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# Initiating Historical Thinking in Elementary Schools

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## Initiating Historical Thinking in Elementary Schools

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*With an ever-expanding focus on reading and mathematics, many elementary schools have chosen to reduce time previously reserved for social studies. Elementary teachers who understand both the relevance of social studies content and the effectiveness of interdisciplinary teaching regularly incorporate applicable history-based children's tradebooks in their curricula. Locating developmentally appropriate books is simple. Teaching history using children's literature can be effective. It can be counterproductive, however, if the selected book is replete with historical misrepresentations. Teaching historical thinking in elementary school is problematic no matter what the teaching tool, and there are few methodological roadmaps for elementary teachers. Here, I first suggest ways for teachers to nurture elementary students' historical thinking using anecdotes from everyday activities and literature with themes germane to history and multiculturalism. Then, I suggest ways for elementary educators to locate and develop engaging, age-appropriate, and historically accurate curricular supplements. Using literature on Christopher Columbus as a reference point to facilitate young students' historical thinking, I propose an interdisciplinary approach, discipline-specific historical literacy strategies, and history-themed authentic assessments.*

*Key Words:* Christopher Columbus, elementary social studies, historical thinking, historical literacy, children's literature, and methodology

### Introduction

I previously explored historical misrepresentations within children's literature (Bickford, 2013a). Specifically, I examined how children's authors portrayed Columbus, his motivations for exploration, his interactions with Native Americans, and his impact on world history. There, I reported various historical inaccuracies and omissions within the majority of the children's literature. Here, I offer possibilities for teachers that cohere with most relevant aspects of state and national curricula initiatives (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010; National Council for the Social Studies, 2013).

Teachers do not intend to select children's literature replete with historical misrepresentations any more than museums and national parks intend to circulate misinformation. Both occur, however, with more regularity than is commonly known (Loewen, 1995, 2000; Wilton & Bickford, 2012). Historical fiction, narrative non-fiction, biographies, and other history-based literature are popular teaching tools, but should not be employed independently for many reasons. Two of the most germane are theoretical extensions of cognitive constructivist theory: historical literacy and critical multiculturalism (Nokes, 2011). Elementary teachers should incorporate both in age-appropriate and discipline-specific ways.

Historical literacy is fundamental for both history and social studies curricula (Nokes, 2011; Wineburg, Martin, & Monte-Sano, 2011). Students' historical literacy skills, such as the

ability to process disparate forms of literature and weigh divergent interpretations of the same event, are compulsory for future academic success (Button, 1998). Such historical thinking patterns are complex skills that must be purposefully nurtured from young ages to prepare students for constructive participation in a pluralistic democratic society (Barton & Levstik, 2003; Button & Welton, 1997; National Council for the Social Studies, 2009; Wineburg, 2001). Children's literature can contribute to historical thinking but cannot do so autonomously; history-specific instructional procedures and relevant historical content are needed for students to interpret historical documents and construct historical understandings.

Critical multiculturalism values the lives of ordinary and extraordinary people, individuals and groups, and the powerful and powerless (Bigelow & Peterson, 1998). It poses ethical questions that enable students to, among other things, actively explore how power has historically been enacted and resisted (Bigelow, 1998, p. 68). Children's literature can be a catalyst for critical multiculturalism, but various other perspectives and primary historical content are needed for balance.

Historical thinking and critical multiculturalism provide insight into what should be taught and how it should be taught. Columbus is, to put it mildly, a controversial historical figure. While historians dispute Columbus's place in history (Schweikart & Allen, 2007; Zinn, 1999), he undoubtedly was the catalyst for the Colombian Exchange. European-Native American contact in 1492 was not one person's achievement, but the spark that kindled a firestorm of interaction and exploration that consequentially impacted world history (Mann, 2005, 2011). As with children's literature, Columbus should not be avoided but supplemented with appropriate methodology and rich content. Teachers should cultivate students' critical multicultural awareness and stimulate students' historical thinking, not simply require comprehension (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). This article is an illustrative and forward-thinking path for elementary educators interested in nurturing young students' historical thinking and critical multiculturalism. It is also a bridge between historians' understandings and the misrepresentative content within some children's literature (Bickford, 2013a).

### **Historical Thinking and Elementary Students**

Historical thinking has been characterized as an unnatural cognitive activity (Wineburg, 2001, 2007). Thinking patterns—or heuristics—are essential for historians yet form barriers of misunderstanding for laymen and youngsters alike (Nokes, 2011; Wineburg, 1998). Such heuristics are palpable when historians interpret a primary document. Historians locate its source, identify the context, scrutinize the source for intent and bias, and metacognitively juxtapose tentative understandings as they search for potential divergent perspectives or interpretations (Nokes, 2011; Wineburg, 1998). Admittedly complicated, educators must model and explicitly teach heuristics even as students struggle to grasp and apply them (National Council for the Social Studies, 2009; VanSledright, 2004; Wineburg et al., 2011).

