history and government teacher, Nancy McTygue is the Executive Director of The California History-Social Science Project. Write to her at chssp@ucdavis.edu.

The Common Core for History - No Fear!



Since the mid-1990s, young snowboarders have often worn tee-shirts bearing the lifestyle clothing brand name No Fear. The slogan expressed the enthusiasm (and perhaps recklessness) with which they tackled the physically challenging aspects of their sport. Contemplating teaching the new Common Core State Standards in history and social science classes is a little like standing atop a thin piece of fiberglass and gazing down a steep snow-covered slope. The Common Core Reading and Writing Standards for Literacy in History-Social Studies are challenging, even more so because they emphasize skills that haven't been required or emphasized since the beginning of standardized testing in the 1990s. Many, if not most, of our students struggle with reading. Given the financial situation of our schools, we know that there will be little money for books, materials, and professional development. This is a steep, steep slope indeed.

But I say – nay, I shout – NO FEAR!

At the risk of being overly dramatic, let me express my enthusiasm for implementing new Common Core State Standards in history and social science classes. I think the Common Core Reading and Writing Standards for Literacy in History-Social Studies might give us history teachers not only what we need but what we want as well. Let me tell you why.

Image courtesy of LetMeColor.com coloring pages.

The Common Core standards for our subject emphasize thinking skills, primary sources, evidence, analysis, point of view or perspective, and argument. These are not merely, or even primarily, English / Language Arts skills. They are closely related to historical inquiry, a process of helping students to act as historians. Under pressure to cover the content standards and raise student test scores, history teachers have had little time to devote to historical inquiry. Now when we take the time to have students analyze a primary source, we can say that we are teaching the Common Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History-Social Studies RH1, RH2, RH4, RH8, and RH9. We can proudly write the standards on the board for our principals and the whole world to see. We can teach history in a more exciting, engaging, and thoughtful way.

Eventually the standardized tests that dominate our planning and efforts will be revised to include the Common Core standards, which will not only test memorization of historical content but also mastery of historical thinking skills. We will no longer be measured solely by how much information we can get our students to memorize. Even though it is quite tricky to measure historical thinking skills on standardized tests, a number of groups, including the History Project, are working on writing these new assessments.

Few of us truly believe that history is about memorization of facts to be regurgitated on a multiple-choice exam. We know that history textbooks aren't very interesting, and lecture isn't a very effective method of instruction. However, stepping away from the tried-and-true plateau of telling students facts to venture down the steep slope of the Common Core standards and historical inquiry is daunting. That's why I say, No Fear!

This article first appeared as a post in the Blueprint for History Blog on March 1, 2012. CHSSP's Program Coordinator, Shennan Hutton, also serves as an instructor for world and Medieval history courses at several northern California colleges and universities. Prior to earning her Ph.D. in Medieval History from UC Davis, she taught high school world history for 15 years in Vallejo, CA.

Visit her blog at <http://blueprintforhistory.wordpress.com/>



History Blueprint Pilot Results - Spring 2012

In the 2011-2012 school year, a team of historians and teacher leaders designed the first History Blueprint unit on the American Civil War. Timed to coincide with the sesquicentennial of the war, the unit combined California History-Social Science Content Standards (part of 8.9 and all of 8.10), and the Common Core Reading and Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies. The goal of the History Blueprint initiative is to create units which have everything a teacher needs – primary sources, lesson plans, multimedia sources, assessments, support for literacy, and development of historical thinking skills. An integral part of the unit creation process is review and revision. The Civil War unit went through three drafts, each read and critically reviewed by teachers, historians, and CHSSP site directors, and revised based on that feedback. The final – and most important – review was the classroom pilot held in spring 2012.

“I felt that the kids really learned how to think like historians. Even the lowest readers could make connections.”

-Pilot Teacher

In spring 2012, more than 20 eighth-grade teachers field-tested the History Blueprint Civil War unit in their classrooms. One pilot teacher, Jennifer Mustin of Oak Valley School in Tulare, quizzed former students who appeared at Back-to-School Night with younger siblings on Civil War content, just to see what they remembered. When she asked them why the South seceded from the Union, she was amazed to find that the students could

actually tell her why. She had noticed during the pilot that their writing improved from the beginning to the end of the unit, but she did not expect them to retain content knowledge. She also reported that her students' CST scores on the Civil War component improved from 64 to 68 points.

Not all teachers felt as comfortable with their implementation of the unit. A universal criticism of the unit was that it was too long. Virtually every teacher who piloted the unit modified the lessons and redesigned aspects of the unit. Doing justice to historical issues while teaching students to read closely, analyze, think and write takes time. All the units we produce are likely to be too long. However, teachers can pick and choose and modify, which is something that they will do anyway. This is the way it should be. We can rely on teachers' judgment of what their students need and what fits in with their classroom practice.

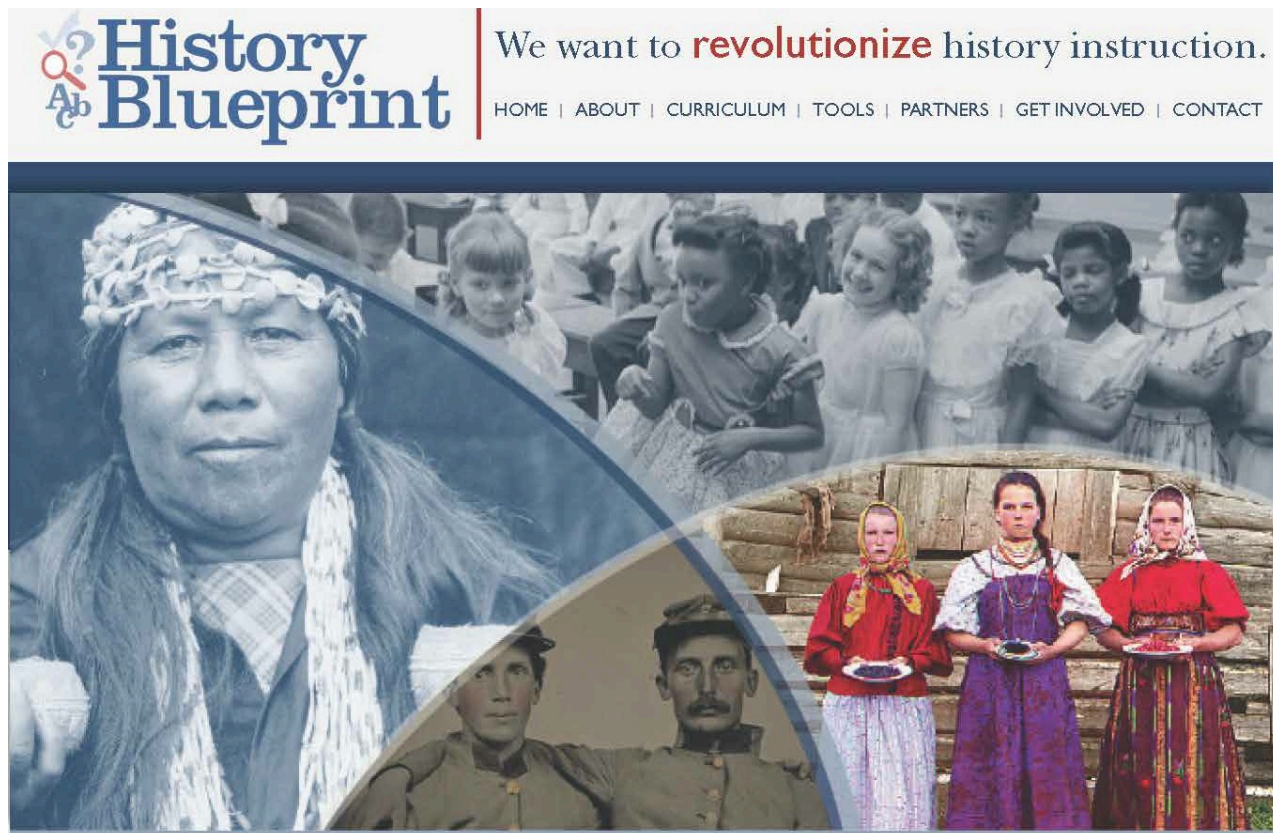
The second part of assessing the unit was an analysis of student work, which we conducted in October 2012. We determined that although the Evaluation of the Secession Argument assignment virtually forced students to cite specific evidence and use the language of logic, many students were still confused in their application of that logic to deal with evidence that pointed in contradictory directions. As a result of this discussion, we will revise the sentence frame to guide the students more effectively.

