

# Chapter 21

## Framing Historical Thinking in the Digital Age

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### ABSTRACT

*It is undeniable that students today are fundamentally different than those of previous generations and that many students of this generation do not enjoy history, as it is typically ranked as one of the least favorite subjects in K-12 schools. A large reason for this is the fact that much of the curriculum and instructional approaches are outdated and of little interest to students and do not mirror the approaches and methods employed by historians. As educators increasingly move towards teaching in online environments, it is critical that history educators structure instruction to meet the needs of the student, while making it effective, engaging, and authentic. This chapter focuses on ways that educators, in a mixed-mode or online environment, can attend to the four dimensions of the college, career, and civic life (C3) framework for social studies state standards: helping students in evaluating sources and using evidence, developing questions and planning inquiries, applying disciplinary concepts and tools, and communicating conclusions and taking informed action.*

### INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that students today are fundamentally different than those of previous generations and that many students of this generation do not enjoy history, as it is typically ranked as one of the least favorite subjects in K–12 schools (Allen, 1994; Black & Blake, 2001; Jensen, 2001; Steffey & Hood, 1994; Zhao & Hoge, 2005). A large reason for this is the fact that much of the curriculum and approaches with which they are presented are outdated, of little interest to our student population, and do not mirror the approaches and methods employed by historians in the field (Brooks, 2014; Levstik & Barton, 2015; Loewen, 2009; VanSledright, 2014; Waring, 2011). Additionally, much of the curriculum being used was not designed for students of the digital age, is ineffective, and does not attend to the ways in which they learn (Prensky, 2001a, 2001b). It is vital that history educators reinvigorate the history curriculum and teach in a manner that is geared towards these digital natives, and as educators increasingly move

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towards teaching in online environments, it is critical that they structure instruction to meet the needs of the online student, while making it effective, engaging, and authentic (Cohen & Rosenzweig, 2005; McGrew, Breakstone, Ortega, Smith, & Wineburg, 2018; Miller & Toth, 2012; Scheuerell, 2007; Waring, 2014). One way to do this is to integrate the teaching of history with available digital resources and to allow students opportunities to conduct authentic historical investigations in online environments (Brush & Saye, 2014; Craig, 2017; Friedman, 2006; Mauch & Tarman, 2016; Scheuerell & Jaeger, 2015; Swan & Hicks, 2006; Swan & Hofer, 2013; Waring & Bentley, 2012).

In 1999, Edward Ayers averred that, in their work, historians may obscure choices and can make a variety of compromises as they “winnow evidence through finer and finer grids of note-taking, narrative, and analysis, as the abstracted patterns take on a fixity of their own” (para. 10). Through the utilization of digital archives and digital primary source repositories, the user is afforded opportunities to discover connections that may not have otherwise been made and to sift through various complications from the past. Thus, as Ayers (1999) notes, history may be “better suited to digital technology than any other humanistic discipline” (para. 4), and the power for the history student is that “digital media does not produce any particular outcome. It does not intrinsically degrade education and scholarship nor does it necessarily improve them. Everything depends on the decisions we make” (para. 28). Conducting historical investigations online, through digital archives and digital primary source repositories, allows students an opportunity to experience the past in a much more authentic and discipline-based manner. The procedures employed by historians in the field can be easily replicated and supported in an online learning environment and, if done properly, online history teaching actually looks more like historians’ work than the overly dependent lecture-oriented face-to-face classroom. This approach, known as digital history, has been defined as “the study of the past using a variety of electronically reproduced primary source texts, images, and artifacts as well as the constructed historical narratives, accounts, or presentations that result from digital historical inquiry” (Lee, 2002, p. 504). Lee points out that a real strength of conducting digital history is that the process encourages “a view of the past that is tentative and process orientated” (p. 508). He also notes that there is a lot of power in learning about the past and conducting historical inquiries in the digital age, as the resources available for historians and history students differ from non-digital materials in the following ways:

1. *Digital historical resources are more accessible;*
2. *They encourage increased archival activity;*
3. *They promote the development of social networks;*
4. *They are easier to manipulate;*
5. *They are searchable;*
6. *They are more flexible; and*
7. *They include an organizational strategy related to the content of the collection. (Lee, 2002, p. 508)*

The opportunities that are afforded to online and mixed-mode educators are vast and growing each day.

The *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2017b) has provided a guiding document that assists stakeholders and practitioners via a framework for how to go about educating students in the social studies classroom and how to provide the “disciplinary tools necessary to prepare students for college, career, and civic life” (p. 17). The stated objectives are for this document to provide ways in which educators can (a) “enhance the rigor of the social studies disciplines”; (b) “build critical thinking, problem solving, and

participatory skills to become engaged citizens”; and (c) “align academic programs to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies” (NCSS, 2017a, para. 1). The C3 framework is rooted in research on thinking, learning, and understanding and features four dimensions of informed inquiry for the social studies classroom: (a) developing questions and planning inquiries; (b) applying disciplinary concepts and tools; (c) evaluating sources and using evidence; and (d) communicating conclusions and taking informed action. The authors of the standards sought to create a framework for educators to prepare students for the 21st century:

*Active and responsible citizens identify and analyze public problems; deliberate with other people about how to define and address issues; take constructive, collaborative action; reflect on their actions; create and sustain groups; and influence institutions both large and small. They vote, serve on juries, follow the news and current events, and participate in voluntary groups and efforts. Teaching students to act in these ways—as citizens—significantly enhances preparation for college and career. Many of the same skills that are needed for active and responsible citizenship—working effectively with other people, deliberating and reasoning quantitatively about issues, following the news, and forming and sustaining groups—are also crucial to success in the 21st century workplace and in college. Individual mastery of content often no longer suffices; students should also develop the capacity to work together to apply knowledge to real problems. Thus, a rich social studies education is an education for college, career, and civic life. (NCSS, 2017b, p. 19)*

This chapter will outline ways in which history educators can bring the past to life in authentic and engaging ways, particularly in online and mixed-mode educational environments. The techniques and suggestion presented will be organized under the four C3 dimensions.

