

History for Homeschooling

Michael Gannotti



Figure 1: Cover

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This illustrated edition is the teaching-manual of 31 August 2026. Endnotes run in one series. Chapter-opening images are original still-lives, not portraits of persons or children. Documents still constrain the facts.

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Welcome

This book exists because the history hour at your table is the whole program. There is no department down the hall and no specialist waiting after lunch. There is you, a student, and today's year — a story to tell, a source to look at, a question worth waiting for. That is enough, if you know what to do with the hour.

I wrote this for a capable, busy, willing parent. You may be teaching two ages at once. You may be fitting history between a job, a toddler, and a grocery run. You may have loved school history, or you may remember it as a fog of dates and names. Many adults feel rusty around dates and names when they sit down to teach. That feeling is common. It is not a verdict. We will move on from it. This book will make you fluent enough in this week's idea to notice a wrong story and ask a good question — without taking over the talking.

You do not need to be a historian. You do need to understand this week's idea well enough to hear “the book said it, so it happened that way” as one account treated as the only one, not as a finished thought. You need a session shape you can run on a Tuesday. You need a few sentences that actually help. That is the job. A path through history — from first-grade then-and-now stories through a college-ready high-school sequence in world, United States, and civics — is possible at a kitchen table. The path is not a personality trait and it is not a percentile. It is a sequence of ideas, practiced until they hold, with you in the chair.

About 3.4 percent of U.S. students ages 5–17 were homeschooled in 2022–23 — roughly 1.765 million children.¹ That figure is context, not a ranking. You are

¹Ellena Sempeles and Jiashan Cui, *Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2023*, NCES 2024-113 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, September 2024), Table A-6: 3.4 percent homeschooled, approximately 1,765,000 students, ages 5–17 with a K–12 grade equivalent, 2022–23. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2024/2024113.pdf>. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026. Latest federal count this book uses; not a 2026 national total. A neighboring 5.2

one of those tables. Homeschooling is legal in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. The paperwork is not one load: Texas asks almost nothing of the state agency; New York asks for a written plan and regular reports.² There is no national homeschool diploma and no national history credit a registrar already files.³ In the last federal tables that published the row, most homeschool families were already teaching social studies that year — 78 percent overall, 81 percent in grades 9–12.⁴ The titles that travel — Social Studies, U.S. History, World History, Government, Civics, Geography, Economics — are names a stranger can read. The hour in front of you is the work.

What a good history hour looks like

You sit down already knowing today's idea. A picture, a map, or a short document is on the table, with the maker visible. You tell a short story — one named person in a named place — then you stop. The child looks. You ask one good question — not “what year was it?” but “who made this, and what did they want us to believe?” Then you wait. Three seconds feels long. It is the work. Practice mixes the new

percent received instruction at home (homeschooled or full-time virtual) and is a different bucket.

²Texas Education Agency, “Home Schooling,” <https://tea.texas.gov/families-and-students/finding-school-your-child/home-schooling>. New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers,” <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers>. Homeschooling is legal in all fifty states and D.C.; these two pages illustrate a light-process and a heavier-process pattern, not a national template. This book is not legal advice.

³Texas Education Agency, “Home Schooling”: “The State of Texas does not award a diploma to students that are home schooled.” New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers”: a high school diploma “may only be awarded to a student enrolled in a registered secondary school.” North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education, “Home School Records Retention & Diplomas FAQs,” <https://www.doa.nc.gov/divisions/non-public-education/home-schools/faqs/records-retention-diplomas>: the State does not issue a diploma or a transcript; the home-school chief administrator does. NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*, http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/Home_School_Toolkit.pdf, treats proof of graduation as a family- or umbrella-issued artifact.

⁴Jiashan Cui and Rachel Hanson, *Homeschooling in the United States: Results from the 2012 and 2016 Parent and Family Involvement Survey*, NCES 2020-001 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), Table 9: among K–12-equivalent homeschoolers, 78 percent were being taught “social science, history, social studies” that year (81 percent in grades 9–12). Geography that year: 41 percent overall. The 2023 First Look did not republish the subject-taught tables. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020001.pdf>.

looking with last week's story. The hour ends with one short task they do alone: a spoken sentence, a caption, a claim that points at the source. You stop talking sooner than feels polite. The child looks and talks. You hold the key. That is the hour. The next long piece of this front matter, *The History Hour*, will teach it in full. Later chapters will not reinvent it.



Figure 2: A kitchen-table history hour

Stories first, then the question. A date list is not a year. Historical looking does not spring from age or from being “good at history”; it goes against the grain of how we ordinarily think.⁵ The chapters will give you wording. The hour will stay this shape.

⁵Sam Wineburg, “Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 80, no. 7 (1999): 488–99: historical thinking “in its deepest forms, is neither a natural process nor something that springs automatically from psychological development”; its achievement “actually goes against the grain of how we ordinarily think.” “It is much easier to learn names, dates, and stories than it is to change the fundamental mental structures that we use to grasp the meaning of the past.”

What you will actually get

Each teaching chapter does eight jobs, always in the same order, so you are never hunting for the move.

You will learn why this week's idea is worth the struggle — what it unlocks later. You will understand the idea yourself, in plain language, with one everyday picture and one precise picture, and with the wrong stories you should be able to hear. You will get a session you can run this week, including exact wording, named activities, and a discussion box with this week's questions. You will get practice that builds learning, not a slog of coverage. Your student will get a short section of their own. If it isn't clicking, you will get three diagnostics and a next move for each, with no shame in the room. Tools, including AI, stay optional and adult-side. And you will get a plain checklist for "done enough," so you can place by skill rather than by birthday.

The eight teaching chapters follow the work, not twelve thin grade labels: then-and-now in grades 1–2; state and early U.S. stories, with a timeline as a tool, in grades 3–5; world moves and U.S. moves in grades 6–8; then high-school World History, U.S. History, civics, sources and discussion, and geography and the present. Records and resources come last.

This week you can learn the session shape and today's idea well enough to hear a wrong story. Today the child can look at one picture or one short source and say something true about it without you filling the silence.

What this book will not do

This book will not hand you 180 days of coverage. A year of photocopies is not a teaching method, and I will not pretend it is. Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour.

It will not sell you a curriculum. Later, a short resources chapter names common programs by fit — parent load, narrative versus textbook versus document-heavy, religious versus secular, how they place a student — so you can choose. Story of the World, Tapestry of Grace, Notgrass, All American History, a textbook path, and Digital Inquiry Group's *Reading Like a Historian* lessons are tools. None of them is this book, and this book is not a catalog in disguise. A family may combine. Combining does not turn a brand into a course name. The transcript still

says World History or U.S. History.

It will not promise a score. There is no guaranteed percentile, no guaranteed AP number, no guaranteed NAEP bar, and no guaranteed college letter inside these pages. What this book can promise is a path: the ideas in order, at the skill the child actually has, until they can do the next idea unaided. NAEP Proficient is not “on grade level,” and there is no national homeschool history score in these pages to wave.⁶

It is not a Common Core tract, for or against. The C3 Framework is an inquiry map states may use; it is not a grade-by-grade content list and it is not a homeschool mandate.⁷ California, Texas, and Virginia print their own maps, and they do not agree about when the world year happens. A publisher’s “grade 6” book is a scope, not a legal grade. Ancient civilizations in sixth grade is California’s sequence, not a national rule.

It is not a culture-war pamphlet. Teach the year on the table. Name a live debate in one sentence when it is load-bearing, then teach. A path through history is the promise. A culture-war win is not. History does not automatically mint a citizen.⁸ If civics is the aim, teach civics, and point to *Publius* for a Federalist week.

And this is not a sequel. *Publius* and *Critical Thinking for Life* are other books. If

⁶National Center for Education Statistics, “Fast Facts: U.S. History and Civics (1160),” <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=1160>: grade 8 U.S. history, 2022, average 258; 13 percent at or above NAEP Proficient; 60 percent at or above NAEP Basic. NCES states that “the NAEP Proficient achievement level does not represent grade level proficiency as determined by other assessment standards.” NCES does not publish a nationally representative homeschool NAEP U.S. history score.

⁷National Council for the Social Studies, *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013), <https://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/c3/C3-Framework-for-Social-Studies.pdf>: the Framework “intentionally preserves the critical choices around the selection of curricular content taught at each grade level as a decision best made by each state.” It does not assign ancient civilizations to grade 6. California *History–Social Science Content Standards* (State Board adoption 9 October 1998; CDE Press 2000): World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations is the grade 6 course. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/histsocscistnd.pdf>.