Meanwhile, the Civil War unit is the prototype which are we following to create two new units, the Cold War (for 10th and 11th-grade) and Sites of Encounter in the Medieval World (for 7th-grade). We anticipate that the Cold War unit will be ready for piloting in April 2013, and the Medieval World may be ready by fall 2013. If you teach any of those grades, please think about the possibility of piloting one of the new History Blueprint units in the coming year.

Visit the History Blueprint and CHSSP websites to learn more:

<http://historyblueprint.org/>

<http://chssp.ucdavis.edu/programs/programs/historyblueprint>



Together, Toward the Common Core in History-Social Science

by Letty Kraus, The History Project at UC Davis

I feel I am teaching to a deeper, more meaningful level. We are writing more in the classroom and our work is at a higher thinking level. I still have to teach the California [History Content] Standards, of course...but when I am teaching with the Common Core Standards in mind, I don't feel like I am "teaching to the test." In fact, I enjoy teaching to these standards!

-Susan Giunta, 4th-grade teacher, SCUSD

The History Project at UC Davis (HP) has heard a variety of teacher reactions to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Many teachers concurred with Susan Giunta and expressed enthusiasm for the guidelines CCSS provides that support historical reading, thinking, and writing skills. Some feel they have found support from HP programs to begin implementing the standards. Heidi Page, an 8th-grade teacher in Benicia Unified School District noted, "I feel my work with the HP-led Teaching American History grant has prepared me very well for integrating the common core. In the lessons I have designed for the project, I already incorporate a great deal of critical thinking skills that are a focal point of the CCSS."

At the same time, teachers also expressed concerns. How will schools and districts implement the standards? What will the state assessments expect? Will history-social science teachers and experts have sufficient impact on decisions related to implementing the CCSS in their subject area classrooms? Amid feelings of cautious optimism, teachers confirmed what we suspected—local districts are focusing almost exclusively on the ELA and Math standards and providing little, if any, discipline-specific support for the CCSS in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects. Like CHSSP sites across the state and other like-minded professional development organizations across the nation, the History Project at UC Davis offers support to teachers, schools and districts as they transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

While the CCSS may be new, the skills that they promote align well with the CHSSP's established vision of high quality history instruction that includes specific attention to developing student literacy. Our experience with teachers illustrates that literacy skills are best taught while actively reading, analyzing, and interacting with engaging and content-rich text. The CCSS seem to endorse this position, bringing hope that history and social science instruction—once marginalized as an unintended consequence of NCLB's focus on English and mathematics—will reclaim an important place in the classroom.

In the spring of 2012 The History Project at UC Davis assembled a study group of teacher leaders from grades three through twelve to help us consider how best to support teachers with implementation. We hoped to nurture the grassroots efforts of teachers and to provide a model of what productive interdepartmental and cross-grade partnerships could look like. Together we engaged in a close analysis of the skills described in the CCSS. Next, we shared how to align existing discipline-specific, academic literacy-focused lessons with the CCSS. Finally, we analyzed the draft assessments recently made available on-line by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, the group charged with developing assessments aligned with Common Core for California's schools.

The HP study group helped us to assess teacher, school, and district needs and to evaluate how our established literacy work aligns with the Common Core. Based on our findings, we developed a "train

the trainers” style workshop for summer 2012, where participants developed their understanding of the Standards while discussing the shifts needed to integrate them into their instruction. HP provided teaching tools, including history-specific question banks (see “Sample Questions” on the next page) to direct close reading exercises; ways to help students think about the significance of evidence; sourcing activities to call students’ attention to the craft and structure of an argument; and methods and terminology to help students construct written arguments. The HP workshop helped participants design a plan for their site customized with local benchmarks and other site initiatives in mind. By partnering with teachers to strengthen existing strategies and to develop new ones, we can continue to identify and capitalize on emerging best practices.

Of course, any new mandate or initiative causes anxiety because it initially feels foreign. From our perspective, however, the CCSS simply institutionalized the academic literacy skills already taught in the history-social science classrooms of the K-12 teachers with whom we work. These teachers—practitioners of discipline-specific literacy—are vital and must be equal partners in formulating, testing, and disseminating an approach that can be customized to school, department, and individual classroom needs in order to raise student achievement over the decades to come.



Solano teachers working with The History Project at UC Davis.

Sample Questions for Close Reading of a Single Primary Source ~Aligned to the Common Core State Standards~

*The directions and questions below are **samples** for teachers from which to select or modify for lessons. The standards that apply to each direction or question are listed in brackets. When deciding which directions or questions to use for a particular source, consider the author's central ideas or claims and to which aspect you want to draw students' attention. It is not recommended that you select all of the questions. Additionally, think about how the source helps to address the investigation question. Finally, decide on which standards you want to focus.*

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading #1

- Provide at least two quotes (3 words or more) of evidence that support each claim or reason.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading #2

- What is the central idea (main claim or thesis) of the text? Is there a quote from the text that represents the creator's central idea? If so, write it down.
- What are the author's supporting claims or reasons that support the central idea?

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading #4

- Choose 2-3 unfamiliar words and try to determine their meaning from their use in the text
- How does the creator's use of the word _____ emphasize the point of the text?

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading #6

- Point of view:
 - What are the creator's occupation, religion, sex, social class, and race?
 - What is the relationship between the creator and the subject of the source?
 - How might that creator be biased?
 - What is the creator's point of view? What can we learn from the point of view of the source?
- Purpose:
 - What is the tone (e.g. sarcastic, gloomy, inspiring) of the source? What loaded words or strong descriptive words are being used? Provide examples and explain how these words emphasize the creator's purpose.
 - Who is the intended audience? How might the audience affect what the creator chose to include or omit?
 - What clues can you point to in the text to explain the creator's purpose? What is the intent or purpose of the creator?

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading #8

- Evaluate the author's argument and supporting claims to determine if the evidence and reasoning is valid, relevant and sufficient.
 - Is the argument valid? Why or why not?
 - Is there enough evidence to support the argument? What additional information could have made the argument much stronger?

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading #9

- Was this source created at the time of the event, as a remembrance, or as analysis?