#### **Shadows of Historical Thinking**

Just as the elementary teacher incorporates pre-algebra thinking (i.e.,  $7 + \square = 9$ ) in preparation for upper level mathematics, the same educator must also incorporate historical thinking with her young charges if they are to ever master such thinking later (Chick & Hong, 2012; Wilton & Bickford, 2012). Historical thinking is cultivated in age-appropriate ways within a developing mind; it is not uploaded at maturity and synced with their prior knowledge.

Even young students engage in *shadows*—or the beginnings—of historical thinking; within such shadows lies fertile ground for further development.

Elementary students can easily identify source. Children effortlessly do so on the playground when they distinguish the teacher’s voice above the cacophony of their friends’ voices and, in doing so, give it different and appropriate weight. Elementary students identify context whenever they distinguish inside from outside and adjust their own speech to appropriate volumes. Students may not readily describe it as context-driven, but it is nonetheless. A young child has the cognitive abilities to note that a single event can generate two divergent perspectives with each perspective containing unique intent and unintentional bias. When an argument erupts between two students over tentative ownership of a toy, “Hey, that’s mine” confronts “I just set it down for a minute to get a tissue, but I was coming right back.” Every time he or she witnesses such a disagreement, the young student experiences divergent perspectives along with the intent and unintentional bias of each perspective. When a close call at home base during a kickball game generates disagreement, a young child weighs evidence, testimony, and the speakers’ intentional biases when listening to the catcher and the pitcher claim “out” as the runner and her teammates call “safe.” Students can identify and distinguish perspective. If asked to speculate about the goals of lunchtime for a student, a teacher, a cafeteria worker, and the principal, students could do so easily. In doing so, the student could identify perspective, reflect on the subjectivity of each perspective, each perspective’s intended goal, the similarity and dissimilarity between intended goals, and each perspective’s means to obtain said goal.

In the yarns above, young students gathered available evidence, scrutinized it through the lenses of prior knowledge and experience, and applied it to their developing sense of logic. The children, in doing so, critically evaluated ambiguous situations. Such higher order thinking is not exclusive to older students (Case, 2013). These anecdotes illustrate elementary students’ shadows of historical thinking or the beginning uses of heuristics. Use such anecdotes in the classroom as catalysts for discussions and guide the discussion with demonstrative questioning. Ask youngsters, how do students, teachers, cafeteria workers, and the principal each view lunchtime? Why do they view it differently? Such purposeful questions provide fertile ground for context, perspective, and bias. Intentional queries can guide students towards ruminations about source, intent, and potential divergent interpretations of intent. Ask, when directions from the principal are different from a friend’s suggestions, what weight do you give each? Why? How might another student respond differently? In elementary classrooms, such anecdotes and questions have the potential to purposefully extend students’ shared prior knowledge onwards and upwards in the direction of historical thinking, especially when buttressed.

### **Foundations for Historical Thinking**

With diligent cultivation, the foundations of historical thinking emerge from the shadows of historical thinking. *I am the Dog I am the Cat* (Hall, 1994) and *Hey, Little Ant* (Hoose & Hoose, 1998) are two books intended for lower elementary students that lucidly incorporate perspective, bias, intent, source, and context in their respective narratives. They can be used in concert to build from students’ shared understandings towards initial applications of historians’ heuristics. The subsequent methodological suggestions nurture young students’ historical thinking while the content is embedded with notions of critical multiculturalism.

To facilitate students' use of evidence, narrative construction, and awareness that the same evidence can generate divergent narratives, photocopy the images from *I am the Dog I am the Cat*, place the unnumbered images in a folder, and ask students to create a narrative by organizing the images. As students share their stories, identify the many different paths the stories take and note the various stories' paths all derive from the same visual catalysts. Then, share the book and how the author sequenced the story and imagery. The above steps have the potential to help young students grasp three foundational concepts of historical thinking. First, students actively shape stories using evidence. Second, different students may draw disparate conclusions from identical evidence. Third, historians similarly shape stories using evidence and frequently form different conclusions.

Lead students towards a better understanding of context, chronology, and historians' sequencing of evidence by using the same student-generated stories. Ask students direct questions about why patterns developed among their stories. Did you all notice that many students placed all the pictures from inside the house before all of the images from outside the house? Why did many students group all the cat pictures before all the dog images? Such questions guide students towards discussions about contextual clues, historical chronology, and historians' logical and purposeful sequencing of evidence during narrative construction.