## **EVALUATING SOURCES AND USING EVIDENCE (DIMENSION 3)**

Although “evaluating sources and using evidence” (NCSS, 2017b, p. 53) is the third dimension of the C3 framework, this is the first of the four dimensions that should be taught. In order for students to understand what historical thinking is and to appreciate the process involved in creating authentic historical narratives, it is essential that they have a full and deep understanding of what primary and secondary sources are and of their similarities and differences (Scheuler, 2014; Waring & Tapia-Moreno, 2015). The creators of the framework expect that students should have an awareness of what primary and secondary sources are, be able to evaluate the value of sources, and understand individual sources do not typically constitute acceptable forms of historical evidence individually, but rather must be aggregated and considered as a whole. It is important that students find, evaluate, and choose sources that help them create their own evidence-based narratives, accounts, and arguments that attend to guiding questions of interest or critical topics for investigation. It is crucial for students to “develop a capacity for gathering and evaluating sources and then use evidence in disciplinary ways” (NCSS, 2017b, p. 18).

### **Leaving Evidence of Our Lives**

A great approach to begin building students’ capacity for using sources is to lead students through a process created by the Library of Congress (2010) entitled “leaving evidence of our lives” (p. 7). In this

activity, students are asked to create a list of items, from events in which they were engaged in during the past 24 hours, that might have been left behind, or those items that might prove that the events took place or that the creator exists. A brief example, including events and sources, should be provided to help them understand what should be listed. Leading students through a scenario for which they have schema developed, such as a visit to a gas station, a shopping mall, or a school, can help them in their attempt to create a list of the sources. These items can be shared as a bulleted list, slideshow, Prezi, or short video. Once the students' lists are created and shared, a discussion about primary and secondary sources can begin. This can lead them to a better understanding of how historians use sources and why they are so important to the construction of evidence-based narratives. This activity, along with many other activities and materials related to teaching with primary sources, can be found on the Library of Congress' Professional Development Builder website site (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/professionaldevelopment/tpsdirect/>).

## **Introduction to Primary Sources**

Once students have had an opportunity to begin learning about what primary and secondary sources are and how these contribute to the construction of a historical narrative, they need to be afforded an opportunity to create definitions of these terms in their own words. Far too often, students are expected to analyze, scrutinize, and engage with primary and secondary sources without having a clear understanding of the terms and their similarities and differences (Vansledright, 2002, 2014). An approach that can make their understanding more concrete and transferrable is having students create 3–5 minute videos defining primary and secondary sources, in their own words, based on a topic of interest or study (e.g., history of baseball, American Civil War, Black Plague, etc.). Staff members at the University of California, San Diego's Social Sciences & Humanities Library (2008) designed a video to provide definitions of primary and secondary sources that can be used as a model (<https://youtu.be/cHTtpYYbhm0>). Within the video, students can be asked to define primary and secondary sources in their own words, offer multiple examples of each, and provide an analysis of the merits and shortcomings of utilizing each when conducting historical research. Some website that can help in the construction of the definitions or be used as references are:

- Finding Historical Primary Sources (Berkeley Library).
- Using Primary Sources (Library of Congress): <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources>
- Classroom Materials and Lessons Using Primary Sources (Library of Congress): <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials>
- Why Use Primary Sources (Library of Congress): <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/whyuse.html>

## **Primary Source Analysis**

Once students have a clear understanding of what primary and secondary sources are, it is important for them to begin to analyze them individually, prior to being given a set of sources and being expected to construct a thesis statement from a collection of sources. Also, it is essential that this process is properly scaffolded. A great worksheet to support these activities with the novice learner is the primary sources analysis tool provided by the Library of Congress (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Library of Congress's primary source analysis tool  
[http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary\\_Source\\_Analysis\\_Tool.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf)

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS TOOL

OBSERVE REFLECT QUESTION

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS | loc.gov/teachers

For an introductory image, the students can be asked to examine an image, such as the “daily inspection of teeth and finger nails.”

Through the use of the analysis sheet, students are asked to examine the image and record their observations, reflect upon what they see and make inferences, and think about what questions are left unanswered, as well as note anything that would assist in further investigation of the topic. For the example

Figure 2. Example image for primary source analysis: Daily inspection of teeth and finger nails  
<http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/nlc.00667>



image, “daily inspection of teeth and finger nails,” students could write down that there are children, a stove on the left side of the room, several children are looking in the direction of the photographer, and that there are images on the rear wall, when completing the “observe” column. However, they should not write that this is a school, that the image was taken in 1917, or that the image was captured in Oklahoma. These thoughts should be reserved for the “reflection” section of the analysis sheet, as “observe” should only include items that do not include outside information, interpretation, or conjecture. Other responses for the “reflection” column may include thoughts, such as the children appear to be from a working class environment, the image was possibly taken during the second decade of the twentieth century, or that the students seem to be of varying age levels. These are thoughts that cannot be verified but are based on the available evidence in the image and from schema that the student has developed from past experience. The final column, “question,” is for any lingering questions that a student may have that cannot be definitively answered.