Reading the Common Core State Standards

by Dave Neumann, Site Director, The History Project at CSU Long Beach

The emergence of the Common Core Standards confronts teachers with a new text that they will soon begin poring over with the same care as the Standards. With that realization in mind, it seems appropriate to step back from this crucial primary source document and engage in the kind of heuristic task proposed by Sam Wineburg, author of *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* and advocate for students' reading of primary sources. The essential question for this lesson, or article, is this: How do *sourcing*, *contextualization*, and *corroboration* help us to better understand the Common Core Standards? A deeper understanding of this broader context might help us appreciate how remarkable this document is as a national standard in education, and to be thoughtful about how to interpret it.

We'll begin our investigation of the Common Core Standards by *sourcing* the document: who is the author? The actual wordsmiths are not as interesting as the official sponsor, the National Governors Association. Most Americans had probably never heard of the NGA before the arrival of Common Core. Even those who routinely teach about the history and structure of American government might be surprised to learn that this organization of all American governors has existed for over a century, meeting annually to address common problems. The leadership of a Progressive-era organization in this endeavor reminds us that Common Core represents but the most recent in a long line of educational reforms. Furthermore, the fact that an unexpected organization has become the lead voice in educational reform indicates the leadership vacuum with regard to our country's woeful academic performance compared with industrial counterparts worldwide. As Linda Darling-Hammond warns in *The Flat World, Educational Inequality, and America's Future*, "the United States is standing still while more focused nations move rapidly ahead."¹ Our country is stymied by a federalist system where responsibility for education is shared between the state and the federal government, so perhaps it should not be a surprise that a group of *state* executives would have the responsibility and authority to write *national* standards.

Next, we need to *contextualize* the Common Core by placing the document into its broader historical framework. While it fits within the larger flow of educational reform, the Common Core initiative is best understood in light of three trends in the last generation. First, the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*, drafted by a federal commission sponsored by Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Education, raised the alarm about declining educational achievement (as measured by SAT scores). These declines came in the wake of the 1970s, which Diane Ravitch describes as an era with "reformers, radicals, and revolutionaries competing to outdo one another" in educational experimentation.² The report launched the accountability movement in its call for rigorous content-based standards in all subject areas. The effort to create voluntary National Standards in the core subject areas resulted from this call. Controversy about a purported left-wing agenda by the authors of the American History standards led to the demise of this project, as described in Gary Nash, et al *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past*. That this effort foundered on controversies about history seems quaint now, given the current marginalization of this subject. Second, the failure of a national standards movement ushered in the era of state standards, which has fundamentally shaped day-to-day classroom dynamics for millions of students and their teachers. Third, of course, the No Child Left Behind juggernaut arrived in 2002. With this reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the *national* government "changed the nature of public schooling across the nation by making standardized test scores the primary measure of school quality"³ while leaving to the *states* the content of instruction measured by test scores.

Finally, the Common Core's definition of educational rigor must be *corroborated* through comparison with other documents. To begin with, the skills described in the Common Core English-Language Arts Standards match well with the conclusions of the report by The Carnegie Council for Advancing Adolescent Literacy's *A Time to Act*, chaired by Catherine Snow, Professor of Education in the

Harvard's Graduate School of Education: "adolescent learners in our schools must decipher more complex passages, synthesize information at a higher level, and learn to form independent conclusions based on evidence. They must also develop special skills and strategies for reading text in each of the differing content areas," including history.⁴ In addition, the specific criteria delineated in Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6–12 jibe with calls for historical thinking issued by education scholars Wineburg, Peter Seixas, Bob Bain, Peter Lee, and others. The Common Core lists specific exemplars of historical texts. While some fit uneasily with current grade-level history standards—such as Patrick Henry's "Speech to the Second Virginia Convention" or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" for Grades 9–10—teachers can easily concentrate on the texts that do fit their standards.

More importantly, rather than focusing narrowly on the particular exemplars, teachers should attend more broadly to the skills necessary to comprehend a variety of texts. When we consider the three instructional shifts in English-Language Arts that Common Core introduces, we recognize some familiar concepts: a focus on content-rich nonfiction and informational text, use of complex text and academic vocabulary, and reading and writing grounded in evidence. Literacy standards in History/Social Science explicitly address citing evidence from primary and secondary sources, considering differences in point of view, and corroborating claims. These are all key elements of inquiry-based instruction in history—elements that CHSSP workshops have emphasized for years. Teachers who make these elements routine in their instruction will find their students succeeding on

Common Core, whether or not they encounter familiar texts on the assessment.

We can enthusiastically embrace the Common Core Standards document's call for a national standard of rigorous literacy skills in history-social science. We should pay at least as much attention to the skills themselves as we do to the exemplars. There has been much talk about how this document is poised to become a dramatic new reality for teachers and students. While this is true in many ways, teachers who already embrace inquiry-based instruction using a rich variety of texts in their classrooms may find that the future is not so different after all.



Patrick Henry before the Virginia House of Burgesses, May 30, 1765. Image from the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2006691555/>

Notes

¹ *The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 9.

² *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 23.

³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴ Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, *Time to Act: An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2010), x.



Teaching Vocabulary

In reviewing the Common Core Reading Standard 4 for Literacy in History/Social Studies in grades 6-12, I have tried a variety of activities to review or reinforce concepts before a unit assessment and find that the lesson below engages students in ways others do not. I walk the rows and I see 32-36 students working diligently, with pencils gripped and academic vocabulary incorporated into their work. There is an element of competition in the activity that motivates each student to actively participate.

Common Core Standards:

L.7.6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression (also standard in grade 6 and 8).

Lesson Overview:

This is a one-class period review lesson to be done before the unit assessment. Create a list of fifteen key terms from the unit. These terms should include general academic and unit-specific words or phrases. I compose a general overview of the unit (from beginning of empire to fall of empire, for example) and then from those sentences, choose the fifteen I want to include in the activity.

Procedures

1. The students should be in groups.
2. Announce that we are retelling the story of the "Roman Empire" for example.
3. Then, one word is revealed. (I use a PowerPoint slide.) Students are instructed to write, from recall, an introductory sentence to the "story" of the Roman Empire correctly using that word. I give them one minute to write (more time could be given or notes could be used to differentiate the lesson). The student then passes his/her paper to the next student.
4. Then, the second word is revealed. The students read the previous sentence and write a second sentence with the second word.
5. The students then pass the papers and a third word is revealed and so on.
6. After approximately five sentences, a break is called. Students are instructed to read everything on their paper and ask themselves if all words are used correctly. They are encouraged to edit any incorrect sentences. After these corrections the next word is revealed and the activity proceeds.
7. When the last word is revealed students write the concluding sentence to the story. As a group they again review the story for accuracy. (One bonus feature is that students have now re-read these vocabulary words three or four times.)

Roman Forum looking towards Coliseum. Image from the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007663210/>

This sample student work uses a vocabulary list based on history standards covered in unit 7.1: "Students analyze the causes and effects of the vast expansion and ultimate disintegration of the Roman Empire." Vocabulary words are underlined in each sentence.