It is important to make explicit that differences in stories can, at times, be silly or serious. Multiple student-generated stories derived from the above *I am the Dog I am the Cat* activities generate playful disagreements, just like the dog's and the cat's lighthearted disagreements about, say, the postal worker. Introducing *Hey, Little Ant* at this time illustrates how divergent interpretations of the same event can yield differing perspectives that can (potentially) have significant and negative results. The conclusion to *Hey, Little Ant* leaves even the young reader aware of negative consequences derived from dissimilar perspectives, but in ways appropriate to sensitive youngsters. The young student might fully grasp the conspicuously embedded message within *Hey, Little Ant*'s conclusion yet miss the semi-concealed notions of bias (derived from perspective) that contribute powerfully to the story's conclusion. To make the young reader more fully aware of seemingly obscured bias (and factors that contribute to such bias), focus students on the image of the tiny ant wearing a burglar's mask and carrying a humorously large sack presumably filled with the family's picnic food. Ask students questions like, what does this picture—not the words—tell the reader? What message is the artist sending by showing the bag (presumably filled with potato chips) this large? What message is sent with the ant's burglar mask? Who is speaking the words on the page? How do you know? What is the speaker's perspective? How might that be biased? Such questions facilitate students' inferential thinking and purposeful rumination about evidence, source, bias, perspective, context, interpretation, and potential for divergent interpretations. All of the aforementioned are foundations for historical thinking. Knowledge of alternative, peaceful approaches is critical multiculturalism. Both historical thinking and critical multiculturalism can be deliberately buttressed with purposeful use of *I am the Dog I am the Cat* (Hall, 1994), *Hey, Little Ant* (Hoose & Hoose, 1998), and other literature, which is the focus of the subsequent section.

### **A Catalyst for Historical (Fiction) Thinking**

While any children's tradebook could have been employed for illustrative purposes, space permits only one. Pam Conrad's (1991) *Pedro's Journal: A Voyage with Christopher*

*Columbus* was selected because its author has won various awards and, anecdotally, it has a history of use. (Three different local school districts had *Pedro's Journal* on its recommended or required reading list.) This traditional historical fiction narrative is intended for upper elementary readers and blurs lines between history and story.

When examined for historical accuracy, *Pedro's Journal* appeared quite representative. I examined *Pedro's Journal* using the same content analysis rubric from my previous research (Bickford, 2013a). There was an absence of five common historical misrepresentations (Eurocentric perspective, leadership perspective, leadership and response, content on Native Americans, and violence) that were ubiquitous in other Columbus-based children's literature (Bickford, 2013a). To be more specific, *Pedro's Journal* gave voice to various historical characters representing numerous perspectives. These voices included Europeans like Pedro de Salcedo, Columbus, Pinzon, and an assortment of crew who followed, mocked, and threatened Columbus while also contributing substantively to the success of the voyage. The disparate responses to Columbus's leadership were a direct result of Columbus's erratic behavior, which Pedro described as shifting from demanding to encouraging to pleading. This indicated disunity and mistrust among the crew. Pedro also documented how members of various Native American tribes responded quite differently to Columbus and his crew, noting how some Native American tribes were quite curious, helpful, and welcoming while other tribes were confrontational and avoidant. Pedro noted these responses were the logical result of Columbus's (and his crew's) willingness to enslave, pillage, steal, and intimidate. With the absence of the aforementioned five historical misrepresentations, *Pedro's Journal* is fertile ground for critical multiculturalism.

While used as an illustrative model for this article, the absence of these five common historical misrepresentations does not mean *Pedro's Journal* is historically flawless. Like all engaging writers, Conrad (1991) took authorial liberties. The young reader would likely not be able to distinguish the accuracy of these historically documented (mis)behaviors and events because they were represented within the historical fiction narrative of Pedro's diary and no primary sources were included. This eliminates potential for both corroboration and historical interpretation (Barton & Levstik, 2003; Wineburg, 2001, 2010). There is no mention of Columbus's subsequent voyages or the long-term implications of the initial journey, which dramatically reduces the reader's potential for contextualization (Barton & Levstik, 2003; Wineburg, 2001, 2010). It can be argued that exceptionalism abounded within the book because Pedro—the youngest crewmember—appeared to be the (only) voice of reason as he identified with the victims (Williams, 2009). While not historically inaccurate or implausible, Pedro's attitude appeared anomalous in comparison with his contemporaries. Conrad's (1991) *Pedro's Journal* is, thus, a relatively representative account (Bickford, 2013a); it is also a rich context to elicit students' historical thinking but it cannot do so independently.