To help teachers scaffold this process, the Library provides various teacher’s guides and analysis tools (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>) for different types of sources. As the students gain the capacity to examine sources at more critical levels, there are many other analysis sheets available online to assist with the analysis, such as the ones from the National Archives (<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets>) and the Maryland Historical Society (<http://www.mdhs.org/education/teachers/primary-source-worksheets>). This process helps the students to begin to think more critically about sources they encounter and the procedure to be used when examining them.

This activity works well in a face-to-face environment but can easily be employed in an online environment. One way that a teacher can determine the extent to which a student is thinking about a source, as he or she examines it, is through the use of video screen capture software. Students can complete the primary analysis sheet along with providing a demonstration of what elements in the source that he or she observed, reflected upon, and what questions are left. These in tandem, along with the audio narrative from the video screen capture, can provide great insight into a student’s line of thinking and where additional instruction or support may be necessary. Image editing and annotation software, such as Snagit (<https://www.techsmith.com>), Snaggy (<https://snag.gy>), Puush (<https://puush.me>), Screenshot Captor (<http://www.donationcoder.com>), and Screenpresso (<https://www.screenpresso.com>), can allow for even more information to be gathered by the teacher. Online educators could also utilize video conferencing to elicit further information or discussion boards to create a deeper collaborative discussion about the particular source.

## **Hide and Seek**

To increase students’ interest in primary sources and to show the importance of looking at the details found within an image, a game of hide and seek can be employed with students, where they are asked to find a place to hide within an image. This process is an enjoyable and effective way to get students to look deeper into imagery and help them to look beyond the superficial. The rules of this activity are based on those utilized for the popular children’s game of the same name. Depending on the topic and purpose, students are shown a historic image and given an opportunity to choose what they will be as they hide (e.g. fly, dog, bird, etc.) and attempt to find a hiding place where they will not be discovered. Images that have a lot of detail, such as street scenes, work well for this activity.

The teacher gives the students 20–30 seconds to find a hiding place and, then, attempts to find each student. As a hiding place is discovered, the seeker should begin asking questions directly associated

*Figure 3. Example image for hide and seek: Italian neighborhood with street market, Mulberry Street, New York, NY*

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/det.4a27270>



with the image, such as “what do you see immediately in front of you?,” “what do you hear?,” and “is what is being spoken a language that you would recognize?” Questions that focus on who, what, where, when, and why, as well as those related to senses, are some of the most effective for garnering additional and detailed information about the image (Morgan & Rasinski, 2012). When introducing the image, the teacher can post the image the night before a face-to-face meeting, synchronous meeting, or use a discussion board, to increase levels of engagement, or facilitate the entire hide and seek process as a webinar. Although this is a great “bell ringer” activity (Boettner, 2011; Wong & Wong, 2018) or the online equivalent, the same image can be used at the end of a unit as a complement to a writing prompt.

Although writing assignments are valuable and necessary, students could also be asked to utilize image annotation sites, like VoiceThread (<https://voicethread.com>), to verbally communicate what is going on in the image and give a detailed commentary about specifics regarding senses and the five w’s and h (who, what, where, when, why, and how). For the more technologically savvy, digital image editing software can be used to place a digital cutout copy of students into the primary source image being used. This greatly increases interest levels and specificity of details in the writing assignments submitted by the students.

Building from the hide and seek activity, teachers can utilize a lesson provided by the Library of Congress, entitled Civil War Photographs: What Do You See? (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroom-materials/lessons/civil-war>). In this lesson, students are shown a picture of the Civil War era mortar, the Dictator, and are asked to think historically by answering a series of questions about the image (Barton, 2001). The image is dissected into six sections, and students are provided with questions corresponding to each section that help them to better ascertain time frame, season, specific uses for items in the image, and other important elements found in the image, as well as develop links between the Civil War and American industrialization (Dutt-Doner, Cook-Cottone, & Allen, 2007). A great way to facilitate

the discussion in an online environment is to create wiki pages for each of the six sections of the image. Students can answer the questions there, provide thoughts, see what colleagues are thinking, and use the history function to see how answers have been modified throughout the process.

## **Evaluating Sources**

Students should begin the evaluative process by thinking about the nature, purpose, and quality of the resource from which they are obtaining their sources. The Cornell University Library provides five criteria for evaluating webpages ([http://guides.library.cornell.edu/evaluating\\_Web\\_pages](http://guides.library.cornell.edu/evaluating_Web_pages)) that are helpful in allowing students to effectively evaluate sites. These guidelines assist students in properly assessing the accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, and coverage of the websites they visit.

A great resource is the website All About Explorers (<https://www.allaboutexplorers.com>). This site was created by educators to assist students in thinking critically about what they access on the Internet. The creators of the site state:

*Although the Internet can be a tremendous resource for gathering information about a topic, we found that students often did not have the skills to discern useful information from worthless data. So we set out to develop a series of lessons for elementary age students in which we would demonstrate that just because it is out there for the searching does not mean it is worthwhile. (All About Explorers, 2014, paras. 1–2)*

This site includes treasure hunts, WebQuests, and biographies of explorers. One of the activities has students answer a series of questions about an explorer and compare the answers to what they find on several other websites provided. This is an example of corroboration which is a discipline specific skill for historical inquiry and the primary aim of the C3 framework.