- 1) The Roman Empire's first emperor was Augustus. Augustus was the most influential emperor in Rome.
- 2) The Romans had advancements in engineering, Architecture, Art, and Philosophy.
- 3) Rome had many problems; internal, and external.
- 4) Rome's internal conflicts greatly weakened the empire.
- 5) Diocetian was an emperor who split the empire into two.
- 6) Constantine reconnected the empire for a short while.
- 7) Barbarians were considered to be uncivilized by Romans.
- 8) The Huns and the Goths were just 2 of the groups that invaded the Roman Empire.
- 9) One of Rome's internal conflicts was corruption in the government.
- 10) 476 AD was when the western Roman Empire fell.
- 11) Justinian was the Byzantine Emperor, the Eastern Empire.
- 12) Christianity was the wide spread religion of the Romans.
- 13) Roman laws protected the rights of the cities citizens.
- 14) The Byzantine empire covers part of Europe and part of Asia.

Lisa Meyers teaches 7th grade World History in Rancho Santa Margarita. Meyers is a fellow of the UC Irvine Writing Project and enjoys developing new reading and writing strategies for the history curriculum.



Common Core Reading Strategies

As stated throughout this issue, history is an especially appropriate discipline in which to teach the reading, writing and critical thinking skills called for in the Common Core State Standards. Our discipline requires students to read primary and secondary sources, synthesize language, gather and organize evidence to support a claim, and then incorporate that analysis into a written explanation, argument, or justification. UC Berkeley History-Social Science Project teachers have found that the academic literacy strategies presented during the *Implementing the Common Core Standards Through History Instruction* summer institute give them a toolbox for teaching the Common Core State Standards.

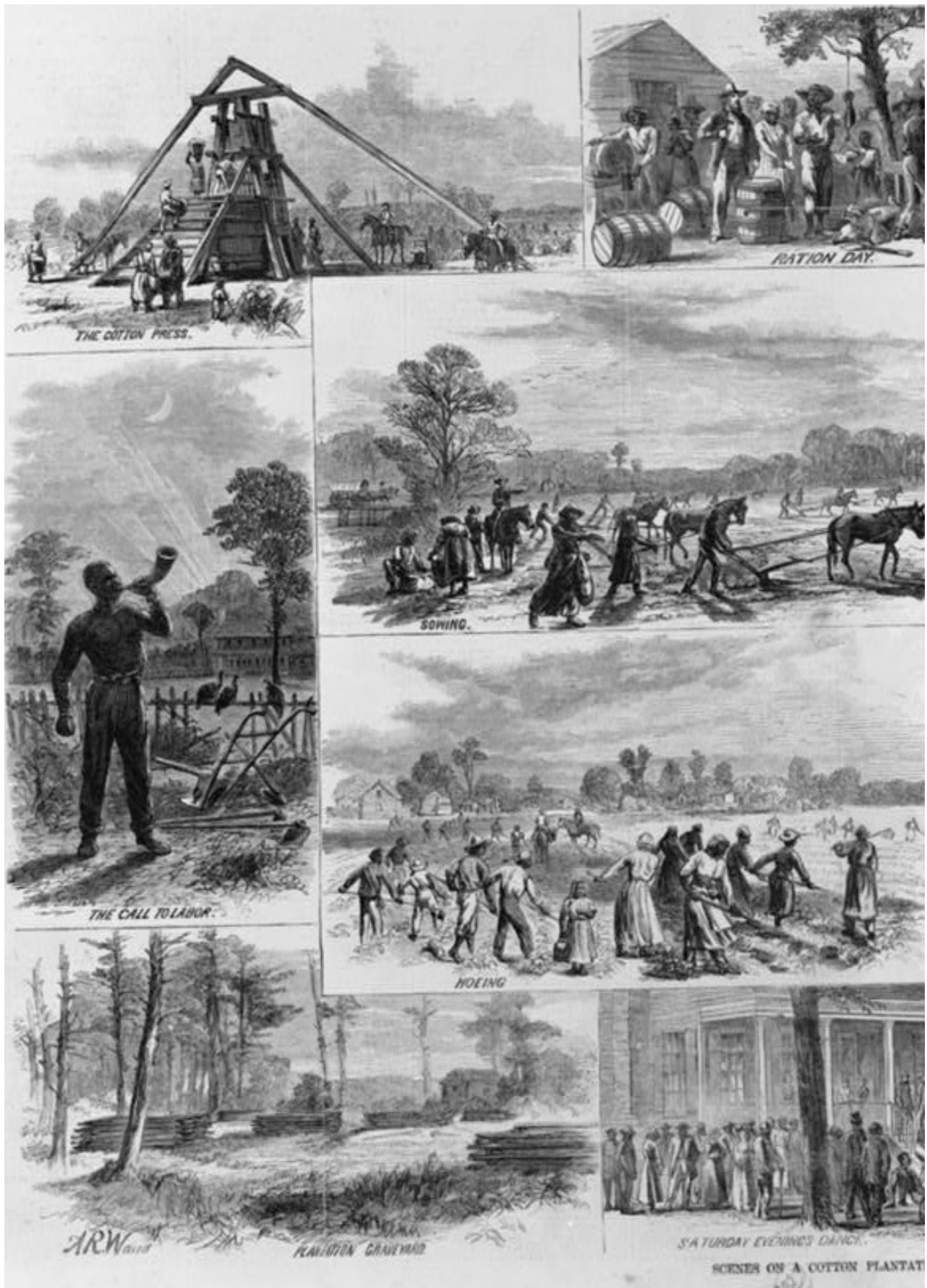
A large part of acquiring the skills necessary to understand history is learning to recognize how text passages are organized. The Common Core State Standards state that 6th to 8th grade history students should “Describe how a text presents information (e.g. sequentially, comparatively, causally).” Passage organization is a close reading strategy that aids students in understanding relationships between evidence. Some of the organizational patterns found in historical writing are: chronology, cause and effect, compare/contrast, debate, point of view, description, and thesis supported by evidence. These patterns have distinct linguistic features, such as verbs and conjunctions, which organize evidence.¹ This approach teaches students how to use linguistic features to recognize these organizational patterns and understand how they impart historical meaning. One of the predominant patterns in historical writing is cause and effect. Without recognizing this pattern, students may see history as just a sequence of events, rather than understanding the relationships among a network of events, people, ideas, and processes. It is in those relationships that true historical interpretation lies, teaching all students how to think historically.

To expose causal relationships within text, teachers can introduce frequently used cause and effect sentence patterns, such as “When __, then __.” Or “If __, then __.” as well as verbs like “led,” “enabled,” “caused,” and “made.” Students should also be taught to recognize signal words used to explain cause and effect, such as, “thus,” “so that,” “since,” “therefore,” “then,” “consequently,” “as a result,” “due to,” and “because of.” After teachers highlight the types of words and phrases that denote causality, students can work in groups to discuss, record, and question the text for an explicit understanding of a text’s cause and effect relationship. The lesson strategy below illustrates how history teachers can seamlessly include Common Core State Standards into their classroom instruction by explicitly instructing students in the recognition and use of cause and effect passage organization.

Consider the following excerpt from *United States History: Independence to 1914*, which includes a number of causal links that may not be readily apparent to students:

*The Cotton Boom: Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin made cotton so profitable that southern farmers abandoned other crops in favor of growing cotton. The removal of Native Americans opened up more land for cotton farmers in the Southeast. Meanwhile, the development of new types of cotton plants helped spread cotton production throughout the South as far west as Texas.*²

To highlight those relationships, it is helpful to break apart, or deconstruct, the individual sentences by organizing them into “cause” and “effect” columns that provide a graphic flow chart detailing the relationships between actions and events. This procedure, when combined with questions of historical significance, can both increase reading comprehension and clarify causality.