⁸Marjolein Wilke, Fien Depaepe, and Karel Van Nieuwenhuysse, “Democratic Citizenship through Historical Thinking? A Cluster Randomized Controlled Intervention Study” (NOKSA 2022 conference paper): a Flemish history-inquiry series improved inquiry skills and procedural knowledge of inquiry; no significant overall improvement in democratic skills and dispositions; “limited transfer from historical to democratic skills.” Not a U.S. homeschool trial. If civics is the aim, teach civics.

a Federalist week needs an essay, that work lives in *Publius*. Evaluation of claims lives inside the history hour — one looking move, a source on the table — not as a course titled Critical Thinking 101, and not as a course titled AI History. AI is a lane here: one history-hour box in this front matter, then a short tools box in each teaching chapter.

This is not a book that lectures your child about you, or you about your character. The student is a person, not a percentile. When this book speaks to them, it speaks with respect. No baby-talk. No research sermon.

The promise

If you only remember one sentence, remember this: a path through history is the promise.

The work is to take this child through history — then and now, a state story, a U.S. survey, a world survey, government a registrar can read — without skipping the looking because they are “a good reader,” and without parking them in a book that is too easy because a catalog printed a grade on the cover. You will sometimes slow down. You will sometimes skip ahead. Both are teaching. Birthday is not placement.

Three things have to hold. You understand this week’s idea well enough to hear a wrong story. The child does the looking and the talking before the tool. Any helper — including an AI agent — stays on your side of the table: a supplement you host and constrain, not a substitute for the child’s reading or the discussion, and not a school-safe product by default.

You can do this. You do not have to know next year’s idea today. You have to know this week’s idea well enough to sit still while they struggle, then ask one good question. Start here. Read *How to Use This Book This Week*, then the one-page list of five things, then *The History Hour*. After that, open the chapter that matches the skill in front of you. You will know more after one chapter than you know this morning. Your child will have something to try today. We can do this.

How to Use This Book This Week

Start at the skill in front of you, not on page one of Grade 1 because a catalog, a birthday, or a well-meant relative said so.

This book is a handbook you open to this week's band, not a novel you read cover to cover. The teaching chapters run: grades 1–2; grades 3–5; grades 6–8; World History; U.S. History; civics; sources and discussion; geography and the present. Records and resources come last. Grade labels here are sequence anchors. They tell you where an idea usually sits. They do not tell you where *this* child sits.

This book does not replace the program already on the shelf. If Story of the World, Tapestry of Grace, Notgrass, All American History, a textbook path, or a set of *Reading Like a Historian* lessons is already working, keep it. Use this book to hear a wrong story, to run the hour, and to name the credit a stranger can read. The transcript still says Social Studies, U.S. History, or World History, not a brand.

Pick the chapter by skill, not by birthday

Open the chapter you think is right. Skip to **What “done enough” looks like** at the end of the *previous* chapter, or to **If it isn't clicking** in the one you opened. If the child can already do those checks unaided, you are too early. If the checks from two chapters back are still failing, drop back.

If they still live in then-and-now pictures — if a date is a noise and a kitchen from long ago is the story — they are still in grades 1–2, whatever their age. Dates had little meaning before third grade; only later do they attach to knowledge a child already has.⁹ A picture clothesline is in range. A sourcing seminar is not, yet.

⁹Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, ““Back When God Was Around and Everything”: Elementary Children's Understanding of Historical Time,” *American Educational Research Journal*

If they cannot yet source a short document — who made this, when, why, before they read the body — they are still in a taught-looking stage, whatever the transcript year. Fifth-graders can investigate when someone teaches the looking. They are not historians.¹⁰ A sixth-grader who still treats the textbook as the only account is not “behind in world history.” They are still learning to look.

If they can look at a byline, place a story on a simple timeline, and say a claim with a reason, and they are still in a “grade 4” reader only because the cover says so, skip ahead. Instruction for a six-year-old need not be “first grade”; it should match what the student actually needs and already knows.¹¹ A publisher’s “Volume 3” is a scope, not a legal grade. Story of the World’s publisher describes its activity materials as designed primarily for grades 1–4 and extendable through 8.¹² Use this book’s checklists, or a placement test from the program you own, and then teach.

Two children may need two chapters. That is ordinary. The session shape in *The History Hour* still holds; the idea on the table changes. You may run a twenty-five-minute then-and-now sit with one child and a forty-five-minute document talk with the other. You do not need two personalities. You need two first problems.

33, no. 2 (1996): 58 children, kindergarten through sixth grade, placed pictures from American history in order. Dates had little meaning before third grade; third and fourth graders understood the numerical basis of dates; only by fifth grade did students extensively connect particular dates with specific background knowledge. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026.

¹⁰Bruce A. VanSledright, “Fifth Graders Investigating History in the Classroom: Results from a Researcher-Practitioner Design Experiment,” *Elementary School Journal* 104, no. 3 (2004): 23 fifth-graders, four months of American history taught as investigation. The approach “holds promise”; the results “contradict a common assumption that fifth graders are too young and intellectually unsophisticated.” They are not historians. Keith C. Barton, “‘I Just Kinda Know’: Elementary Students’ Ideas about Historical Evidence,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 25, no. 4 (1997): 407–30: fourth- and fifth-graders rarely examined sources critically without being asked.

¹¹New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers,” <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers>: instruction for a six-year-old need not be “first grade”; “instruction should be geared to the level appropriate to the student’s needs and previous level of achievement.”

¹²Well-Trained Mind Press, “Tell me about The Story of the World Activity Books,” updated 21 March 2025: the Activity Book is “Designed primarily for grades 1–4,” with map exercises, activities, projects, and reading lists that “make it extendable for grades 5–8.” Publisher placement language, not a statute. This book does not rank programs.

Maps are maps

California, Texas, and Virginia do not print the same year. That is not a problem for you to solve. It is a reason not to treat any one of them as national law.

C3 is an inquiry arc — questions, disciplinary tools, sources and evidence, a conclusion said aloud. It leaves content to each state. It does not assign ancient civilizations to grade 6.¹³ California does: ancient world in 6, medieval and early modern in 7, U.S. Constitution through World War I in 8. Texas’s 2022 map puts contemporary world cultures in grade 6, not an ancient survey, and U.S. colonial through Reconstruction in grade 8. In June 2026 Texas adopted new social studies standards and named an eighth-grade Texas history capstone; this book names that live change and will not write the new student expectations from a press release.¹⁴ Virginia’s 2023 table splits U.S. history at 1865 across grades 5 and 6, puts world geography in 8, and postpones world history to high school, split at 1500.

Middle school is where U.S. maps disagree about when the world year happens. The child still needs world moves and U.S. moves before high school. Chapter 4 does not assume two prior world years. You choose the map that matches the work on your table. Then you teach the moves.

¹³National Council for the Social Studies, *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013): primary purpose is guidance to states; Inquiry Arc of four Dimensions; the Framework “intentionally preserves” content choices for each state. It does not assign ancient world to grade 6. <https://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/c3/C3-Framework-for-Social-Studies.pdf>.

¹⁴California State Board of Education, *History–Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools* (adopted 9 October 1998; CDE Press 2000), grades 6–8. Texas State Board of Education, 19 TAC Chapter 113 attachment (adopted 2022): grade 6 contemporary world; grade 8 U.S. colonial through Reconstruction as the first of a two-year study. Texas State Board of Education, “Texas State Board of Education Adopts New Social Studies Standards and Required Literature Reading List,” 26 June 2026, <https://sboe.texas.gov/state-board-of-education/sboe-news/texas-state-board-of-education-adopts-new-social-studies-standards-and-required-literature-reading-list>. Virginia Department of Education, 2023 Standards of Learning for History and Social Science course table (Board approval 20 April 2023): U.S. History to 1865 in grade 5; U.S. History 1865 to the Present in grade 6; World Geography in grade 8; world history in high school, split at 1500. <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-instruction/history-and-social-science/standards-of-learning>.

How you use the parent half

Most of each teaching chapter is for you. Read it *before* the lesson, not over the child's shoulder.

Why this matters tells you what this idea unlocks. **For the parent: understand it yourself** gives one everyday picture, one precise picture, and three to five wrong stories you should be able to hear. Sit with those. If “the book said it” still feels like the last word, that is the sourcing idea, and it is worth five quiet minutes now.

How to teach it this week assumes the session shape from *The History Hour*. It will not rebuild the hour. It will give you this week's named activities, the wording for *this* idea, and a discussion box: an opening question, a few follow-ups, how to wait, and what a stuck silence usually means. Later chapters supply this week's questions. They do not reinvent the shape.