This is an excellent resource for online teachers, as they teach students to critically examine sites and sources to determine their worth. For example, the student can think about whether, in 1513, Juan

***Figure 4. Example image for What Do You See?: The Dictator***  
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/civil-war/studentindex.html>





Ponce de León was “hired by Revlon, a cosmetic company, to search for the Fountain of Youth.” Did he become “interested in sailing through his cousin, Christopher Columbus?” They can also wrestle with the idea that de León “was close friends with his neighbor, Vasco da Gama,” and determine if he “contracted a rare disease which caused the loss of his right hand. As a result, de León had to learn to type all over again with just his left hand.”

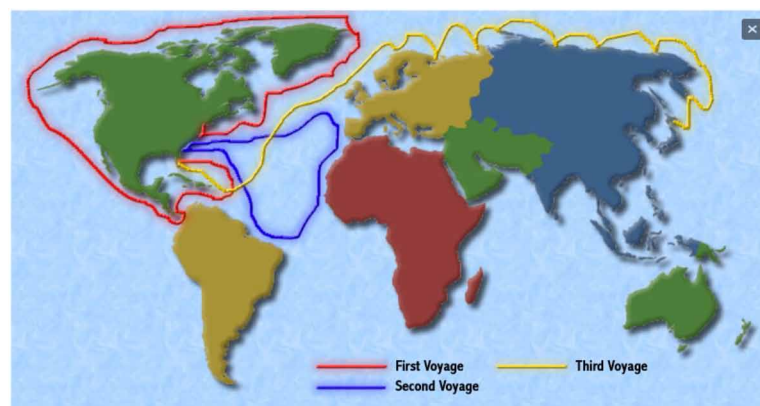
As students progress with their understanding of primary and secondary sources and are better able to critically assess the sites from which they are getting their information, they should begin to evaluate the quality, trustworthiness, and reliability of sources being used. The ability to determine the credibility of a source is an essential skill in digital history. The Stanford History Education Group (SHEG; <https://sheg.stanford.edu>) has provided several resources that will help teachers explore this further with students (e.g., SHEG, 2016). One activity, “evaluating sources,” (<https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/evaluating-sources>) helps students to enhance their abilities to examine and source documents. The activity guides students in how to think more critically about a source’s validity, as well as to discern which sources provide the best evidence to answer historical questions. Additionally, SHEG provides an activity where students begin with a historical question and two sources. They are asked: which would they trust more, and why? Many other activities are provided to help students read more accurately and efficiently, like a historian (<https://sheg.stanford.edu/list-reading-historian-lessons>). In online or mixed-mode learning, these can be done independently, and then, students can come together, in either a face-to-face or online environment, to share, debate, and reconcile their thoughts.

## Editing or Changing Primary Sources

Students must also be very cognizant of the fact that many sources have been inadvertently or blatantly altered through the process of translating a source from one language to another. For example, if students come across the Letter from the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, with news of the defeat of the Scots at the Battle of Falkirk (July 22, 1298; <http://deremilitari.org/2013/04/letter-from-the-bishop-of-lichfield-and-coventry-with-news-of-the-defeat-of-the-scots-at-the-battle-of-falkirk-july-22-1298>), they should be able to determine that the letter has been translated into English from Norman French and question

*Figure 5. Example map for the voyages of Juan Ponce de León*

<https://www.allaboutexplorers.com/explorers/deleon>



The Voyages of Juan Ponce de Leon (Click to enlarge)

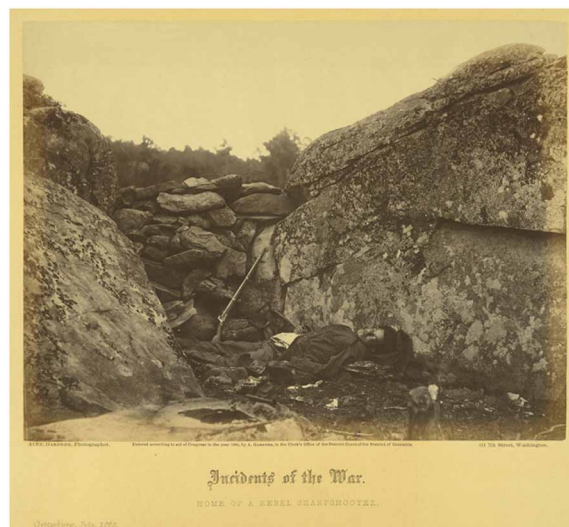
if all elements of the letter have been interpreted properly. They should also question changes made when historians or educators attempt to make the source more readily understood for novice readers of history, by deleting text through the use of ellipses and/or the addition or modification of particularly difficult or archaic words.

Furthermore, students need to question the validity of the statements made in the reading or reenacting of sources by someone other than the original creator. For example, when students encounter James Earl Jones reading Frederick Douglass's "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" (<https://youtu.be/8tTkHJWxfP0>), they need to question if Douglass intended the inflections, pauses, and tones given by Jones, as well as if omissions changed the intent found in Douglass's original version (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2927t.html>). Students need to have opportunities to critically think about these issues through the examination of a variety of sources and examples.

A great lesson for students to learn that you cannot always believe what you see is through an examination of an Alexander Gardner photograph, the Home of the Rebel Sharpshooter, in which Gardner posed the body of a Confederate soldier with a prop gun in a location more than forty yards from the place in which he originally fell and died.

Along with the image, there is an emotion-stirring narrative that accompanies the image. The student can read the text that Gardner provided in his *Photographic Sketch Book of the War* (1865–1866), on the Case of the Moved Body website (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war-glass-negatives/articles-and-essays/does-the-camera-ever-lie/the-case-of-the-moved-body>). This website creates a vivid picture of what the soldier in the image endured and uses emotive language, such as "What visions, of loved ones far away, may have hovered above his stony pillow! What familiar voices may he not have heard, like whispers beneath the roar of battle, as his eyes grew heavy in their long, last sleep!" On this site, the student can learn more about the analysis conducted by historian William Frassanito, over 100 years after the image was captured, in his book *Gettysburg: A Journey in Time* and how he determined that the image was of an altered scene.