Scenes from a Cotton Plantation. Image from the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96513748/>

The teacher begins by asking “What caused the cotton boom in the South?” This question provides a focus for the lesson. The teacher models the first cause and effect relationship on the chart for students. Working in pairs, students then practice finding the second effect. After an initial discussion, student pairs are directed to find and record the remaining two effects on the chart. As they fill in these columns, students are encouraged to also write down relevant questions or conclusions in the third column. This chart inserts the Federal Government as the agent that opens up more land in the Southeast.

Student Worksheet

What caused the cotton boom in the South?

Cause Because...	Effect As a result....	Questions/ Conclusions
Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin	made cotton so profitable	
[the cotton gin] made cotton so profitable	southern farmers abandoned other crops in favor of growing cotton	
[the Federal Government] opened up more land for cotton farmers in the Southeast		
development of new types of cotton plants		

Teacher Key

What caused the cotton boom in the South?

Cause Because...	Effect As a result....	Questions/ Conclusions (sample questions)
Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin	made cotton so profitable	Why wasn’t cotton profitable before?
[the cotton gin] made cotton so profitable	southern farmers abandoned other crops in favor of growing cotton	What other crops were grown?
[the Federal Government] opened up more land for cotton farmers in the Southeast	The removal of Native Americans	What happened to the Native Americans? How could the government remove them?
development of new types of cotton plants	helped spread cotton production throughout the South as far West as Texas	Why was cotton so important? (New types of cotton plants allowed planters to grow in different/drier climates than the original southern cotton states – editor’s note).

After completing the chart, the class turns again to the initial question: “What caused the cotton boom in the South?” Using their completed chart and the paragraph frame provided below, students can then write a short, one-paragraph response to the question.

Student Paragraph Frame

What caused the cotton boom in the South?

Topic sentence: _____

Due to the invention of the cotton gin _____

In response, _____

Additionally, _____

As a result, _____

Teacher Key

The following is an example paragraph developed as a possible student answer.

What caused the cotton boom in the South?

The cotton gin caused the cotton boom in the south.

Due to the invention of the cotton gin, cotton became much more profitable.

In response, Southern farmers abandoned growing other crops and grew more cotton.

Additionally, the United States Government removed Native Americans so there would be more land to grow cotton. New kinds of cotton plants were also developed.

As a result, people grew cotton all throughout the south and as far west as Texas.

Possible Inference Question: How did the invention of the cotton gin impact the spread of slavery?

Notes

¹ Mary J. Schleppegrell, *The Language of Schooling* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004).

² *United States History: Independence to 1914* (Austin, Texas: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2006), 378.

This lesson was written by Donna Leary, former Site Director of the UC Berkeley History-Social Science Project.



Don't Be Afraid of the Common Core

by Mary Miller, Co-Site Director, UCLA History-Geography Project

The more we at UCLA have looked at the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—at least in their present form—the less concerned we are about how history teachers will be able to address this new mandate. Because we have had the good fortune to work with teachers long-term in our Teaching American History grants and summer institutes, we have seen the development of many lessons addressing critical aspects of the CCSS, which can be boiled the down to a few key terms:

- **Analysis**
- **Evidence**
- **Varied sources (primary and secondary, visual, graphic, videos, maps, etc.)**
- **Text structure**
- **Perspective of author(s)**
- **Fact/opinion and claims/reasoned judgment**
- **Chronology and causation/explanation**

In truth, teachers can feel confident that they are heeding the demands of the CCSS if they just keep in mind **analysis**, **evidence**, and **perspective**. (I'm deliberately avoiding switching those terms around for fear that it would result in the cry—"Remember APE!" or "PEA is the key!")

What does this mean in actual practice? In the Spring, 2012 *Source*, we wrote about our summer "Cities" Institute where we integrated CCSS thinking in our planning. We spent three wonderful days learning about Rome, Constantinople, Chinese Imperial Cities, and Tenochtitlan. Of course, their physical forms and styles of political organization were interesting topics, but more valuable were our investigations of the reasons they were located where they were, which required **analysis** of geographic sites and **evidence** based on maps and images. We also looked at why they declined, a question to which there were no easy answers. Did Rome collapse because of over-extension (a geographic **perspective**) or because of barbarian attacks (a military **perspective**)? Clearly, no one viewpoint can capture all the elements of such a complex phenomenon, particularly one that occurred over time and space, but these how's and why's of history are both more interesting and more valuable in developing students' critical thinking skills.

Our longer "Places and Time: L.A. History and Geography" and "Library of Congress" institutes allowed participants to actually develop full lessons. The richest of these focused on comparisons of places,





social structures, or **perspectives**. Participants asked their students to **analyze** two or more cultures or ideas using graphic organizers that called for **evidence** from primary sources. Savvy teachers know that many of the relevant documents are challenging for students so they carefully excerpted key passages or used images to make these materials accessible for all. Sherry Scott and Terry Sanders, fifth grade teachers at Dickison Elementary School in the Compton Unified District, for example, created a lesson using illustrations from the Library of Congress collection. Students were first asked to **analyze** the drawings' contents, then reflect on the reasons for their creation, and ponder what additional questions they had about the content. Following guided reading, they were then to sort Revolutionary era events into categories (economic, religious, or political) and decide which of those elements was the most influential in determining whether or not to separate from England. The lesson concluded with a carefully structured essay incorporating **evidence** from their studies. We are looking forward to seeing how this lesson played out

in their classrooms when they and the other enthusiastic participants return in February for a follow-up session.

In summary, we believe that focusing on the thinking behind the Common Core State Standards can only help us develop more skilled and thoughtful students. Not only is this an essential element of modern citizenship, but in our increasingly diverse world where the specific content of occupations is often best learned on the job, employers will value job-seekers who have been trained to **analyze**, use **evidence**, and engage with multiple **perspectives**.

Facing page image: *Constantinople. Mosque of St. Sophia and Constantinople*. Image from the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/mpc2010000637/PP/resource/>

Above image: *Los Angeles City Hall*. Image from the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ca1261.photos.322282p/>



Why Did Lincoln Fight?

A History Blueprint Lesson

Abraham Lincoln's public justification for war evolved over his years in public office. In fact, the entire meaning of freedom and equality - ideals of the Declaration of Independence - evolved during the war as well. As a senatorial candidate in the 1850s, Lincoln argued for the preservation of the Union and against the expansion of slavery to the west. As the war progressed, he placed a greater emphasis on freedom and the abolition of slavery. While Lincoln's most famous act may have been freeing the slaves and so bringing "a new birth of freedom," some historians argue that this was not his original intention.

The California History-Social Science Project completed its first History Blueprint Unit in 2011. *The Civil War* unit covers the 8th Grade Civil War standard, and centers on the question: "Was the Civil War a war for freedom?" The unit is comprised of 8 lessons, each of which aligns with Common Core reading and writing standards to develop student literacy. What follows is an excerpt from Lesson #5: Lincoln's Speeches. Like all Blueprint curriculum, this unit centers on a question of historical significance and includes analysis of relevant primary sources in order to develop an evidence-based interpretation or argument. This unit asks students to consider Lincoln's motivations through a close reading of his public statements in order to answer the central question of the lesson: "Why Did Lincoln Fight?"