Practice that actually builds learning is a short blocked set of the new looking, then mixed work so the child has to choose. Kitchen objects, a walk, and a holiday can motivate. They do not replace the source on the table or the unaided sentence. **Tools, including AI** is optional, short, and for the adult. The rules live once in *The History Hour*. **What “done enough” looks like** is how you leave: unaided work, not a perfect Tuesday. Placement is by skill, not birthday.

You do not have to read the whole chapter tonight. You do have to read the parent half of *this week's* idea before you sit down with the child.

The five-minute parent warm-up

Make this a habit.

Five minutes. Child not yet in the chair. Phone face down.

1. Read today's idea until you can say it in one sentence.
2. Look at one picture or one short document yourself. Ask, out loud, who made it. Stay off the key until you have looked.
3. Glance at the “wrong stories you should be able to hear.” Name the one you would have given at fourteen.
4. Write one sentence you will actually say. Not a speech. Example: “Who made this?” Or: “What is different in this picture from our kitchen?”
5. Close the book to the student page. You are ready.

That five minutes is how you stay out of their working memory. If you are learning the idea *while* they are stuck, you will talk too much. Prepare first. Then sit still.

How the student uses “For the student”

Every teaching chapter includes a short section written to the student, not about them. One or two pages. Warmer. Direct. What the idea is, a tiny worked example, two tries, an “explain it back” prompt, and one challenge. Hand it over after your short story, not instead of it. You stay in the room. The challenge is optional that day.

The student page is not something to send off with an unsupervised chatbot. The attempt is still theirs. You still hold the key.

When to skip ahead

Skip ahead when this chapter’s “done enough” checklist is already true *unaided*. Slow down when the same wrong story repeats after a clear telling and a real attempt. **If it isn’t clicking** will give you three likely causes and a next move. Missing pictures or missing talk are skill problems, not character problems.

Diagnose the looking before you buy the high-school survey. Accelerate a child who has the prerequisites. Hold still for a child who does not. If you need a human tutor, that is a normal high-school plan, not a failure of the kitchen.

For this week: pick the chapter by skill. Do the five-minute warm-up. Run the hour as *The History Hour* describes it. Let the student page be theirs. Stop talking sooner than you want to. That is how you use the book.

If You Only Remember Five Things

Keep this page. The chapters will add wording, pictures, and this week's questions. They will not replace these.

1. Stories first, then the question. A date list is not a year. Tell one named person in a named place. Then ask. Names, dates, and stories are easier than changing how we think about the past; the story is still the door a child can walk through.¹⁵ Pictures-in-time come before dates in the early years. You do not wait for “readiness” as a personality trait. You tell the story. Then you put a source on the table.

2. The student talks. You ask one good question and wait. Three seconds. Maybe five. The silence is the work. An authentic question is one you have not already written the answer for.¹⁶ “What year was the Magna Carta?” is a quiz. “Why might a king agree to limit his own power?” is closer — if you do not already have the sentence you want to hear. Struggle before rescue: ask, wait, hint, then

¹⁵Sam Wineburg, “Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 80, no. 7 (1999): 488–99: “It is much easier to learn names, dates, and stories than it is to change the fundamental mental structures that we use to grasp the meaning of the past.” Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, ““Back When God Was Around and Everything”: Elementary Children’s Understanding of Historical Time,” *American Educational Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (1996): dates had little meaning before third grade; pictures-in-time first. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026.

¹⁶Martin Nystrand, Lawrence L. Wu, Adam Gamoran, Susie Zeiser, and Daniel A. Long, *Questions in Time: Investigating the Structure and Dynamics of Unfolding Classroom Discourse*, CELA report ED461119 (Albany, NY: National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement, 2001), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED461119.pdf>: an authentic question is one “for which the asker has not prespecified an answer.” Mary Budd Rowe, “Wait-Time and Rewards as Instructional Variables: Their Influence on Language, Logic, and Fate Control,” NARST paper, ERIC ED061103 (1972), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED061103.pdf>: wait three to five seconds after you ask and after they stop. Rowe studied elementary science classes, not history scores.

model. You do not finish the paragraph.

3. A source on the table beats a paragraph about “being critical.” A picture, a letter, a map, an object — with the maker visible. Look first. Ask who made it, when, and why, before you read the body.¹⁷ A lecture on being a critical thinker, with nothing on the table, is not the hour. If it is a website, leave the page and look from the outside. That looking move lives here. The longer course lives in *Critical Thinking for Life*.

4. Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour. You cannot do every kingdom, every battle, every standard. A survey is triage: a few regions, a few documents, a question the sources can actually speak to.¹⁸ The curriculum on the shelf is the map. Tuesday is one story, one source, one question.

5. A path through history is the promise. A culture-war win is not. Teach the year on the table. Name a live debate in one sentence when it is load-bearing, then teach. History does not automatically mint a citizen.¹⁹ If civics is the aim, teach civics. Birthday is not placement. You will sometimes slow down. You will sometimes skip ahead. Both are teaching.

The child looks and talks before the tool. You hold the key. A helper may explain a timeline *to you* from a named page. It does not sit in the chair during the attempt.

If this week needs a compass, this is it. Five things. Then sit down and teach.

¹⁷Daisy Martin and Sam Wineburg, “Seeing Thinking on the Web,” *The History Teacher* 41, no. 3 (2008): sourcing is looking at the document’s attribution *before* reading the text. Library of Congress, Teaching with Primary Sources, “Getting Started with Primary Sources,” <https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/>: Observe, Reflect, Question. Sam Wineburg and Sarah McGrew, “Lateral Reading and the Nature of Expertise,” *Teachers College Record* 121 (November 2019): if it is a website, leave the page.

¹⁸Sam Wineburg, “Crazy for History,” *Journal of American History* (Textbooks and Teaching, 2004), quoting Wilfred McClay: curriculum design “must be an exercise in triage.” Texas State Board of Education, World History Studies introduction (19 TAC Chapter 113, adopted 2022 attachment): because of “the expanse of world history and the time limitations of the school year, the scope of this course should focus on ‘essential’ concepts and skills.”

¹⁹Marjolein Wilke, Fien Depaepe, and Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse, “Democratic Citizenship through Historical Thinking?” (NOKSA 2022): inquiry skills moved; no significant overall improvement in democratic skills and dispositions; “limited transfer from historical to democratic skills.” Transcript titles a stranger can read: Social Studies, U.S. History, World History, Government, Civics, Geography, Economics. Never a brand. Never “Critical Thinking 101.”

The History Hour

The hour has a shape. Learn it once. Later chapters will give you today's story, today's source, and today's questions. They will not rebuild this hour. When a chapter says "run the session," it means this.

You do not need a school bell. You need a looking start, a short story, a real attempt, one authentic question, mixed practice, and an unaided check. Younger children may finish in twenty-five minutes. Older students may need forty-five. The shape does not change. The year on the table does.

Sit down having already done the five-minute parent warm-up from *How to Use This Book This Week*. You know today's question. The child looks and talks. You hold the key.

1. Warm-up looking

Three to five minutes. A picture, a map, or a short object they already know. Mixed, not a quiz of dates they cannot yet attach. This is retrieval, not a test of character.

Say:

"We're going to start with something you already know."

"Look at last week's picture. What do you still notice?"

"Point to the place on the map we already used."

Keep this short. The warm-up is not the lesson. When you feel yourself telling a new story here, stop. That story belongs in the model. A kitchen from long ago is

a story a first-grader can hold; 1776 is a noise until it attaches to something they already know.²⁰

2. Short story, then a short model

Five to eight minutes. One new move, visible. A named person in a named place. Then a source on the table, attribution up. Then you stop.

New, dense material — first then-and-now clothesline, first “who made this” before the body, first two accounts of one event — is where a short model earns its keep. Show the move. Then fade.

Say:

“I’m going to tell this one short. Then you’ll look.”

“Watch how I look at the name at the top before I read.”

“Hear the story. Then this letter is yours.”

On the second pass, leave a hole:

“Your turn to tell me what we look at first. I’ll hold the page this time. You do the looking.”

“I’m covering the date. What can you say from the picture?”

Include one incorrect example when the idea is new, and ask:

“What did they treat as the only account? How can you tell?”

That question is worth more than another correct copy.

If you are still talking at minute twelve, you are giving a lecture. Close the story. Hand them the picture, the letter, or the map.

²⁰Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, ““Back When God Was Around and Everything”: Elementary Children’s Understanding of Historical Time,” *American Educational Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (1996). Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026. Session shape in this chapter is pedagogical design for the kitchen table, not a national history-minutes study (none was found).

3. Student attempt

This is the center of the hour. Eight to twelve minutes. Maybe longer for two documents or a paragraph. The first looking is theirs.