*Figure 6. Example for editing or changing primary sources: Home of the Rebel Sharpshooter*  
[http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/7milVol/pics/fullsize/vol1\\_pl41.jpg](http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/7milVol/pics/fullsize/vol1_pl41.jpg)



To supplement the teaching of this image, you can utilize a segment of an episode of the PBS series, *The History Detectives* ([http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/video/3\\_civil\\_war.html](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/video/3_civil_war.html)), in which they discuss Civil War photography and specifically discuss the Home of the Rebel Sharpshooter. Additionally, the Annenberg Learner site has a page ([https://www.learner.org/series/biographyofamerica/prog11/feature/index\\_text.html](https://www.learner.org/series/biographyofamerica/prog11/feature/index_text.html)) that provides this image with areas over which the user can move the cursor to reveal further information about its elements. This activity can be presented in any number of ways; however, I find that it is important that the students hear a reading of Gardner's narrative. Each element of his description should be presented individually, in sequence, and without any additional resources being made available. This way, students can more fully digest what Gardner is presenting and experience a greater shock that the setting captured in the image was staged. This activity can create great dialog on the biased nature of all primary sources, especially those created with an intent to deceive the viewer or create a particular understanding. Thus, it may be best to present this activity in a face-to-face meeting or as a webinar.

## **DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND PLANNING INQUIRIES (DIMENSION 1)**

The first dimension of the C3 framework (NCSS, 2017b) specifies that educators need to allow students opportunities to create engaging questions and authentically plan discipline-based inquiry. This is an essential step to the historical inquiry process, as students need multiple opportunities to think about the content, develop initial thoughts, and create questions that frame the topic of study. In an online or mixed-mode environment, this is an easy and natural process, as students routinely use the Internet to ask and answer questions, discuss issues of interest, and conduct basic research. However, there is a need to scaffold the process and provide skills and tools in order to make students' time online more fruitful and engaging.

When students begin to think about a topic for research and begin planning for online-based inquiry, questions will need to be developed. Questions must be non-dichotomous, as a quick yes or no answer will stifle the learning process, and they should help students to engage in historical empathy and avoid the urge to minimize the complexity of the past to a single cause or simplistic causes. One example question provided by the authors of the C3 framework asks students to think critically about whether the American Revolution was revolutionary. A question such as this one allows students the opportunity to think critically, engage in historical empathy, and use multiple sources to build a thesis statement, all of which minimize the urge to boil down a complex issue to a simple answer.

### **Opening Up the Textbook**

The textbook is one of the best starting places for engaging with the past and asking new questions of interest. Samuel Wineburg (2007) created an activity he terms OUT: Opening Up the Textbook, that helps students to think critically about text they are reading and to question whether there are voices being left out, different perspectives needing attention, and what biases may be present in the narrative provided. These are the questions that historians, discipline experts, seek to answer and are fundamental to digital history. With this approach, students are asked to read a section of the textbook, or another

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secondary or tertiary source such as Wikipedia, and judge the statements being made against various pieces of evidence. This way, students can authentically wrestle with questions like “how do you explain the differences in these accounts?” and “what is the significance of these differences?”

There are six ways that are suggested for how students can open up the textbook:

1. **Comparison:** *Comparing two textbook accounts—e.g. U.S. to non-U.S., old to new.*
2. **Direct Challenge:** *Using primary documents to challenge textbook facts or interpretation.*
3. **Narrativization:** *Where does a textbook begin to tell the story, where does it end it?*
4. **Articulating Silences:** *Who is left out of the textbook’s narrative? Try bringing in voices of the silenced or moving issues of narrative choice to the surface.*
5. **Vivification:** *Breathing life into a text that only mentions, or omits.*
6. **Close Reading:** *Careful, attentive focus on word choice, including adjectives, titles, and the like.*  
(<http://teachinghistory.org/best-practices/teaching-with-textbooks/19438>, para. 5)

Through an example lesson, provided on the Historical Thinking Matters website (<http://historical-thinkingmatters.org/rosaparks/1/materials/textbook/>), students are asked to look at, critically examine, and challenge the traditional textbook story about Rosa Parks. In addition to the textbook version of what happened, students are given two primary source documents that question and contradict that narrative. Wineburg (2007) suggested that students can be asked to complete summative assignments, such as having them write a response to the author of something in the text or even rewriting the textbook passage so it is more complete, accurate, or complex. This is a terrific approach for structuring the planning of an inquiry and having a basis for the questions guiding the historical investigation. Activities, such as this one, need to be conducted and repeated frequently so that students will become critical consumers of any text they encounter.

## **Google Search, Yahoo Answers, and Ask a Historian**

Because many students seek out answers for questions posed to them by conducting a Google search (<https://www.google.com>) or by visiting a website such as Yahoo! Answers (<https://answers.yahoo.com>), I suggest that they do just that. Students can learn a great deal about what is commonly believed about a subject, misconceptions that exist, how they themselves go about utilizing the Internet to answer questions, and use what they find to construct a question worthy of pursuing. Questions that are of interest to the learner and those that seek to find a more appropriate, thorough, or correct answer to information found online can be the ones that are the most engaging and passionate for our students.