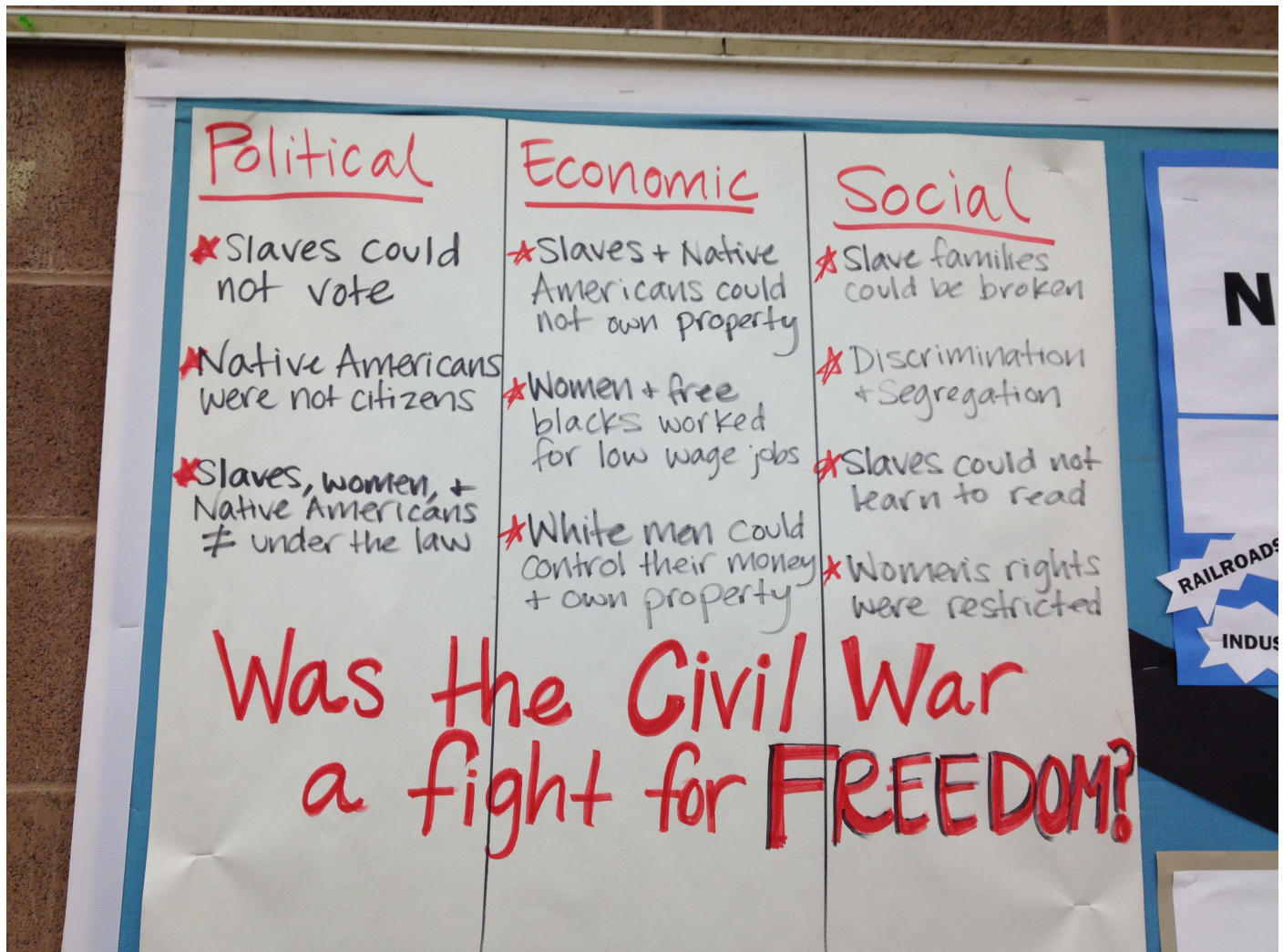
Lesson #5 gives students the opportunity to make their own interpretations to answer the focus question based on specific evidence from Lincoln's speeches and comparisons with the Declaration of Independence. This particular excerpt centers on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered on November 19, 1863 at the dedication of the Gettysburg cemetery, six months after the infamous battle that resulted in more than 50,000 Confederate and Union casualties. The lesson utilizes a sentence deconstruction activity, a literacy strategy designed to help students understand Lincoln's symbolism, abstraction, and 19th-century prose. Basic directions are described on the next page; see CW5.4, unit page 227, for additional context and step-by-step instructions for this lesson.

For more information and a free download of the entire unit, including all teacher resources, visit: <http://chssp.ucdavis.edu/programs/historyblueprint>.

Abraham Lincoln, three-quarter length portrait. Image from the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009630693/>

Procedures:

1. Distribute excerpt of *The Gettysburg Address* to students, with a brief outline of the background of the address, emphasizing the historical context of the speech.
2. Read or have students read the excerpt aloud, and then silently to themselves. Direct students to underlined the sentence(s) that gives Lincoln's reason(s) for fighting the war.
3. Distribute *Sentence Deconstruction* chart. Working closely with your students, have them fill in the first four columns of the chart using the text of the *Address*, paying close attention to the parts of speech and how they help create meaning for the reader or audience.
4. Finally, have students work in pairs or as a whole group to answer the questions listed in the fifth column. Discuss to make sure students both comprehend the text and understand its significance.
5. Using text from the *Address* as evidence, return to the focus question: "Why Did Lincoln Fight?"



Bulletin Board from Sarah Schnack's Blueprint pilot classroom.

Student Handout #1:

Background: Six months after the Union victory in the Battle of Gettysburg, Lincoln gave this speech as part of a dedication of the Gettysburg cemetery. 23,000 Union and 28,000 Confederacy soldiers died at the battle of Gettysburg:

Speech:

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

*But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. **It is** rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."*

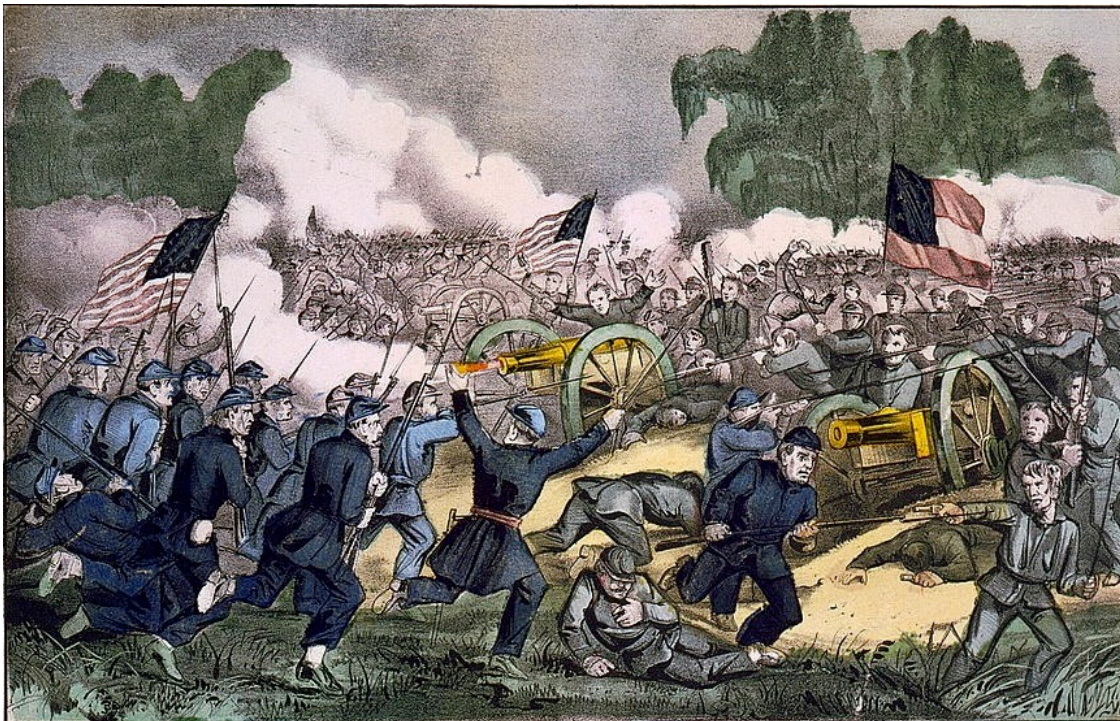


Gettysburg Address Wordle

Student Handout #2:

