

INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 17

TASK 17 WHITE OUT

Building both historical knowledge and literacy skills requires that student wrestle with text and apply inquiry and analysis to understand the continuity and change that applies to a wide variety of the concepts studies in history class. This strategy assists students in doing that by removing (or ‘whiting out’) context clues from text/images and asking students to uncover context by sorting out the meaning of words and phrases; integrating multiple sources of information; determining main ideas; and citing textual evidence. Different students can find different ways to interpret the sources; prior knowledge, vocabulary skills, image analysis, etc. What is revealed through this task is the notion, attributed to Mark Twain, that “history doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.”

Steps Outlined:

1. Select a text, image, cartoon or other document that connects to a significant theme or concept in your course. (examples might include equality, rights, economic boom and bust, war, etc).
2. Remove context clues from the source including author, reason/rationale, time period, specific places or names of events. Alternatively, scaffold the activity by removing only some context clues.
3. Prepare ‘outliers’ related to the theme/concept; events or individuals that are similar to the selected text and that might be mistaken for the topic/source/author of the selected text. (For example, Using text from Declaration of Sentiments, removing context clues, and offering as possible authors/documents the Declaration of Independence; multiple choice style. The text is very similar and allows for investigation into why the words are reused and historical continuity and change.)
4. Either through class discussion, written analysis, or both, allow students to make predictions about the author of the text or the event it relates to. Encourage students to consider the author’s language as a clue to when the document was created and articulate their rationalizations about the selection of author/event.

Extensions for this activity:

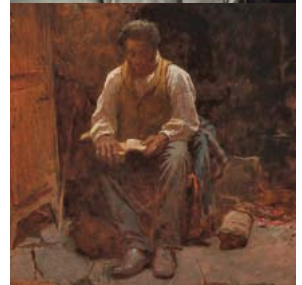
- comparing several documents that have been prepared on the same theme
- rather than historical text, use text/passages and characters from novels
- student generated questions for further research/writing

Examples for clarity:

- “No man, nor number of men upon earth hath power or authority to rule over men’s consciences in religious matters”

Possible sources:

The First Amendment to the US Constitution, 1789
Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, 1786
Charter of West Jersey, 1677



(Continued next page)

INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 17 (continued)

Possible discussion points:

- Use of the word “hath” and what that tells you about when
- The dates of each document as clues
- Prior knowledge about early colonists and religion
- “Unless the stream of these people can be turned away..., they will soon outnumber us so that we will not be able to save our language or our government.”

Possible sources:

Henry Bowers, founder of the Protective Association, 1894
Henry Wilson, member of the Know Nothing Party, 1854
Benjamin Franklin, 1751
Tom Tancredo, Colorado congressman, 2010

Possible Discussion points:

- i. Prior knowledge about immigrants in various time periods in the US
- ii. Language analysis as a limited tool
- iii. Change/continuity in immigration debate over time
- iv. Student generated questions for research on political parties, immigration, Ben Franklin

Source:

Fitzpatrick, Anthony. Social Studies can be SPEctacular. New Jersey: American Institute for History Education. 2011.