Another great resource is the Ask a Historian (<http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/ask-a-historian>) section of the National History Education Clearinghouse (<http://teachinghistory.org>). In this section, there are dozens of questions, such as when and why did Hawaii become a state, what were the most important battles of the American Revolution, and to what extent did African Americans, slave or free, fight for the Confederacy, and detailed responses from experts in the field discussing one opinion on the topic. In an online class, having access to a discipline expert could extend learning in rich and meaningful ways.

## **Online Newspapers**

Students can also take narratives, found in online newspapers, which question the traditional historical narrative, typically a textbook version, having been provided to students. An example is one in which 25 skeletons were unearthed as workers were building underground train rails in London, England. After this excavation and subsequent focus on the bodies found, there are claims that from detailed analysis of the skeletal remains and of wills registered in the area from around the estimated time of death, there should be doubt cast on the “‘facts’ that every schoolchild has learned for decades: that the epidemic was caused by a highly contagious strain spread by the fleas on rats” (<http://www.theguardian.com/science/2014/mar/29/black-death-not-spread-rat-fleas-london-plague>, para. 2). A story, such as this, helps students to see that history can be an ever evolving and changing narrative, even centuries after the event took place. Thus, questions worthy of asking continue to exist. Online tools that provide contemporary content topics are excellent resources for the virtual K–12 social studies classroom.

## **APPLYING DISCIPLINARY CONCEPTS AND TOOLS (DIMENSION 2)**

Within this dimension, students are asked to “analyze societal issues, trends, and events by applying concepts and tools” from within the particular discipline, such as historians’ distinctive habits of mind (NCSS, 2017b, p. 17). Better understanding these concepts and tools allow students to more effectively conduct authentic investigations and understand how to “fill in the gaps in their knowledge by learning how to work from sources and evidence in order to develop claims and counter-claims” (NCSS, 2017b, p. 18).

### **Why Historical Thinking Matters**

The Why Historical Thinking Matters website (<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org>) was designed “to teach students how to critically read primary sources and how to critique and construct historical narratives.” This site provides the user with various student investigations that foster critical and historical thinking skills and allow students opportunities to construct narratives and conclusions about past events. The introductory slideshow walks the user through the creator’s approach to examining primary sources: sourcing, contextualization, close reading, and collaboration. These are skills valued in the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Using the Battle of Lexington Green, the creators of the site have provided a way to assist students in better understanding the need for thinking about the past in a specified and structured manner that replicates skills and approaches employed by historians. This is a great resource for the online teacher, as the instructional elements to be conveyed are all included within the structure of the site.

### **National Council for History Education: History’s Habits of Mind**

An effective and authentic framework for guiding history instruction is the National Council for History Education’s (2014) History’s Habits of Mind, which were constructed to assist teachers in developing curricula that would empower and enable their students to:

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- *Grasp the significance of the past in shaping the present*
- *Perceive past events and issues as they might have been experienced by the people of the time, with historical empathy rather than present-mindedness*
- *Read critically, to discern differences between evidence and assertion and to frame useful and appropriate questions about the past*
- *Interrogate texts and artifacts, posing questions about the past that foster informed discussion, reasoned debate and evidence-based interpretation*
- *Recognize that history is an evolving narrative constructed from available sources, cogent inferences and changing interpretations*
- *Appreciate the diversity of cultures and variety of historical contexts, as well as to distinguish elements of our shared humanity*
- *Understand the impact made by individuals, groups and institutions at local, national and global levels both in effecting change and in ensuring continuity*
- *Realize that all individuals are decision makers, but that personal and public choices are often restricted by time, place and circumstance*
- *Negotiate a complex, often uncertain and ambiguous world, equipped with the appreciation for multiple perspectives*
- *Engage in patient reflection and constant reexamination of the past and present.* (National Council for History Education, 2014, para. 2)

These are vital elements to the historical inquiry process and, thus, must be present in a thorough, authentic, and engaging history curriculum.