Sentence Deconstruction

-Time marker -Connector words -Prepositional phrase -Circumstances	Historical Actors (who is doing this?)	Verbs / Verb Phrases	Who, What, Where Message	Questions or Conclusions
It is rather for	us (<i>our country</i>)		to the great task remaining before us	What was the unfinished task?
that from these honored dead	we		increased devotion	How did Lincoln think the people could honor those who died?
to that	cause for which they (_____) here		the last full measure of devotion	
-- that	we			
that	these dead		in vain	What does "a new birth of freedom" mean?
-- that	this nation, under God,		a new birth of freedom	
-- and that	government of the people, by the people, for the people,		from the earth.	
				Why did Lincoln think the people of the Union should continue fighting the war?



The Battle of Gettysburg. Image from the Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/90709061/>.

Teaching Writing: Planning and Implementing a Standards-Based Program



In order for students to engage in the study of history, they must write. Writing is the primary mode of knowledge production for the history discipline. Historians analyze and synthesize source-based evidence and answer relevant questions by developing interpretations, or arguments about historical events. The history classroom is a primary site for students to gain experience writing non-fiction, informational text. This is exactly the type of writing that is required by the newly-adopted Common Core State Standards. These standards “are designed to be robust and relevant to real careers.” A consortium of researchers, educators, politicians, and business professionals created these national standards so that K-12 students would achieve the reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills that are necessary for success in academia and the business world for the 21st century. The standards require students to write in the history classroom and mandate that all secondary students engage in both informative and explanatory writing as well as argumentative writing tasks.

Teachers and scholars with the California History Social-Science Project have developed a research-based and standards-aligned curriculum, *Teaching Writing: Planning and Implementing a Standards-Based Program*, to support educators as they incorporate the new writing standards. Most importantly, the curriculum helps teachers develop an effective writing program for their history classrooms. The curriculum is organized into two parts. The first section, “Planning for Writing,” provides teachers with the support they need to develop a year-long writing program as well as planning tools for developing unit or lesson level writing prompts. In the second section, “Implementing History Writing,” teachers will be introduced to practical examples of a range of writing genres, including Cause and Effect and Compare and Contrast. Given the Common Core State Standards’ emphasis on developing students’ ability to do research in multi-media formats, the curriculum also includes instruction in research papers and websites. On a practical note, the genres included in the curriculum align with the Advanced Placement History exam. Given that writing instruction will increase academic literacy and opportunities for all students – particularly English Learners – *Teaching Writing* argues that writing instruction should not only be reserved for “advanced” students, but must be included in all history classrooms.

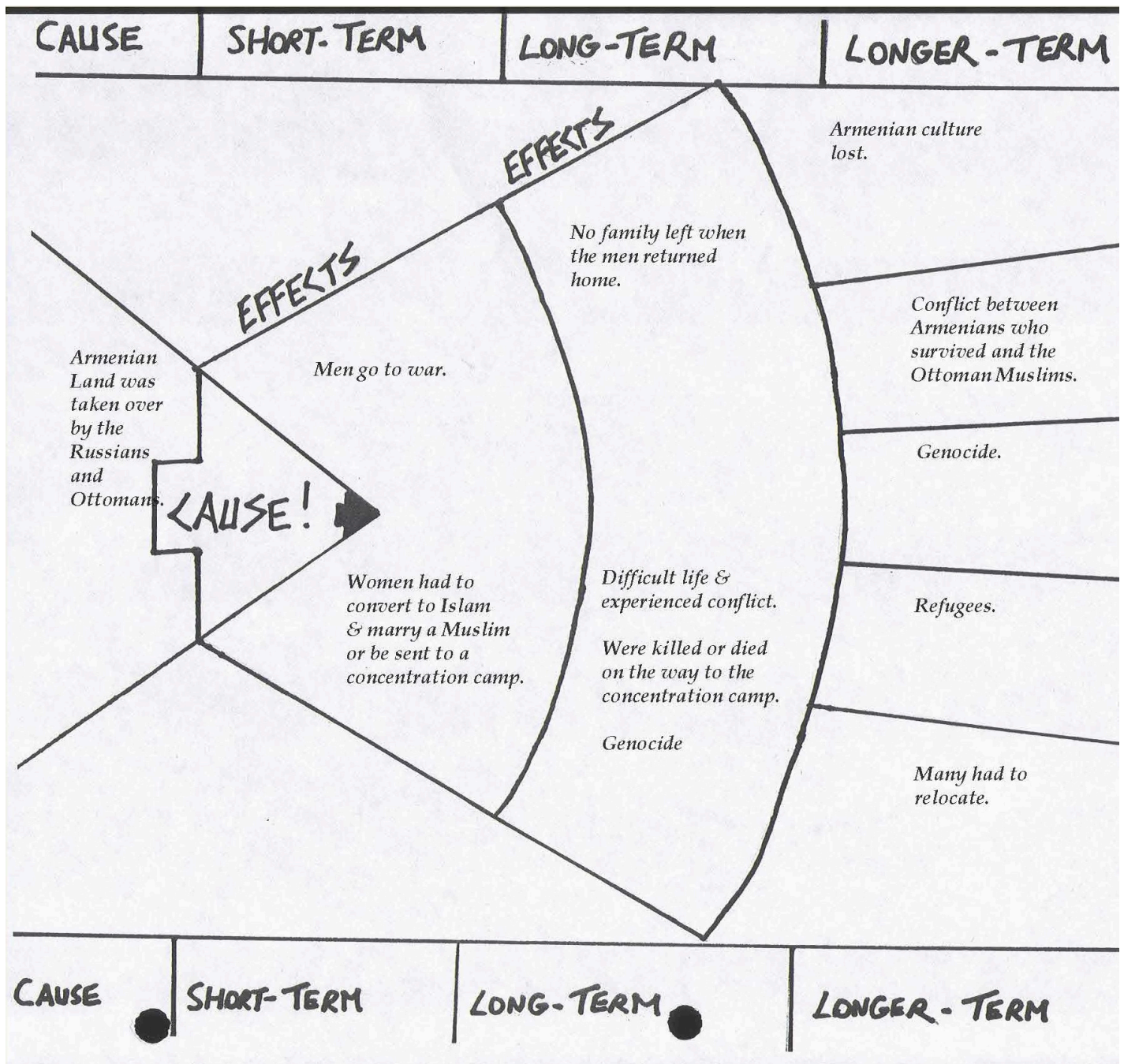
Teaching Writing: Planning and Implementing a Standards-Based Program lessons have been tested in a variety of classroom settings. Qualitative analysis of research data from piloting classrooms demonstrates that the professional development improved teachers’ academic literacy expertise and increased their efficacy at improving student literacy. These teachers increased their explicit writing instruction and consequently noticed increased achievement in their classrooms. One teacher reported, “I have seen a tremendous growth of writing in my class.” Another teacher reflecting on his students’ growth commented, “I can already see a positive difference in my students’ writing this year as opposed to last year.” Evaluation results of middle and high school students support teacher observations. An external research report found that treatment group students outperformed comparison group students in the areas of reading comprehension and written historical analysis. Additionally, these gains were also consistent for English Learners who were a part of the treatment group.¹ We look forward to working with teachers, schools, and districts to implement rigorous writing programs to build upon the hard work of teachers and students in our state.