### **Eliciting Historical Thinking Through Historical Fiction**

For *Pedro's Journal* to be more than a tool for students' literary engagement, the teacher needs to utilize instructional procedures that facilitate students' historical thinking.

Methodologies can emerge as pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading historical literacy strategies. They all share purposes beyond the (simplistic) comprehension of a literary text.

A pre-reading strategy prior to beginning the book or a new chapter can facilitate students' purposeful reading. Quote a line from the upcoming reading on the board and ask, who might have said something like this? Why do you think so? Why might this person have said

this? What might this person have wanted by saying this? These types of question have elements of inferential thinking, perspective taking, context, and intent. Upon completion of various stages of the reading, students can evaluate their pre-reading speculations and generate evidence-based conclusions. Inferential thinking, perspective taking, context, intent, reevaluation of inferences, and active development of evidence-based conclusions are all heuristics that facilitate historical thinking (Nokes, 2011; Wineburg, 2001). Further, these heuristics were targeted previously with playground and lunch anecdotes. They were then extended in the activities centered on *I am the Dog I am the Cat* (Hall, 1994) and *Hey, Little Ant* (Hoose & Hoose, 1998). Methods that elicit such thinking enable purposeful reading, reflection, and evaluation upon completion.

The teacher should also supplement *Pedro's Journal* by addressing historical content that is absent in the book. Complicate students' historical understandings as Pedro confronts many unseemly and ignored events. These events include, but are not limited to, Columbus's enslavement of Native Americans, keen interest in gold, willingness to deceive, inclination to engage in violence, anxieties about his legacy and his sons' financial futures, and competitive jealousies with Martín Alonso Pinzon. Incorporate primary sources to enrich, corroborate, or contradict Pedro's observations. Lead an activity where students scrutinize primary documents for source, perspective, and intent, all of which are relevant heuristics (Wineburg, 2001, 2010; Wineburg et al., 2011). Ask, Who is most likely to have said (or written) this based on what you know? How do you know? Why might this person say (or write) this? What did they want? These questions explicitly appeared in the aforementioned pre-reading of historical fiction content (and also implicitly in the out-of-class school anecdotes). Employing such questions again with primary documents extends students' emergent heuristic applications towards more formal historical thinking.

Students' uses of heuristics also can involve secondary source analysis; children's books are developmentally appropriate. To do so, focus on narrative construction and the historian's inclusion and omission of evidence. Require that individual students read different children's books about Columbus. While not as academically rigorous as historians' books, children's books can be treated as secondary sources and evaluated for narrative construction and the inclusion and omission of evidence (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010; National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). Students can scrutinize the books using a content analysis rubric for historical accuracy and critical multiculturalist themes. *Content Analysis for Elementary Students* (Table 1 below) is one potential example; it was adapted in age-appropriate ways from previous research (Bickford, 2013a; Field & Singer, 2006; Henning et al., 2006).

Table 1

*Content Analysis For Elementary Students*

1. Author's name, book's title, and book's publication date.
2. How old would a student have to be to read and understand this book?
3. Is the book written like a fiction story? Or a historical fiction story? Or like a history textbook? How do you know?

4. Who was/were the main character(s)? Please describe in detail the main character(s) including if they were European or Native American.
5. What did the author say were the reasons why Columbus went on this exploration? Did the author mention spices, gold/greed, glory, spreading Christianity, or something else? Explain your answer and give an example.
6. How did the author describe Columbus's leadership? Was he described as being a positive and helpful leader? Or controlling and demanding? Explain your answer and give an example.
7. How did the crew respond to Columbus's leadership? Did they all get along or were there problems? Explain your answer and give an example.
8. How did the book describe Columbus (and his crew) interacting with the Native Americans? Was violence mentioned a little, a lot, or not at all? If it was mentioned, please describe the violence.
9. Did the book describe Columbus as cheating the Native Americans in any way? Explain your answer and give an example.
10. Did the book describe the Native Americans? Were they described as kind and generous? Intelligent and skillful? Or something else? Explain your answer and give an example.
11. How many times did Native Americans speak? Were any individual Native American names given? Were they described as Native American, Indian, Taino, Arawak or something else?
12. Did the book mention any voyages after 1492? If so, which one(s)? Please describe the voyages.
13. Did the book mention or use any primary sources (like letters, diaries, maps, etc.)? If so, what? Were any of these mentioned after the story ended (in the book's afterward)? If so, what? Be specific.
14. Did the book make it seem like Columbus would be successful no matter what would happen? Explain your answer and give an example.
15. Did the book focus mostly on Columbus and ignore people like his crew and the Native Americans? Explain your answer and give an example.
16. Were there any parts of the book that seemed inaccurate or unlikely to have happened? Explain your answer and give an example.