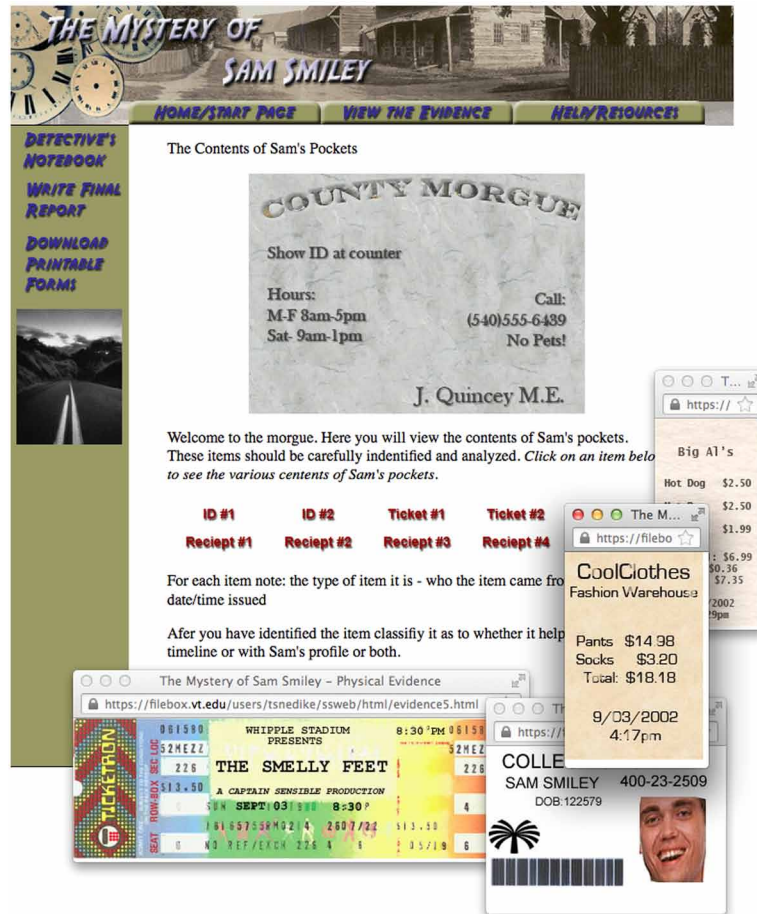
## **The Mystery of Sam Smiley**

Researchers at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University created a site, the Mystery of Sam Smiley (<https://hsi.wm.edu/cases/smiley/smiley.htm>), to help K–12 students better understand the process of constructing an evidence-based narrative and have a way to tie the research conducted and reports written by a crime investigator to the research and narratives completed by an historian. In a case provided on this site, the user is asked to unravel the mystery of the demise of Sam Smiley, as his body has been discovered under suspicious circumstances. The student is able to sift through various pieces of evidence (maps, the contents of Sam’s pockets, movies and transcripts of several witnesses, etc.) to determine if a crime was committed and how Sam died, specifically focusing on the completion of a:

1. Timeline, to trace the events of Sam’s final day;
2. Personality profile of Sam; and
3. Hypothesis/final report of Sam’s demise.

The creators remind the student that “a good detective carefully examines all the evidence checking for consistency across evidence and evaluating the reliability of the evidence.” This is yet another example of corroboration. Once a student has completed this investigation, the teacher can have a discussion about the process utilized by the crime scene investigator and that of an historian and can refer back to this lesson any time a student tries to make a hasty decision about the past, without weighing the evidence,

Figure 7. The mystery of Sam Smiley



thinking about multiple perspectives, or boiling down the past to a simplistic, mono-causal answer. In an online environment, teachers can also have students create screencasts of the site, with accompanying narratives, so that they can assess the ways in which the student is navigating the site and what content is being utilized and in what ways.

## Collaborative and Interactive Tools

There are many collaborative and interactive tools that can be utilized with students to give them opportunities to work with historians. These can be utilized in face-to-face environments, but can be equally effective, or even more so, in online and mixed-mode environments. Web conferencing tools, such as Skype (<https://www.skype.com>), JoinMe (<https://www.join.me>), Adobe Connect (<https://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect.html>), and Google Hangouts (<https://hangouts.google.com>), allow students an opportunity to ask questions of interest, learn more about the profession of a historian, and hear about current topics for debate among historians in a synchronous manner.

Cloud-based file sharing and storage tools, such as Dropbox (<https://www.dropbox.com>), Google Drive (<https://drive.google.com>), Microsoft OneDrive (<https://onedrive.live.com>), and Box (<https://www.box.com>), can be used in conjunction with web conferencing tools or alone. Primary sources, historian articles, and guiding questions can be stored there to facilitate conversations with historians or to provide further context. Other asynchronous tools, such as wikis or discussion forums, can be utilized, as students discuss the past with historians, history teachers, and archivists.

There are many sites that provide opportunities for students to ask questions of experts in the field and those individuals who work on a daily basis with primary sources. Students can email archivists and librarians at the Library of Congress with questions, on the Ask a Librarian (<http://www.loc.gov/rr/askalib>) section of their website. The user can ask questions about general collections, specific collections and sources, and services provided by the Library, and an expert in the area will provide responses within five days. Many libraries provide an “ask a librarian” section of their website, where students can ask historical questions to leading historians and even request where one might find the best sources to learn about a specific topic.

## **COMMUNICATING CONCLUSIONS AND TAKING INFORMED ACTION (DIMENSION 4)**

The fourth dimension encourages educators to create opportunities that allow students to develop explanations and supporting arguments and, subsequently, take action. The creators of the framework suggest that this can be done through the creation of individual essays, group projects, and other classroom-based written assessments, both formal and informal. Although they do note that “there is no substitute for thoughtful and persuasive writing, the Framework advocates expanding the means by which students communicate their preliminary and final conclusions” (NCSS, 2017b, p. 19), I would argue that much more can be done, especially with the assistance of emerging technologies.

### **Digital Narratives**

When learning about the past, it is essential for students to understand how secondary source narratives are constructed. They need to understand that the textbook readings that they utilize are based on evidence and contain the author’s biases and interpretations. Thus, students must be afforded opportunities to construct narratives in authentic ways (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Students typically enjoy learning about historical events through stories and, conversely, appreciate being given opportunities to present their understandings about the past in a story-based format. Therefore, students can enjoyably and effectively present their understandings about past events through the construction of narratives in a digital format. They can use video editing and creation software and websites such as Microsoft Story Remix, Animoto (<https://animoto.com>), and VoiceThread (<https://voicethread.com>), or create their own comics (ComicLife), picture books (StoryBird; <https://storybird.com>), or posters (Glogster; <https://edu.glogster.com>) to convey their understandings and knowledge constructed in an authentic and enjoyable way. These are interactive tools that could easily address learning goals of an online, virtual K–12 classroom.



## Websites

Students can create historical websites of their own, which mirror what they themselves consume on the Internet. The use of Weebly (<https://www.weebly.com>), or other webpage authoring sites, is effective for allowing students to create and share their narratives in an interactive and engaging manner (Waring & Bentley, 2012). Weebly is a free website development tool that allows users to plan, build, and publish their own website in a very structured and user-friendly manner, much of which is drag and drop and functions like a typical word processor. Dozens of templates are provided, and the user can easily modify these or choose to write HTML code. There is a Weebly Education section that allows teachers the opportunity to construct class websites, e-portfolios, and blogs, as well as unique sites for up to 40 users, without any fees or advertising. This is all done in a protected environment, and the teacher is given the power to decide which sections are available for public consumption and which are to remain private, as well as what areas and pages are unlocked for editing by students.