Hand them “For the student” if the chapter has it, or the first task from **How to teach it this week**. Then you talk less than you want to.

Say:

“This one is yours. I’ll be quiet.”

Then be quiet.

If they stall, use this order: ask, wait, hint, then model. Not the reverse.

Ask:

“Show me what you noticed.”

“Who made this?”

“What would we still need?”

Wait. Count a slow five in your head — three at the least. The silence is the work. If you fill it, you took the problem back.

Hint, one hint:

“Look at the line under the picture. That is a maker.”

“You already know this place from the map. Point.”

Then, if they are still stuck after a real try:

“I’m going to show you this one step. Then you take it from here.”

Show the step. Return the page.

If they are missing a piece — they have no story to think with — that is a hole, not useful struggle. Fill it with a short retell, then return to the task.

Keep your hands off their page. Taking it feels kind. It teaches them to watch. If you feel the urge, put your hands in your lap and say the ask-sentence again. The child looks and talks. You hold the key.

4. One authentic question

Two or three minutes for the question itself; the talk around it can run longer, using the discussion shape below. Not “did you get it?” They will say yes. You will learn nothing.

An authentic question is one for which you have not already written the answer.²¹ “What year was it?” is recitation. “Who made this, and what did they want us to believe?” is closer — if you do not already have the sentence you want to hear.

Say:

“Who made this?”

“Can both of these accounts be useful — and for which question?”

“What would have to be true in *their* world for this to make sense?”

Then wait. Three to five seconds after you ask. Three to five again after they stop. Mary Budd Rowe found that elementary *science* teachers waited about one second; when they reached three to five, students talked longer, guessed less, and asked more of their own questions. That was science class. This book borrows the pause. It does not claim the pause raises history scores.²²

One question. Maybe a follow-up. Then stop. This is not a seminar. You are checking that they have a picture, not collecting a speech.

If they cannot explain it back, they copied a step. Return to the looking — maker first, then the body — and give one more attempt.

²¹Martin Nystrand, Lawrence L. Wu, Adam Gamoran, Susie Zeiser, and Daniel A. Long, *Questions in Time: Investigating the Structure and Dynamics of Unfolding Classroom Discourse*, CELA report ED461119 (2001), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED461119.pdf>: an authentic question is one “for which the asker has not prespecified an answer.” Dialogic spells were infrequent: less than 7 percent of 1,151 instructional episodes in eighth- and ninth-grade English and social studies had even one. There is no kitchen-table discussion randomized trial in these pages.

²²Mary Budd Rowe, “Wait-Time and Rewards as Instructional Variables: Their Influence on Language, Logic, and Fate Control,” NARST paper, ERIC ED061103 (1972), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED061103.pdf>: over 300 tapes of elementary science classes; mean wait-time about one second after a teacher question and 0.9 seconds after a student response. When mean wait-times of three to five seconds were achieved, nine student variables changed, including longer responses, fewer failures to respond, and more student questions. Rowe is science, not history.

5. Mixed practice

Ten to fifteen minutes. First a short blocked set of the new move — four to six looks, captions, or placements that use today's idea — so they learn to execute. Then mix. Yesterday's picture. Last month's map. An old story among new ones.

Blocked practice teaches execution. Mixed practice teaches *when* to use the move. A page of twenty identical date blanks feels like mastery at 9 p.m. It often is not still there in two weeks.

Say:

"These first few are today's move. Get the feel of it."

Then:

"These are mixed on purpose. First decide what kind of job it is. Then look."

Stop while they can still think. Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour.²³

6. Unaided check

Three to five minutes. One short task. Book closed. No hints. No "For the student." No chatbot. No looking at the worked example.

Tonight's helped practice, with you in the chair and a tool in reach, is not this check.²⁴

Say:

"One task. Source still on the table. I won't help. That's the point."

"Wrong is useful. We'll look after."

"You don't need a perfect score. I need to see what you can do alone."

²³Sam Wineburg, "Crazy for History," *Journal of American History* (Textbooks and Teaching, 2004): "Light rail excursions through mounds of factual information may be entertaining, but such dizzying tours leave few traces in memory." Wineburg quotes Wilfred McClay: curriculum design "must be an exercise in triage."

²⁴Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, "Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–99: current performance is "often an unreliable index" of learning. The unaided check is the check this hour trusts. A model-written paragraph is performance. The unaided retell the next morning is the test.

A spoken sentence or a caption in the early years. A paragraph in the middle years. A claim with a named source in high school.

Then you are quiet again. When they finish, you look. If it is right, you are done enough for today. If it is wrong, you diagnose — which wrong story from the parent section is this? — and you note tomorrow’s first move. You do not redo the whole hour. You do not punish. You find the picture that was missing.

Fade until the check does not need you.

When to stop talking

After you ask, wait. If you fill the silence, you took the problem back.

During the attempt, your job is almost nothing. If you hear yourself explaining while they look, you have moved back into the model. Stop. Let them look.

Instead of “this is the hard part” or “I was never good at dates,” say today’s sentence: “Who made this?” Or: “Show me what you see.”

Praise a clear look, a sentence that points at the source, a catch of their own error — not speed.

“You noticed the name before the body. That’s the looking I want.”

Stop talking when the next sentence would be a rescue. Hands in your lap. Count five. Then one hint, or one step, and the page goes back.

If you remember only one move from this page, remember that one.

The discussion shape, once

Later chapters will fill this week’s questions. They will not reprint this shape. When a chapter prints a discussion box, it means this.

Opening question. Authentic. About the source or the story on the table. No answer you have already written. Examples of the *shape*, not required topics: “What is different in this picture from our kitchen?” “Who made this, and what did they want us to believe?” “Can both of these accounts be useful — and for which question?”

Three to five follow-ups. Pick from this list. You do not need all five every Tuesday.

1. Observation: What do you actually *see*?
2. Source: Who made this, when, and why?
3. What else: What would we still need?
4. Strangeness: What would have to be true in *their* world?
5. Revision: What would you change in what you said, now that you've looked again?

How to wait. After you ask, three to five seconds. After they stop, three to five again. If the silence is hard, look at the source, not at the child. The page can hold the pause. You do not have to.

What a stuck silence usually means.

- Wait time has been too short for years. Borrow Rowe's pause. Count.
- The question was a recitation item in disguise. "What year?" will get you a year, or a shrug.
- The child does not have enough of the story to think with. Tell a shorter story. Then ask again.
- The child is doing presentism — reading the past as if it were today. That is the mind at rest, not a character flaw.²⁵ Ask what would have to be true in *their* world.
- The child can critique a source when asked, and does not know that is what you now want. Say so: "I want the evidence connection, not a list."

In one high-school study of document lessons, trained teachers with materials in hand produced only nine whole-class text-based discussions in more than a hundred videotaped lessons.²⁶ Materials do not talk. You pose, wait, and point back at the source.

²⁵Sam Wineburg, "Reading Abraham Lincoln: An Expert/Expert Study in the Interpretation of Historical Texts," *Cognitive Science* 22, no. 3 (1998): 319–46: "The phenomenon of 'presentism,' the act of viewing the past through the lens of the present, is not some bad habit we've fallen into, but is instead our psychological condition at rest."

²⁶Avishag Reisman, "Reading Like a Historian: A Document-Based History Curriculum Intervention in Urban High Schools," *Cognition and Instruction* 30, no. 1 (2012): 86–112; same study in the 2011 Stanford dissertation: quasi-experiment, 236 eleventh-graders, San Francisco, six months. Qualitative analysis: only nine whole-class text-based discussions in over 100 videotaped lessons. Copy the lesson *shape* (short background, documents, looking, talk), not the effect sizes, onto elementary. This is grade 11, not a homeschool trial.

Elementary “done enough” is a spoken sentence or a caption. Middle school is a paragraph. High school is a claim with a named source.

The AI rules, once

Later chapters will point here in one sentence. They will not reprint this box.

Child first. You hold the key. AI is optional for the adult.

The child reads the page, looks at the source, and talks before any tool is in the room. You keep the answer key — on paper, in a closed tab, in your head after the warm-up. A chatbot does not sit beside them during the attempt.

Use a tool, if you use one at all, for four jobs: explain this week’s timeline *to you* from a named textbook page; draft discussion questions you vet before they reach the table; make extra map or timeline practice with the answers hidden from the child; diagnose work they already produced.

Never say “write my DBQ.” Never ask it to invent a primary source. Never leave an unsupervised chatbot running during the attempt. Never let “what happened” be the whole hour. Never photograph the worksheet for a key.