*Content Analysis for Elementary Students* elicits students' active evaluation of evidence included, evidence excluded, how each influenced the constructed narrative, and how the constructed narrative represents (or misrepresents) history. By directing students' attention towards potential areas of historical misrepresentation or omission, the teacher can incorporate curricular supplements that guide students towards corroboration (Wineburg, 2001, 2010). Corroboration is a critically important heuristic for historians and also an age-appropriate for elementary students. Create opportunities for students to juxtapose the content from *Pedro's Journal* with images from a *National Geographic* article about Columbus's first voyage (Scofield, 1975, p. 595-600). Events characterized in both are corroborated and given more weight. Make language modifications to the *National Geographic* article to enable students to corroborate aspects within *Pedro's Journal*. There are over a dozen areas of overlap which include, but are not limited to, specific details such as a boy steering the *Santa Maria* as the crew slept, the *Santa Maria* being marooned on a coral reef on Christmas eve, sightings of manatees,

and Columbus ordering the establishments of a fort along with general patterns like the crew's interactions at various times with both welcoming and resistant Native American tribes and the numerous separations of the three ships at different times. Corroboration is an age-appropriate activity for elementary students and a heuristic that experts in the discipline regularly utilize. If students are to corroborate historical fiction accounts with *National Geographic* images and its accompanying story, they must be exposed to contexts rich with potential. In order to corroborate historical sources with *Pedro's Journal*, the historical background must be supplemented with substantive secondary accounts and rich primary resources. The subsequent section addresses these concerns.

### **Supplementing Historical Fiction with History Content**

Comprehensive research exists on the history, geography, anthropology, and archaeology of the Americas both before Columbus's explorations and the impact of the Columbian Exchange (Diamond, 2005; Mann, 2005, 2011; Nunn & Qian, 2010; Zinn, 1999). These resources can be unduly cumbersome for time-pressed teachers working in schools that might value mathematics and reading more than social studies. Teachers can find much of the most meaningful content from abridged literature intended for adults or in literature intended for secondary students. *Literature Addressing Columbus and the Columbian Exchange* (Appendix I) are quality sources that comprehensively address Columbus, his involvement with Native Americans, and the impact of his explorations on world history.

There are sources from popular, respected magazines that explore distinct topics. Breathtaking photography and illustrative primary source material complement these resources. Columbus's four voyages have been detailed (Scofield, 1975). Columbus's culpability through desperate acts and fanatical insistence on titles and treasure has been examined (Begley and Murr, 1999; Lloso, 1992; Thernstrom, 1992). Evidence from drowned cargoes historicizes Columbus's exploration within the broader context of continued European mercantilist competition (Peterson, 1977; Severin, 1977). The demise of Columbus's first and second settlements—La Navidad and La Isabela, respectively—caused by various illnesses, fires, hurricanes, external attacks, and internal revolts has been detailed (Deagan, 1977). The possibility of African mariners crossing the Atlantic on papyrus boats has been posited (Heyerdahl, 1971). This feat, if true, was far more tenuous and precarious than Columbus's exploration. While not comprehensive, such sources are quite illustrative and inclusive of engaging nuances sated with potential opportunities for further inquiry.

The previously mentioned materials are intended to expand teachers' background knowledge. Their text can be abridged for young students and the photography can supplement children's literature. To enable students to work as historians do—through analysis and interpretation of historical documents—history education researchers encourage teachers to locate primary historical sources (Ruffin & Capell, 2009; Wineburg, 2001; Wineburg et al., 2011). Primary sources can add depth and texture to events characterized in secondary children's literature like *Pedro's Journal*. They can also provide nuance and complexity through evidence or opinions incongruent with events characterized in the selected children's literature. Primary sources can enrich, corroborate, or contradict a historical perspective or an accounting of history. Use primary sources as either illustrative supplements or as catalysts for perspectives not proffered (Field & Singer, 2006; Henning, Snow-Geron, Reed, & Warner, 2006; Wineburg & Martin, 2009). Primary sources are easily to locate. Maps, diagrams of ships, drawings of

tools, and journal entries are available (de Las Casas, 2003; Halsall, 1996). Such materials, however, are not always student-friendly. Modify primary sources to cohere with students' cognitive abilities, sensitivities, and maturity; do so in historically representative ways (Drake & Brown, 2003; Wineburg & Martin, 2009). Columbus-centric historical content has been located, modified, and differentiated to address both elementary and middle level reading levels (Bickford & Wilton, 2012). Their selected sources address Columbus's navigational skills, bravery, leadership, and responses to mutiny, his (and his crew's) engagement in violence and slavery, and his motivations to explore (which range from the monetary reward to supercilious interest in fame). This is illustrated in *Historical Sources Abridged for Elementary Students* (Table 2 below) and *Historical Sources Abridged for Middle Level Students* (Table 3 below).