Notes

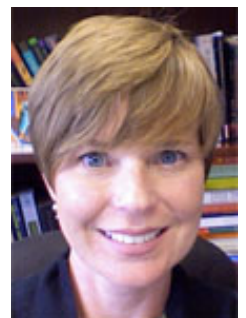
¹ Improving Teacher Quality grant in Santa Ana Unified and Orange Unified in partnership with UC Irvine History Project evaluated by Continuous Improvement Associates in 2009.

Cause and Effect

A strategy to support identifying cause and effect in writing a paragraph.



Contact Nicole Gilbertson, Director of the The History Project at UC Irvine, to learn more about *Teaching Writing: Planning and Implementing a Standards-Based Program*. More information can also be found at: http://www.humanities.uci.edu/history/ucihp/literacy_institute/index.php



Rewriting History

by Emily Markussen-Sorsher,
The History Project at UC Irvine

The students in today's classrooms will face new challenges when they graduate; jobs have changed, as have the skills they require of their entry-level workers. In an effort to secure our economic success in the next generation, political and educational leaders created the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). At the heart of the Common Core are the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, which reinforce the mission of the CCSS – to ready students for the new global economy. With all signs pointing to an economic future focused on the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields, history must find a new way to contribute to our students' futures. For over two decades, the California History-Social Science Project has emphasized the critical thinking skills that are crucial to success in the modern workforce – *research, analysis, and synthesis*. These are reflected in the new literacy goals that are shared across the curriculum.

The CCSS focus on three types of writing – argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative. Students should demonstrate their understanding through writing that conveys complexity of ideas, the synthesis of research, and well-honed language techniques. For students in the 8th grade, these three types of writing should be equally balanced; by the 12th grade, argumentative and explanatory assignments should account for 40% each of a student's work, while narrative is relegated to 20% (a reflection of the needs of the modern workforce). These categories present opportunities for history teachers to focus on literacy and give students practice for CCSS assessments. The new computer-adaptive testing will involve “performance task” items, which ask the students to synthesize and evaluate research in order to make an argument.

Many of the new standards capitalize on the current Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills outlined in the California State Standards. A focus on research, interpretation, evaluation, and explanation of connections is crucial to success on CCSS writing assignments. The new standards take these prioritized skills one step further and organize them into specific categories of writing (see “Types of Common Core Writing” on next page).

In short, the Common Core expands upon the skills that teachers already knew were most effective for our students. Teachers should ensure that writing assignments are part of their regular classroom routine, scaffolding students through the research, analysis, and synthesis skills that prepare them for rigorous college courses, expanding career options, or whatever their future may hold.



Types of Common Core Writing

Argument – emphasizes an ability to interpret complex events and make connections between historical moments and larger trends in politics, economics, and social phenomena. Common Core focuses on the use of evidence in these assignments, where students will need to gather, evaluate, and use information to support a claim in argumentative style writing. For history teachers, this will mean routinely scaffolding activities such as Document Based Questions, wherein students answer text-dependent questions from given excerpts of primary sources. Students are required to use a variety of primary and secondary sources including graphs, tables, literature, and narratives, with special attention to point of view. Appendix B of the CCSS includes suggested sources for students.

Informative or Explanatory – captures the standards in *Chronological and Spatial Thinking*, with exercises in sequencing, cause and effect, and comparison. Current CHSSP practices on summary writing will be beneficial to teachers adopting the Common Core. As students matriculate, summaries are to include a carefully balanced body of research, with a final product that presents a synthesis of information that has been carefully selected and organized to provide insightful analysis of difficult concepts. This writing exercise prepares students to produce a succinct summary from a wide-ranging body of research, a skill necessary in college and career readiness.

Narrative – encourages the use of narrative devices (rhetoric, figurative and sensory language) to weave historical narratives into an argumentative or explanatory essay. Students use the same *Research, Evidence, and Point of View* California standards to examine bias in narratives and the value of narratives as evidence. With this new twist, perspective becomes a tool students use to drive home their point in a speech, dissertation, or job application.



The Civil War

A Common Core Program

*Curriculum, Assessments, Student Literacy
& Teacher Professional Development*

Was the Civil War a War for Freedom?



A COMMON CORE PROGRAM

To commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, the California History-Social Science Project (CHSSP) designed a comprehensive unit of study that combines primary and secondary sources to engage students in historical investigation, literacy development, and critical thinking.

The History Blueprint:

- ✓ Aligns with both the Common Core Standards for E/LA and History, as well as the California Content Standards for History-Social Science
- ✓ Builds student literacy and critical thinking
- ✓ Includes a variety of formative and summative assessments to inform classroom instruction.
- ✓ Is research-based and classroom-tested

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

Strategies to improve student ability to:

- ✓ Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis
- ✓ Determine the central ideas or information of a source
- ✓ Determine the meaning of words as they are used in a text
- ✓ Describe how a text presents information
- ✓ Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view
- ✓ Integrate visual information
- ✓ Analyze the relationship between primary and secondary sources
- ✓ Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content
- ✓ Produce clear and coherent writing

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Two-day workshops for teachers & administrators that provide an introduction to Blueprint materials, presentations by leading historians, and practical guidance by experienced teacher leaders to improve student thinking, disciplinary understanding, expository reading & writing ability, and historical content knowledge.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO VIEW CURRICULUM

To find out about workshops in your region or learn how your district can host a workshop customized for your school, contact us!

Web:

- <http://chssp.ucdavis.edu/programs/historyblueprint>
- <http://historyblueprint.org>

Email:

chssp@ucdavis.edu

Phone:

530-752-0572

Address:

California History-Social Science Project
University of California, Davis
1254 Social Sciences and Humanities
Building
One Shields Avenue
Davis, CA 95616



Common Core Resources

The California Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards on August 2, 2010.
See below for links to relevant information regarding these standards.

California Department of Education, Common Core State Standards Resources:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cc/>

Common Core State Standards Initiative Homepage:

<http://www.corestandards.org/>

Frequently asked questions about the Common Core State Standards:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cc/ccssfaqs2010.asp>

ASCD, an endorsing partner, hosts a Common Core Resource Page:

<http://www.ascd.org/common-core-state-standards/common-core.aspx>

Videos on implementing the Common Core Standards:

https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos?page=1&categories=topics_common-core
<http://www.youtube.com/user/TheHuntInstitute>

Common Core Toolkit from Partnership for 21st Century Skills:

<http://www.p21.org/tools-and-resources/publications/p21-common-core-toolkit>

Share My Lesson information center for the CCSS:

<http://www.sharemylesson.com/article.aspx?storyCode=50000148>

Curricula and lesson plans, and Common Core forum.



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