In a high-school math study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice about 48 percent and then cut the unaided exam about 17 percent; a hint tutor that withheld full solutions raised practice without that exam drop. That study is mathematics, not a history trial. The crutch still governs the hour: if the model produces the paragraph, the child is a spectator.²⁷

²⁷Hamsa Bastani, Osbert Bastani, Alp Sungu, Haosen Ge, Özge Kabakçı, and Rei Mariman, “Generative AI without guardrails can harm learning: Evidence from high school mathematics,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Field experiment, nearly 1,000 Turkish high-school math students, GPT-4-0613: a ChatGPT-like tool raised assisted practice grades 48 percent relative to control, then cut unaided exam grades 17 percent; a hint tutor that withheld full solutions raised practice 127 percent and was statistically indistinguishable from control on the unaided exam (point estimate -0.004). GPT Base was correct on 51 percent of the practice set. The paper notes that math has objective scoring “which is unavailable in creative subjects such as writing.” This is a math RCT, not a history RCT; the transferable cau-

Language models invent sources, dates, and quotes. In one study, more than half of GPT-3.5 citations and nearly one in five GPT-4 citations were fabricated; many of the real ones had the wrong date.²⁸ Treat every model-supplied quotation, date, and “as Lincoln wrote” as untrusted until you find it in a named book, archive, or textbook page. A generated “letter from a Civil War private” is fiction with a costume. A generated painting of a battle is a scene to look at together. It is not a source. It has no maker in 1863.

Hermes 4 is a chat model. Hermes Agent is a different runtime. Grok the assistant is not Grok Bot. Grok Bot has no education product and is not a school-safe tutor. If you use any of these, they live on your machine or your account. They are not the child’s study buddy, and they are not a companion.

Detectors fail often enough that they are not a verdict on a child’s page.²⁹

You can teach this entire book with no AI. Many families will. The hour still has the same shape.

If a product claims it “does 100 percent of the teaching,” treat that as advertising. You still hold the key.

tion is the crutch. Author PDF: https://hamsabastani.github.io/education_llm.pdf. College Board, *AP Exam Terms and Conditions* for 2026 exams (updated 27 April 2026), Section 4: no part of Test answers, work, or submission may be generated in whole or in part using AI tools, including ChatGPT.

²⁸William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and errors in the bibliographic citations generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045: 55 percent of GPT-3.5 citations and 18 percent of GPT-4 citations were fabricated; of the real citations, 43 percent (GPT-3.5) and 24 percent (GPT-4) had substantive errors, including wrong dates. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-023-41032-5>.

²⁹Weixin Liang, Mert Yuksekgonul, Yining Mao, Eric Wu, and James Zou, “GPT detectors are biased against non-native English writers,” *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): 100779: average false-positive rate on human TOEFL essays 61.3 percent (61.22 percent in the preprint, arXiv:2304.02819). Hermes Agent: <https://hermes-agent.org/> (open-source agent runtime, February 2026). Hermes 4 is a separate chat/reasoning model family; Nous Portal docs state it is not recommended inside Hermes Agent. Grok Bot: xAI, “Introducing Grok Bot,” 11 August 2026, <https://x.ai/news/introducing-grok-bot>, and Grok Bot FAQ, <https://docs.x.ai/grok-bot/faq> — cloud computer; no education product and no FERPA claim on the pages opened 31 August 2026. Grok the assistant, Grok Bot, and the El Salvador school partnership for Grok the assistant are three different objects.

A Tuesday, said plainly

Here is an illustration, not a reported family. A parent has spent five minutes looking at one picture and asking who made it. The child warms up on last week's map. The parent tells a short story, then puts a letter on the table, name at the top. The child looks. The parent asks, "Who made this, and what did they want us to believe?" and waits. Mixed practice: today's letter next to yesterday's picture. Exit: "One sentence. Point at the source. I won't help." Right or wrong, the hour had a shape.

On a high-school day the same shape holds. Warm-up: two places already on the map. Model: two short accounts. Attempt: they corroborate. Question: "Can both be useful — and for which question?" Mixed: last week's period card next to today's documents. Exit: one unaided claim with a named source, model closed.

You can run that hour. You do not need a degree. You need today's question, a page you refuse to take, and the willingness to stop talking.

Dose is not a 180-day script. There is no national table of history minutes for the kitchen.³⁰ The hour is this shape. The minutes follow the child.

Later chapters will say: run the session as in *The History Hour*. That sentence is this page. The year will change. The hour will not.

³⁰No IES, NCES, or NCAA page opened on 31 August 2026 prescribed a national homeschool history-minutes table. North Carolina DNPE *recommends* (not law) five hours across all subjects; Pennsylvania statute names 180 days or 900/990 hours for the whole program; New York's unit is 6,480 minutes. None of these is a national history block.

Chapter 1

Then and now: pictures before dates



Figure 3: A kitchen-table still-life: a string of then-and-now pictures of kitchens and tools, a household object, a simple hand-drawn neighborhood map, and a cropped family photograph with no identifiable child. No faces. No logos.

Why this matters

This year is not a waiting room until “real history” begins. The work of these years is the past as a picture you can hang, a place you can walk, a person in the family who was actually there. Then and now. Home and street. A map that is a picture of a place the child already knows. A holiday as a story told with care. An object on the table that someone used. Short sits. The child talks.

The sentence that surprises people is this one: a date list is not a year, and a six-year-old who cannot say “1776” is not behind in history. Keith Barton and Linda Levstik sat with fifty-eight children from kindergarten through sixth grade, laid out pictures from American history, and asked them to put the pictures in order and talk. Even the youngest made some basic distinctions in historical time. Those distinctions grew more differentiated with age. Dates had little meaning before third grade. Third- and fourth-graders understood the numerical basis of dates. Only by fifth grade did students extensively connect particular dates with specific background knowledge. At every age, children’s placements of most pictures agreed with one another and with the correct order.³¹ A picture clothesline is in range. A sourcing seminar is not. A quiz that begins “what year is this?” is asking the wrong organ.

Peter Lee, reporting English classroom work, is the household picture of the same miss. First-graders will sort pictures into “long ago” and “now” by the physical condition of the objects — and of the photographs themselves. A shiny museum stagecoach can beat a beat-up modern car, because everyday “old versus new” swallows historical “long ago versus now.”³² The child is not being silly. They are using the only time-tool they have: how something looks. Your job is to give

³¹Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, “‘Back When God Was Around and Everything’: Elementary Students’ Understanding of Historical Time,” *American Educational Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (1996): 419–454. Fifty-eight children, kindergarten through sixth grade; pictures placed in chronological order. Dates had little meaning before third grade; third and fourth graders understood the numerical basis of dates; only by fifth grade did students extensively connect particular dates with specific background knowledge. Placement of most pictures showed substantial agreement with the correct order. Instructional implication the authors wrote: information that relies on dates is unlikely to activate temporal understanding in the early grades.

³²Peter J. Lee, “Putting Principles into Practice: Understanding History,” in *How Students Learn: History in the Classroom*, ed. M. Suzanne Donovan and John D. Bransford (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2005), 31–77. First-graders sorting “long ago” / “now” by physical condition of objects and of photographs; a shiny museum stagecoach can outrank a beat-up modern car. Everyday old-versus-new swallowing historical long-ago-versus-now.

them better pictures to hang, not a calendar to recite.

Treat the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework as a map of *moves*, not a homeschool mandate and not a content list. C3 is an Inquiry Arc — questions, disciplinary tools, sources and evidence, a conclusion said aloud. It “intentionally preserves” content choices for each state. It does not prescribe “how a bill becomes a law or the difference between a map and a globe.” Its pathways run K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12.³³ C3 does not assign neighborhoods to grade 1, and it does not assign ancient civilizations to grade 6. What the map is good for is saying what the hour *does*: a question, a looking move, a sentence the child can hold.

California’s 1998 History–Social Science pamphlet and Texas’s 2022 social-studies TEKS are other maps, not national law. California grade 1 is “A Child’s Place in Time and Space”: the classroom as a small civic community, the neighborhood compared with people long ago, symbols and songs. Grade 2 is “People Who Make a Difference,” including a family traced through artifacts, photographs, interviews, and documents.³⁴ Texas starts closer in: kindergarten is self, home, family, and classroom; grade 1 is classroom, school, and community, with past, present, and future and simple maps; grade 2 is the local community and the people and events that marked it.³⁵ The pattern on two coasts is expanding communities — self, home, street, town. The pattern is not a statute that every kitchen table must follow in that order. A family that does not live in California

³³National Council for the Social Studies, *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013). <https://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/c3/C3-Framework-for-Social-Studies.pdf>. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026. Inquiry Arc of four Dimensions; content choices preserved for each state; does not prescribe “how a bill becomes a law or the difference between a map and a globe”; pathways K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12. Cited as a map of moves, not a homeschool mandate and not “the national history standards.”