Table 2

*Historical Sources Abridged for Elementary Students* (Used with permission of World History Connected)

Document 1. On August 3rd 1492, we set sail from Spain early in the morning. Heading south and west towards the sunset, we traveled sixty miles.

Document 2. On August 6th 1492, the rudder of our ship the Pinta broke! I think people on the ship might have done it. My sailors Gomez Rascon and Christopher Quintero were both on board and have complained about this trip.

Document 3. On September 9th 1492, we sailed more than 60 miles, but I'm not telling my crew the truth because they seem very worried about if we will ever find land. The sailors steered our ships badly, causing them to tip a lot. I had to tell them repeatedly to do better.

Document 4. On April 14th 1495, I ordered every Indian over fourteen to collect three handfuls of gold every three months. I'm going to give this to the King and Queen of Spain. When the Indians bring it, I give them a copper necklace. Those Indians who don't do this will be punished.

Document 5. These Indians could be good servants. I will take six of them back to Spain with me for the King and Queen.

Document 6. I want you all to follow my religion and also obey my king's rules. If you don't, I will fight you and make the women and children slaves. It will be your fault if you don't follow my orders.

Document 7. To pay for this trip, I want you, Christopher Columbus, to take all the pearls, gold, silver, spices, and other expensive things. And, then, I will give you a part of it all.

Document 8. King and Queen of Spain, my name is Christopher Columbus. Since you love Christianity and don't love enemies or people who aren't Christian, please send me to India. I want to meet with the people and see the land there. I want to help make them Christian. If I find this land and meet these people, then I want to rule it.

Document 9. King and Queen of Spain, you would not believe how kind, generous, and loving these Indians are! If you ask them for something, they will give it. I will give you, the King and Queen of Spain, as much gold as I can get and as many slaves as I can take on the ship.

Document 10. I, Pope Alexander VI, leader of the Catholic Church, give Christopher Columbus all the lands you discover. I will let you own them.

Table 3

*Historical Sources Abridged for Middle Level Students* (Used with permission of *World History Connected*)

Document 1. 3 August 1492. Set sail from the bar of Saltes at 8 o'clock, and proceeded with a strong breeze till sunset, sixty miles or fifteen leagues south, afterwards southwest and south by west, which is the direction of the Canaries.

Document 2. 6 August 1492. The rudder of the caravel Pinta became loose, being broken or unshipped. It was believed that this happened by the contrivance of Gomez Rascon and Christopher Quintero, who were on board the caravel, because they disliked the voyage.

Document 3. 9 September 1492. Sailed this day nineteen leagues, and determined to count less than the true number, that the crew might not be dismayed if the voyage should prove long. In the night sailed one hundred and twenty miles, at the rate of ten miles an hour, which make thirty leagues. The sailors steered badly, causing the vessels to fall to leeward toward the northeast, for which the Admiral reprimanded them repeatedly.

Document 4. 14 April, 1495. I ordered all persons fourteen years or older to collect three handful quantities of gold every three months for thy Royal Highness. As they bring it, they are given copper tokens to hang around their necks. Those found without tokens shall have one hand cut off as punishment.

Document 5. They [the Native Americans] should be good servants...I, our Lord being pleased, will take hence, at the time of my departure, six natives for your Highnesses.

Document 6. I implore you to recognize the Church as a lady and in the name of the Pope take the king as lord of this land and obey his mandates. If you do not do it, I tell you that with the help of God I will enter powerfully against you all. I will make war everywhere and every way I can. I will subject you to the yoke and obedience to the Church and to his majesty. I will take your women and children and make them slaves. ... The deaths and injuries that you will receive from here on will be your own fault and not that of his majesty nor of the gentlemen that accompany me.

Document 7. That of all and every kind of merchandise, whether pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, spices, and other objects and merchandise whatsoever, of whatever kind, name and sort, which may be bought, bartered, discovered, acquired and obtained within the limits of the said Admiralty, Your Highnesses grant from now henceforth to the said [Christopher Columbus] ... the tenth part of the whole, after deducting all the expenses which may be incurred therein. (On April 17, 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain created this business contract which entitled Columbus to ten percent of the profits.)

