

## Department Handbook - *Critical Thinking with History*

### Sequence in the Curriculum

- This handbook will be distributed to students in United States History I, United States History II and Modern World History at the beginning of the school year.

### Background:

It is a challenging time for the teacher of history. With the demise of the history MCAS and the advent of the common core, it may look to some that history is on the outside looking in at the core subjects. As the Lead Teacher of a history department of 20 members, my primary goal is to establish the relevance of my subject area and re-establish our place among the big four (math, science, ELA and history). If I can't, students will lose invaluable educational opportunities and colleagues will lose jobs.

To do this, I am advocating for history education to reposition and rebrand itself. Notice I say rebrand and not re-invent. Education needs history, history teachers just haven't been all that articulate in communicating why they are needed. Instead of bemoaning the coming of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skill inspired common core, I say bring it on. In fact, I think our discipline needs to brand itself as the purveyor of skill instruction. If you sit down with the common core and look at what it is asking, you will see a call to teach the skills historians use all the time. The common core wants students to be strategic readers that identify point of view. It wants writers that can acknowledge other arguments and work to overcome them. It wants researchers that can synthesize multiple sources into a cogent argument. It wants historians, it just doesn't know that. We need to be the ones that tell our colleagues, our administrators, and our school committees that these so-called 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are actually things we've been doing for centuries.

What follows is a small attempt to push my department toward this repositioning. I have taken the many discussions, lectures, and readings from our coursework this year and tried to pull together a handbook that speaks to the critical thinking employed by historians while they practice their craft. The reading, writing, and research required by the common core will be impossible if a student can't think critically. Even our current US frameworks ask students to 'analyze' 59 times, yet never once does it speak to the teaching of analysis. History classrooms can become the place to teach this skill, and this can be done without sacrificing content coverage. Improving our students' ability to critically engage the material will only improve their ability to meaningfully interact with the content. It's no longer about making masters of content; history classrooms should become the place that we start making masters with content.

I plan to distribute this handbook to my department and to anyone else who may find it helpful in their classrooms. The handbook is written directly to students to allow for easy implementation in the classroom.

### Objectives

- Given the *Critical Thinking with History Handbook*, **students will be able to identify and critique** the analytical tools used by an author in a primary or secondary source as evidenced by their successful completion of the strategic reading worksheet.
- Given the *Critical Thinking with History Handbook*, **students will be able to support assertions** in their writing using sophisticated analytical tools or interpretive frameworks as evidenced by their submitted essays.

### Standards addressed

- The 68 standards in the *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework* that ask students to analyze. Examples:**
  - USI.4 Analyze how Americans resisted British policies before 1775 and analyze the reasons for the American victory and the British

	<p>defeat during the Revolutionary war. (H)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ USII.8 Analyze the origins of Progressivism and important Progressive leaders, and summarize the major accomplishments of Progressivism. (H, E)</li> <li>○ USII.21 Analyze how the failure of communist economic policies as well as U.S.-sponsored resistance to Soviet military and diplomatic initiatives contributed to ending the Cold War. (H,E)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6–12</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</li> <li>○ Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.</li> <li>○ Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Handbook</li> <li>● Strategic Reading Worksheet</li> <li>● Strategic Reading Rubric</li> <li>● Written Communication Rubric</li> </ul>

<b>Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Essay</b></li> </ul>
<b>Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suri, Jeremi. "Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus?": <i>Journal of Cold War Studies</i> Vol. 4, No. 4, Fall 2002, pp. 60–92</li> <li>● James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, "The Decision to Drop the Bomb" Ch. 12 from James West Davison and Mark Hamilton Lytle, <i>After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection</i> (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1992), 275-302</li> <li>● Braudel, Fernand. <i>The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II</i>. University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1999.</li> <li>● Butterfield, Herbert. <i>The Whig Interpretation of History</i>, 1931</li> </ul>