³⁴California State Board of Education, *History–Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, adopted 9 October 1998 (CDE Press, 2000). Grade 1, “A Child’s Place in Time and Space,” opening: classroom as microcosm; neighborhoods compared with people long ago. Grade 2, “People Who Make a Difference,” opening, and standard 2.1.1: “Trace the history of a family through the use of primary and secondary sources, including artifacts, photographs, interviews, and documents.” Public-school map, not a homeschool statute. The pamphlet’s own notice: guidance is exemplary except where law is cited.

³⁵Texas State Board of Education, proposed revisions to 19 TAC Chapter 113, Subchapters A–C, November 2022 attachment, adopted 2022. Kindergarten: self, home, family, classroom. Grade 1: classroom, school, and community; past/present/future; simple maps. Grade 2: local community and significant individuals and events. Public-school map, not a homeschool statute. This book is not legal advice.

does not owe California's family-history standard. The *move* is still useful: a relative who was there, an object that was used, a picture of then next to a picture of now.

Among K–2-equivalent homeschoolers in the last federal subject table, 70 percent were being taught social science, history, or social studies that year.³⁶ That figure is context, not a ranking. You are one of those tables. There is no national history-minutes number in these pages. Short sits, then stop, is teaching advice from how young children actually look, not a citation of minutes.

What you are teaching is then and now as pictures; family and classroom as a small community with rules and work; a map as a picture of a place; a commemorative holiday as a story, told with care, about people who remembered something; and oral history as a relative's voice. Pictures and objects before long text. The child looks. The child says one sentence. You wait.

What this band unlocks is a timeline that can later carry a few dates under pictures the child already owns, a picture or object treated as a source, and a story with names. Skip the pictures, and later "chronology" arrives as a slog of numbers with nothing to hang on. Skip the talking, and later discussion is recitation. Skip the relative who was there, and later "a source has a maker" has nowhere to sit.

You do not need to be a historian. You do need to hear "what year is this?" as the wrong question for this band, and "they were just stupid" as the mind at rest, not as a cute slip.

For the parent: understand it yourself

Many adults feel rusty on how to talk about the past without a date list. That is ordinary. Five minutes of this section, then the warm-up at the end, is enough for tomorrow.

Everyday picture. Two pictures on a string across the kitchen. One is *this* kitchen, or a kitchen that looks like yours: a refrigerator, a tap, a stove you would know how

³⁶Jiashan Cui and Rachel Hanson, *Homeschooling in the United States: Results from the 2012 and 2016 Parent and Family Involvement Survey*, NCES 2020-001 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), web tables from PFI 2016. Among K–12-equivalent homeschoolers, 78 percent were taught "social science, history, social studies" that year; 70 percent in K–2. The 2023 First Look (NCES 2024-113) did not republish subject-taught tables. Context, not a ranking.

to light. The other is a kitchen from long ago: a wood stove, a pump, a washboard, no refrigerator. You do not ask the year. You ask: “What is different in this picture from our kitchen?” The child points. “That stove is black.” “There is no fridge.” “Someone is pumping water.” Then or now is a picture-sort, not a test. The string is a clothesline of time. Hanging is the work.

Precise picture. Historical time, for a six- or seven-year-old, is visual before it is numerical. Barton and Levstik’s finding is the precise picture of the whole band: pictures in order first; dates later, when they attach to knowledge the child already has, around grade 5.³⁷ Lee’s first-graders sorting by shine and dents is the precise picture of the miss you will hear: *old* meaning *worn*, *new* meaning *shiny*. Your correction is not a lecture on centuries. It is another picture, and a question that stays on what they can see.

A primary source, in Library of Congress language, is one of “the raw materials of history — original documents and objects that were created at the time under study.” Their classroom tool for young lookers is Observe, Reflect, Question: what do you see, what do you think, what do you wonder. The same page warns that sources are “incomplete snippets,” and that successful looking takes careful selection.³⁸ That is not Sam Wineburg’s sourcing-before-the-body move, which later chapters will grow. It is curiosity with an object. A photograph, a letter, a spoon, a map the child drew of the walk to the park. See first. Infer second. Ask third.

Sam Wineburg’s larger sentence still belongs in the parent’s ear, even though this year’s child will not source a Lexington document. Historical thinking, in its deepest forms, “goes against the grain of how we ordinarily think.” It is easier to learn names, dates, and stories than to change the mental structures we use to grasp the past.³⁹ Presentism — viewing the past through the lens of the present — is “our

³⁷Barton and Levstik, “‘Back When God Was Around and Everything’” (1996).

³⁸Library of Congress, “Getting Started with Primary Sources,” Teachers page, accessed 31 August 2026. Primary sources as “the raw materials of history — original documents and objects that were created at the time under study.” Analysis tool: Observe, Reflect, Question. Warning: sources are often incomplete snippets with little context. Curiosity and inference scaffold; not Wineburg’s sourcing-before-the-body heuristic.

³⁹Sam Wineburg, “Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 80, no. 7 (1999): 488–499. Historical thinking “in its deepest forms, is neither a natural process nor something that springs automatically from psychological development”; it “actually goes against the grain of how we ordinarily think.” Easier to learn names, dates, and stories than to change the mental structures we use to grasp the past.

psychological condition at rest.”⁴⁰ When a seven-year-old says they were just stupid not to have a refrigerator, the child is at rest. You do not scold. You ask what would have to be true in *their* kitchen. That is contextualization in kitchen language. It is one looking move. It is not a course titled Critical Thinking 101, and it is not a sequel to another book.

C3’s K–2 ceiling is a skill, not extra content. By the end of grade 2, on that map, a child can work with a question, use a simple disciplinary idea (then and now; a place; a rule), look at a source, and say a conclusion. The content of the year is yours, or your state’s, or the book already on the shelf. Expanding communities is a pattern two coasts happen to share. It is not a national “grade 1 = neighborhoods” law.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. *You hold up a picture of a kitchen from long ago and ask, “What year is this?” The child stares, or guesses a number that sounds old.* Dates mean little before third grade. The question asked the wrong organ. Cover any caption that prints a year. Ask what is different from our kitchen. If they can point to a stove, a pump, a missing tap, the time-tool is working. If they cannot, the year was never going to help.
2. *The child looks at a washboard, or at people in heavy clothes in summer, and says “they were just stupid,” or “everything is better now because they didn’t have cardboard.”* Presentism, and the deficit-past story. The past as a place that was simply worse, waiting for us. Lee reports the pattern: change as generally beneficial; milk in bottles “because they didn’t have cardboard.”⁴¹ Say: “What would have to be true in *their* kitchen for this to make sense?” Then wait. A wood stove is a solution to a world without a gas line, not a failure to invent yours.
3. *A tablet tells the day’s story in a warm grandmother voice, or a generated “colonial coloring page” sits on the table as if it were a source from 1700.*

⁴⁰Sam Wineburg, “Reading Abraham Lincoln: An Expert/Expert Study in the Interpretation of Historical Texts,” *Cognitive Science* 22, no. 3 (1998): 319–346. Presentism, “the act of viewing the past through the lens of the present,” is “not some bad habit we’ve fallen into, but is instead our psychological condition at rest.”

⁴¹Lee, “Putting Principles into Practice” (2005), reporting Barton: change as linear and generally beneficial; Kenny, fourth grade, “everything has gotten better than before”; milk in bottles “because they didn’t have cardboard.” A deficit past. Named here so the parent can hear it in grade 1–2 talk; the repair is the same question later chapters will keep: what would have to be true in *their* world.

The chatbot is not the relative. A generated scene is a picture to look at together, not an object made at the time under study. Oral history is a real person's voice, an artifact, a photograph with a maker who was there. If you want a looking object, use a named photograph from a book or from the Library of Congress, with the credit line visible. If you want a story, you read it, or Grandma tells it.

4. *The child recites the book's paragraph, or the holiday script, as the one true story, and cannot point to anything in a picture that made them say that.* Recitation. Martin Nystrand's name for a question that already has the sentence in the teacher's head is a recitation question, not an authentic one.⁴² "What did I just tell you?" is recitation. "What is different in this picture from our kitchen?" is a question you do not already have the child's sentence for. The book is one account. The picture is on the table so the child can look.
5. *Twenty minutes in, the child is wriggling, the parent is still narrating the westward movement, and no one has pointed at a picture for ten minutes.* The sit is too long, or the story never landed on an object. Short sits, then stop. A second sitting later in the week is better than a lecture that trains the child to wait you out. If silence is hard, look at the picture together. The picture is the joint attention. You are not the joint attention.