Document 8. Your Highnesses, as Catholic Christians, and princes who love and promote the holy Christian faith, and are enemies of ... all idolatry and heresy, determined to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the above-mentioned countries of India, to see the said princes, people, and territories, and to learn their disposition and the proper method of converting them to our holy faith... [Y]our Highnesses ... ordered me to proceed ... to India, and for that purpose granted me great favors, and ennobled me that thenceforth I might call myself Don, and be High Admiral of the Sea, and perpetual Viceroy and Governor in all the islands and continents which I might discover and acquire... (On August 2, 1492, Columbus wrote this entry into his journal.)

Document 9. They are artless and generous with what they have, to such a degree as no one would believe but him who had seen it. Of anything they have, if it be asked for, they never say no, but do rather invite the person to accept it, and show as much lovingness as though they would give their hearts ... Their Highnesses may see that I shall give them as much gold as they need ... and slaves as many as they shall order to be shipped. (In April of 1493, Columbus wrote this letter to a financier, Luis de Santangel.)

Document 10. We of our own motion, and not at your solicitation, do give, concede, and assign for ever to you and your successors, all the islands, and main lands, discovered; and which may hereafter, be discovered, towards the west and south; whether they be situated towards India, or towards any other part whatsoever, and give you absolute power in them. (In this May 4, 1493 papal bull, Pope Alexander VI granted ownership of this newly “discovered” land to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain.)

Teacher-ready materials that will likely generate students' interest are available. *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years* (Bigelow & Peterson, 1998) and *Voices of a People's History of the United States: A Teacher's Guide* (Olson-Raymer, 2005) are two rich sources. Internet resources like the Public Broadcasting Service's (PBS) *Gun, Germs, and Steel*, the Zinn *Education Project*, and *American Indians in Children's Literature* are valuable. Some of the above sources are intended for teachers, others for students, but all have classroom potential. Some have easy-to-use, age-appropriate methods; others do not. While all are specific to the history discipline, content related to Columbus (and exploration) emerges in other curricula.

### **An Interdisciplinary Approach to Historical Thinking**

Due to the incremental decrease in time devoted to elementary social studies (Center on Education Policy, 2008; Chick & Hong, 2012; Wilton & Bickford, 2012), it is prudent for teachers to select history content that buttresses other curricula. From a teacher's perspective, an interdisciplinary format solidifies the location of history content within elementary curricula (Jackson & Davis, 2000). From a student's perspective, it enables integration of understandings constructed from examination of the same event or issue from different angles (Vars, 1997). Research indicates the effectiveness and efficiency of interdisciplinary teaching and learning (National Association for Core Curriculum, 2000). *Pedro's Journal* has strong potential to supplement all core curricula and, with engaging methodologies, can elicit students' historical thinking.

### **Historical Thinking in Language Arts**

*Pedro's Journal* is an engaging historical fiction story that elementary reading, English, and language arts teachers would likely value for various reasons. Pedro de Salcedo, a young boy, is able to read, write, and travel independently. Pedro writes in his journal about his eight-month journey aboard the Santa Maria with three-dozen men and Columbus. The story climaxes sans conclusion, leaving the reader enticed. The afterword elicits curiosity and questions about what was fact and fiction. While clearly an engaging story, *Pedro's Journal* is also quite adaptable for English/language arts. With a third-through-fifth grade reading level, lower elementary teachers can read selected portions as a class novel; upper elementary teachers can assign it for students' to read independently or in literacy circles. With about 80 pages of text, the story is rich in substance yet supplemented by over 30 images. Spelling and vocabulary can be authentically integrated with introductions to words like, betrayal, fathom, horizon, leagues, omen, refusal, roster, rudder, sullenly, trek, convert, devour, mutiny, and native. As a first person account, elementary students can view history through the eyes of a child similar in age, which provides teachers the opportunity to discuss perspective.

### **Historical Thinking Through Science and Technology**

The concept of geographical location can connect history and social studies to science, specifically weather. Ask students to identify dates, places, and weather patterns that Pedro mentioned. In doing so, students are encouraged to connect understandings generated from *Pedro's Journal* with observations garnered from examination of modern physical maps, physical maps of that period, and modern weather maps. Construct connections between science and technology. Examining the real threats that storms posed for wooden ships could lead to discussions about buoyancy and the trial-and-error that spurs inventions. The technology Columbus utilized also is a fruitful point of entry for teachers. To elicit students' interest by

harnessing their (likely) inexperience with navigation, ask students how sailors navigate the ocean's open waters. Building on their answers, place images of different historical navigational instruments at centers around the room for students to move, view, and infer their purpose.