There are many other such online tools that exist that allow for and support the development of individual and collaborative student narratives. These online tools include the Google Drive suite (Drive, Docs, Sheets, Slides, and Forms), Prezi (<https://prezi.com>), SlideShare (<https://www.slideshare.net>), authorSTREAM (<http://www.authorstream.com>), YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com>), and iBooks Author (<https://www.apple.com/ibooks-author>).

## SOURCES FRAMEWORK

Once students understand the key elements to historical thinking, primary sources, and how utilize digital resources, they can be allowed to investigate questions of interest in a more independent manner. One framework that helps students to think historically and scaffolds the process is the SOURCES Framework for Teaching with Primary Sources.

In the first stage of the SOURCES Framework, *Scrutinize* the fundamental source, students are asked to analyze a primary source related to the selected topic of study. Two sources may be used if they are both deemed crucial, but for this initial stage, the use of one source is optimal. The fundamental source is the one that would be considered to be vital to any proper study of the topic being considered. To help scaffold the process of examining this fundamental source, the teacher should supply a fundamental question that will guide the entire historical inquiry process associated with the topic of study. These questions should be not be dichotomous (e.g., yes or no), should not allow for an easy answer, should encourage students to think critically, and should necessitate careful examination of the sources provided throughout the entire process to be able to properly attend to the question posed. Examples of fundamental questions for this sort of inquiry could be “what historical and social impacts can be associated with the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich?”, “to what extent did the end of slavery improve the lives of African Americans in the South?”, or “what are some of the events that led to the writing of the United States Constitution, and how did those events impact the content of this document?” In addition to providing a fundamental question to guide the historical inquiry, it is essential to provide students with other proper scaffolds, such as analysis sheets from the Library of Congress, National Archives and Records and Records Administration, or the Maryland Historical Society.

For the second stage of this inquiry process, students are asked to *Organize* thoughts associated with the fundamental source, the fundamental question, and any other information gleaned at this point in time.

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During the next stage, *Understand* the context, students are given an opportunity to think about what they know about the historical context related to the fundamental question and fill in some of the gaps in their understanding that exist. Depending on the ability level and previous knowledge of the students, this can be provided by the teacher through children's literature, brief videos, primary and secondary sources, guest speakers, or whatever method is most appropriate. Alternatively, students can independently find necessary information on their own to form a more complete understanding of the associated context.

Now that the students have formed a better understanding about the topic of study and can formulate some thoughts regarding the fundamental question, students are asked to revisit the fundamental source and carefully "*Read between the lines*" to try to interpret rationale and purpose for the creation of the fundamental source. As we know that not everything can be taken at face value, this is an important step in the historical thinking process so that students understand that the creator of the sources that they utilize often had deliberate reasons for its creation, and that typically is not obvious from the initial analysis of the source.

Depending upon the expertise of the students conducting the SOURCES inquiry, the *Corroborate* and *refute* stage can vary in structure. If students are more adept at analyzing sources and working independently, then the teacher can assign students the task of finding sources that will corroborate or refute their understandings, in regards to the fundamental question. If the students are at a more novice level, then the teacher can provide a set of primary and secondary sources, scaffolding questions, analysis sheets, and any other necessary information that will help them to develop a more complex and diverse understanding of the topic of study.

At this point in time, students should be prepared to *Establish* a plausible narrative. This can be created in the form of a traditional paper, documentary movie, historical marker, play or skit, diary, or whatever artifact the teacher decides is the best product for allowing for assessment of each student's acquisition of the desired content.

In the last stage, *Summarize* final thoughts, students are asked to think about the process that was undertaken, what ways they engaged in thinking and procedures that mimics what an historian does, what they have learned about the topic of study and the fundamental question, how they came to know what they know, and what questions still exist.

Engaging with the past, especially when utilizing digital primary sources, can be valuable and educational for students of various abilities and ages. It is essential that the process is properly scaffolded in order to help ensure success and, hopefully, engender interest and passion for learning history. The SOURCES framework is one tool that can help history. (For examples of lessons using the SOURCES framework, see: Cowgill & Waring, 2015; Herlihy & Waring, 2015; LaVallee & Waring, 2015; Terry & Waring, 2017; Waring & Herlihy, 2015; Waring, LaVallee, & Purdin, 2018; Waring & Scheiner-Fisher, 2014; Waring & Tapia-Moreno, 2015.)

## **CONCLUSION**

In the digital age, it is necessary, now more than ever, for history educators to find ways to allow students to learn about and convey understanding about the past in authentic, engaging, and virtual ways. The *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (NCSS, 2017b) is an excellent model for history educators to utilize as they prepare students for college, career, and civic life. This chapter focused on ways that educators, in a mixed-mode or online environment, can attend to

the four dimensions of the C3 framework, specifically focusing on how to assist students in evaluating sources and using evidence; developing questions and planning inquiries; applying disciplinary concepts and tools; and communicating conclusions and taking informed action. As online learning environments are becoming increasingly common at the K–12 level, it is important that transitioning from traditional face-to-face environments is rooted in sound technology-mediated instructional strategies and approaches that afford students varied opportunities to interact with content areas, such as the approaches addressed in this chapter.

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