A sixth you will also hear: every unfamiliar picture is named from a cartoon, or from yesterday's read-aloud, while the eyes never land on the actual stove or the actual pump. That is a schema doing the looking. Cover the caption. Put a finger on the thing. "What do you actually see?" Then wait.

Five-minute parent warm-up

Do this before the lesson, with two pictures and a piece of string, no child in the room.

Minute 1. Lay out a picture of now and a picture of long ago. Say out loud: "I am not going to ask the year. I am going to ask what is different."

⁴²Martin Nystrand, Adam Gamoran, and others, *Questions in Time: Finding and Sustaining Authentic Discussion in Classroom Discourse* (CELA report, 2001), building on Nystrand, *Opening Dialogue* (1997). An authentic question is one "for which the asker has not prespecified an answer." Dialogic spells were infrequent: less than 7 percent of 1,151 instructional episodes in eighth- and ninth-grade English and social studies had even one. Classroom study, not a kitchen-table trial.

Minute 2. Sort them onto a string, now at one end, long ago at the other. Notice that the work is hanging, not dating. That is the clothesline.

Minute 3. Imagine the child saying “they were just stupid.” Decide, without performing, what a scold would do. Decide what “what would have to be true in *their* kitchen?” would do instead. You are installing the miss so you can hear it tomorrow.

Minute 4. Draw, badly, the walk from your door to the corner: one street, one landmark, a square for home. That is a map as a picture. It does not need a compass rose yet.

Minute 5. Write the sentence you will actually say: “What is different in this picture from our kitchen?” Put the pencil down. That sentence is the lesson.

If you can do those five minutes, you are ready to sit down. The child looks at the pictures. You hear.

How to teach it this week

A good history hour this week has a shape. The history-hour chapter in the front of this book is the full version, including the AI rules. Here is the shape scaled to this band.

Warm-up (2–3 minutes, unaided). Two pictures the child has already hung. “Which is then? Which is now?” No device. No year.

Short story (5 minutes). One story, one picture or object. You tell it short. A grandmother’s kitchen. A walk to the corner. A holiday the family already keeps. Then you stop.

Student looking (8–12 minutes). The longest block, and it is still short. The child hangs, points, draws, or asks a relative one question. You wait. Struggle before rescue: ask, wait, hint, then a short model on *your* scrap, not on their sentence.

One good question. Not “what year is this?” A question that names the idea: “What is different?” “What do you actually *see*?” “Then or now — what makes you say that?” “Who might have used this?”

Talk (3–5 minutes). One spoken sentence, or a caption the child can say while you write it: “This is a plow. It is from long ago.” You are not assigning a paragraph.

Stop. While they still have a look left in them. A second sitting later in the week beats a long sit that ends in tears.

That shape is a practice you impose on whatever book, photograph, or walk is already in the week. It is not a 180-day plan.

Exact wording you can say

On then and now:

“What is different in this picture from our kitchen?”

“Then or now — what makes you say that?”

“Point to the thing that tells you.”

On seeing:

“What do you actually *see*? Not what you remember from the story. What is in the picture.”

“Cover the caption. Look again.”

On a person or an object:

“Who might have used this?”

“What would we ask Grandma?”

“What would have to be true in *their* kitchen?”

On a map:

“This is a picture of our walk. Show me our corner.”

“Where would the park go?”

On a holiday:

“What story does this day remember? Who remembered it?”

When you are about to take over:

“Your eyes. I’ll wait.”

Then wait. Three to five seconds after you ask, and three to five after they stop. Mary Budd Rowe found those windows in elementary *science* classrooms, where the usual wait was about one second; when teachers reached three to five, children

talked longer, asked more, and offered more evidence-inference sentences.⁴³ That is not a history-score promise. The silence is still the teaching. Look at the picture if the silence is hard. Taking the sentence is the high-help path. Prepare so you can hear “what year” and “they were just stupid.” Then leave the looking in their hands.

First problem for the student

Two pictures, no years visible, on the table or already clipped to a string:

one kitchen from now, one kitchen from long ago.

Say: “What is different in this picture from our kitchen?”

Wait. If the child names a year, they used a caption or a guess. Cover the year. If they say “old” because the photograph is brown, they used the condition of the picture, Lee’s miss. Ask what *in the kitchen* is different. If they point to a stove, a pump, a missing refrigerator, they looked. If they stare, model on a *different* pair — two shoes, one worn work boot and one sneaker, said as “I see laces here, and I see no laces there” — then return to the kitchens.

Later the same week, the diagnostic item:

a shiny object from long ago next to a beat-up object from now.

If they call the shiny one “now,” the everyday old/new sort is still doing the work. Tell the story of the object. Hang it again. The story is what attaches “long ago” to the thing, not the shine.

Named activity: Then-and-Now Picture Clothesline

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes, including hanging. Stop while they still want one more clothespin.

⁴³Mary Budd Rowe, “Wait-Time and Rewards as Instructional Variables, Their Influence on Language, Logic, and Fate Control,” paper to NARST, 1972, ERIC ED061103. Over 300 tapes of elementary *science* classes; mean wait-time about one second after a teacher question and 0.9 seconds after a student response. When mean wait-times of three to five seconds were achieved, nine student variables changed, including length of responses and evidence–inference statements. Not a history-score claim.

Materials. A string or a strip of tape on a wall or across two chairs. Clothespins or paper clips. Four to eight pictures: kitchens, tools, clothes, streets — two of now, the rest from long ago. Cut from a library book photocopy the library allows, a textbook you own, or a Library of Congress print-out with the credit line kept. No generated “colonial scene” as if it were a source. No portraits of real children on the line.

The fun. Hanging. The child is a curator of the string. Pictures can move. An argument about which end is “now” is the point.

The skill. Visual time. Barton and Levstik’s clothesline, not a date list. Then and now as a sort you can see.

Say: “Hang then on this side. Hang now on that side. What is different?” If they sort by color of the paper, the condition-of-the-photograph miss is in the room. Ask about the *things* in the picture.



Figure 4: Two kitchen pictures clipped to a string, one with a wood stove and a pump, one with a refrigerator and a tap. No children. No logos.

Named activity: Family Oral History of a Relative

Time. One short ask, then a drawing or a caption. Fifteen minutes if the relative is in the room; two sittings if you record a call and listen later.

Materials. One artifact, one photograph, or one living relative. A pencil. A small card for a caption. California’s grade-2 family-history standard is the *shape* — artifacts, photographs, interviews, documents — not a national requirement that every home trace a family in grade 2.⁴⁴

The fun. Asking a real person. “What was your kitchen like?” is a question a child is allowed to own.

The skill. A source has a maker who was there. The chatbot is not Grandma. The relative’s voice, or the photograph’s maker, is the day’s looking.

Say: “Ask one question. Then tell me, in a sentence, what they said.” If the child wants you to ask, the work is still theirs: they choose the question. If no relative is available, a photograph with a name on the back is enough. A model pretending to be a grandmother is not.

This is an illustration, not a reported family: a child holds a wooden spoon and asks an uncle what it stirred. The uncle says oatmeal on a stove that had to be lit. The caption the child can say: “This spoon is from Uncle’s kitchen. It is from then.”

Named activity: Map-as-Picture of Home-to-School

Time. A walk you already take, then ten minutes at the table, or ten minutes from memory if the walk already lives in the body.

Materials. Paper. A pencil. The child’s known walk — door to corner, or door to park. C3 does not decide for you the difference between a map and a globe.⁴⁵ This sitting is a map as a picture of a place, not a globe lesson.

⁴⁴California HSS standard 2.1.1 (1998). Shape for the oral-history sitting; not a national family-history law.

⁴⁵NCSS, *C3 Framework* (2013), “What Is Not Covered”: the difference between a map and a globe is a content decision for each state.

The fun. “This is our corner.” A square for home. A mark for the big tree. The child is the mapmaker of a world they already have.

The skill. A map is a picture of a place. Geography as a looking tool, not a slog of capitals. The next chapters will put a state outline and a world map on the table. This week the map has to be walkable.

Say: “Draw the walk. Show me our corner.” If they draw a house floating in white space, walk it again with a finger: door, sidewalk, corner. If they copy a phone-map’s look, the device did the looking. Paper. Memory of the feet.



Figure 5: A simple hand-drawn neighborhood map: a square for home, a line for the sidewalk, a mark for a corner tree. Adult demonstration quality. No child in the picture.

Named activity: Holiday as a Story with Care

Time. One sitting in a week the family already keeps. Ten minutes of story and looking, not a unit.