### **Historical Thinking in Authentic Assessments**

The aforementioned are a small sampling of the many ways in which *Pedro's Journal* could complement various curricula. It is important, also, to incorporate authentic and differentiated assessments that enable students to demonstrate newly generated understandings (Bickford, 2012; Tomlinson, 1995, 1999). Such assessments should elicit students' emergent heuristics through content-specific writing, both necessary in the historians' field (Wineburg & Martin, 2004; VanSledright, 2014; Wineburg et al., 2011). The subsequent assessments build off previously published Columbus-based curricular suggestions (Bickford & Wilton, 2012; Bigelow & Peterson, 1998).

One possible creative writing activity is based on interpretation and contextualization, two historical thinking concepts. First, transcribe brief entries from Columbus's journal that highlight significant events in both Columbus's first and subsequent voyages. Then, locate images of locations that conspicuously connect to aforementioned journal events. Artistic renderings or recent photographs from *National Geographic* could be used. Ask students to construct a timeline, connect events from the journal to the timeline, link images to the journal entries, and create a narrative. Require students make textual modifications and revisions to the journal entries to bolster the quality of their writing. Students could locate a passage in need of detail or a place between two journal entries and make historically representative additions.

A second assessment could focus on visual representation of historical events. Encourage students to identify a journal entry rich with potential for supplementary imagery. First, require students to make a concept map of details associated with the journal entry. After completion of the concept maps, have students brainstorm a list of concrete images or simple statements that can replace abstract concepts on the concept map. This "substitution list" can help students devise various and creative ways to represent events, people, and ideas. For instance, the word "Spain" on the boat's flag could symbolize Spain's financial support for Columbus. Students can then use the concept maps and substitution lists in concert with Internet imagery and image modification technologies to create original political cartoons. Empirical data indicates the efficacy of this authentic assessment (Bickford, 2013b), which enables students to creatively express newly generated understandings using unproblematic technologies (Bickford, 2012).

The final suggestion for assessment synthesizes the historical writing skill from the first assessment and the creativity of the second. Students can utilize previously interpreted primary sources and previously read children's literature for content background in a perspective-taking creative writing activity. Students can contribute articles, editorials, current events, letters to the editor, or advertisements for a historical fiction newspaper or magazine. In doing so, students reshape and apply history content. To apply the heuristic of perspective, have students write the historical fiction newspaper or magazine with an intended audience. Different groups of students can write for different audiences taking into account the appropriate perspective of each group. Writing for sailors, the student-authors can create stories that speak to adventure, good pay, and the opportunity to see the world. Addressing an audience of investors, the student-authors can write stories aimed at the potential riches to be found in "India." Students are limited only by

their creativity and the boundaries of representative history when creatively writing historical fiction newspapers (Bickford & Wilton, 2012; Gregg & Greene, 2010; Schwartz, 2009).

These activities are a small sampling of the creative possibilities for historical thinking within an interdisciplinary unit on Columbus. The possibilities increase exponentially with new, different, and richer content supplements, which the preceding section addressed. These assessments require students' applications of historical thinking, which must be cultivated and integrated throughout the curricula.

### Discussions

To teach history well, a teacher needs a robust understanding of both the historical content and pedagogical variables that influence students' learning. The interdependence between rich, accurate, engaging content and age-appropriate pedagogy is never more important than at the elementary level (National Council for the Social Studies, 2009). At this age, students' interests can be nurtured and channeled positively or their disinterest might manifest into ambivalence or apathy. For these reasons, it is critical for history education researchers and elementary history teachers to bridge gaps between historians' understandings and thinking patterns and elementary students' understandings and thinking patterns. Anecdotes from shared experiences on the playground and outside class provided opportunities for students to effortlessly employ shadows of historians' heuristics, which the teacher can then harness for academic purposes. Creative adaptations of *Hey, Little Ant* and *I am the Dog, I am the Cat* supplied age-appropriate teaching tools. This enabled students to apply heuristics and engage in discipline-specific thinking. *Pedro's Journal* provided opportunities for interdisciplinary learning in elementary social studies and non-history curricula, which can be bolstered with rich, relevant secondary texts and primary historical documents.

If history is the metaphorical tail that wags the dog of social studies curricula, then heuristics are the bone structure within that metaphorical tail: concealed yet functionally indispensable. Researchers of elementary social studies have examined differentiated history curricula, history-specific methodology and assessment, and representations of history within children's literature, yet the research on students' historical thinking remains largely focused on middle level and secondary students (Alleman & Brophy, 2003, Nokes, 2011). Here, I have explored how young students' shadows of historical thinking can be nurtured. Empirical research is needed to examine the effectiveness of such suggestions.

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