Materials. One commemorative holiday already in the year. One picture or object that belongs to it — a flag, a candle, a recipe card, a photograph of a parade, a page from the book you are already reading. No culture-war script. Teach the year on the table.

The fun. A day the child already feels in the body, now with a story attached: who remembered, what they remembered, what we still do.

The skill. A holiday is a story people tell on purpose. It is not automatically the whole truth of the past, and it is not a fight you have to win at breakfast. One story, one picture, one sentence.

Say: “What story does this day remember?” Then: “Who remembered it?” If the child recites a slogan, ask what in the picture or the object made them say that. If the family keeps more than one commemorative day, pick one this week. Depth is the hour. Coverage is a map.

Named activity: People Who Supply Goods

Time. A kitchen look, a walk, or a photograph. Ten minutes.

Materials. One kitchen object, one photograph of a worker, or a walk past a place that makes or sells something the family uses — bread, mail, water from a tap. California’s grade-2 opening is the *shape*: contemporary people who supply goods and services.⁴⁶ You do not have to live in California to ask who baked the bread.

The fun. The loaf had a baker. The letter had a carrier. The tap had a pipe. Interdependence as a story, not as a worksheet of “community helpers” to color.

The skill. A community is people doing work for one another. The classroom, or the kitchen, as a small civic place with jobs and rules. Texas grade 1 already sits

⁴⁶California HSS, grade 2 opening (1998): “The study of contemporary people who supply goods and services aids in understanding the complex interdependence in our free-market system.”

the child in classroom, school, and community.⁴⁷

Say: “Who made this bread possible?” Wait. If they say “the store,” ask who before the store. If they say “a machine,” ask who ran it. Stop before it becomes a lecture on the global supply chain. One person, one object, one sentence.

Named activity: See / Think / Wonder with One Object

Time. Five to ten minutes. Looking dies if you add a second object.

Materials. One household object from then, or one Library of Congress photograph with the credit line visible. A spoon, a flatiron, a washboard, a ration book photocopy, a street photograph. Incomplete on purpose. LOC’s own warning: snippets, little context.⁴⁸

The fun. Being the person who notices the chip, the handle, the thing in the background nobody mentioned.

The skill. Observe first, then infer. See / think / wonder is the Library of Congress tool. It is not yet “who made this, before we read,” which the next chapter will teach on purpose. Today: what is actually there.

Say: “What do you see? Then what do you think? Then what do you wonder?” Keep the order. If they jump to wonder (“is this from the olden days?”), come back to see. A caption they can say: “I see a pump. I think people got water there. I wonder who carried it.”

Discussion box

This is an illustration, not a reported family. Two kitchen pictures are on the table. The parent has not announced the year.

Opening question

“What is different in this picture from our kitchen?”

⁴⁷Texas 2022 Chapter 113 attachment, Grade 1 introduction: students study their relationship to the classroom, school, and community.

⁴⁸Library of Congress, “Getting Started with Primary Sources.”

Not: “What year is this?”

Follow-ups (pick three to five; you will not use all of them every sitting)

1. What do you actually *see*?
2. Then or now — what makes you say that?
3. Who might have used this?
4. What would we ask Grandma?
5. What would have to be true in *their* kitchen?

How to wait

Ask. Count three to five seconds in your head. Look at the picture, not at the child’s face, if the silence is hard. After they stop talking, wait three to five seconds more before you speak. Rowe’s windows were measured in science class. Use them anyway. A follow-up that arrives in half a second trains the child to wait *you* out, not to look.

What a stuck silence usually means

The question was recitation in disguise — you already had “1890” in mind. Or the wait was too short, and they learned that you will fill it. Or there was not enough story before the question: a picture with no kitchen-in-the-body to compare. Or the sit is already too long. Next move: tell one short story about *this* stove, then ask the opening question again. Done enough this week: a spoken sentence or a caption. “This is a plow. It is from long ago.” You wrote it only if they said it.

Practice that actually builds learning

Blocked, for a new move. The day you introduce then-and-now, give a short set that is only that: four pictures, a string, hang. The day you introduce a map as a picture, only the walk you know. The day you introduce see / think / wonder, one object, the three questions in order. Mixing too early makes the child hunt for the “right” school move instead of looking.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, then-and-now reappears next to the relative’s spoon and the holiday object. Mixing is the practice of choosing a looking move: is this a sort, a map, a person who was there, or an object to see first? You impose that mix on the week you already have. A purchased reader that

is all one era can still be mixed by you pulling a “now” photograph onto the same table.

Brief retrieval of pictures already hung. Two minutes, mixed, after the child can sort those pictures untimed. Cover any years. You listen. Overlearning a date list until tonight’s score is perfect is the wrong retrieval for this band. Retrieval is a second look at a picture they already own, not a race.

One incorrect example to diagnose. After the child has attempted the kitchens, show a card that guessed “1890” from a brown photograph. Ask: “What did this person use to decide?” After a “they were just stupid,” show a wood stove and ask what would have to be true in *their* kitchen. The child names the miss. You do not narrate it as a verdict on talent.

Talk every sitting. Oral language is the product this year. A spoken sentence is done enough. A caption is a sentence you write only after they say it. Complex talk — a reason tied to a picture — is already the thing later reading will need. You are not assigning a paragraph. You are teaching a sentence the child can hold.

Kitchen, walk, and making. A grocery list is not history, but “who baked this?” is. A walk is not a field trip requirement; it is how a map gets a body. A drawing of the clothesline is making in the service of looking. It does not replace the pictures on the string.

Read-aloud above independent reading. Ten minutes, you reading a story from long ago, they talking. New words live here. The looking hour does not have to carry the whole language load. The story comes first. Then the question. A date list at the end of a picture-book is still a date list.

A weekly shape: day of a new looking move, a short blocked sitting. Same week: mixed retrieval of older pictures. Later this week: the new move next to an unlike object. Daily, if you can: one picture, one sentence. You impose that shape on the photographs and the walks you already have. The year is a map. This week is one story, one place, one looking move.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Sam Wineburg, “Crazy for History,” *Journal of American History* 90, no. 4 (2004): 1401–1414. “Light rail excursions through mounds of factual information may be entertaining, but such dizzying tours leave few traces in memory.” Curriculum design as triage, quoting Wilfred McClay: memory is most powerful when purposeful and selective.

For the student

You are learning how then and now look. A picture can be from now or from long ago. You look at the picture. You say what is different. A year is a number. You do not need the number yet. The picture is the work.

Two pictures on a string. One kitchen looks like yours. One kitchen has a stove you would not know how to light, and a pump, and no refrigerator. You hang then on one side. You hang now on the other. That is history you can see.

Tiny worked example

Look at a picture of a kitchen, with no year showing.

What do you actually *see*? A black stove. A pump. A bucket. No fridge.

Then or now? Then — because our kitchen has a fridge and a tap, and this one does not.

That is looking. The caption, if you want one: “This kitchen is from long ago. I see a pump.”

Two tries

1. Hang two pictures on a string — then and now — and say one sentence about what is different, looking at the pictures.
2. Draw the walk from your door to the corner. Show the corner. Then point to it and say, “This is our corner.”

For the second one, the map is a picture of a place you already know. It does not have to look like a map in a book.

Write nothing if writing fights the sitting. Talk the sentence. Your grown-up can remember it.

Explain it back

Tell someone at the table, in your own words, how you know a picture is from then or from now. Then point to a picture and say what you *see*, not the year. Then point to a map you drew and say what place it is.

Challenge

Some people look at a brown photograph and say a year. Some people see a shiny wagon and say “now.” Some people say people long ago were just stupid because they did not have a fridge. What would those three moves mean? How do you look at the *things* in the picture instead? How do you ask what would have to be true in *their* kitchen?

You are allowed to struggle. You may use a string, a clothespin, a walk, a relative’s spoon. You look. You talk. If you get stuck, ask for a hint — not the year. Then try again.

A holiday is a story people remember on purpose. You can say what story the day tells, and who remembered it. You do not have to win a fight about the day.

When you talk, a sentence about what is in the picture is enough for today. You do not have to write a paragraph. That is later. Today you look, you hang, you say one true thing.

A person in your family who was there is a source. A picture a computer made of “olden days” is a scene. It is interesting. It is not the person who was there.

If it isn’t clicking

Three diagnostics. Each one has a next move. None of them is a verdict on talent, and none of them is a reason to wait for a birthday.

1. The child cannot sort then and now, or sorts by shine and dents, or guesses a year.

Visual time is not yet attached to the *things* in the picture. Next move: fewer pictures, more story. Two kitchens you can talk about in the body — ours, and one from a grandparent. Cover years. Name the stove, the tap, the pump, out loud, then ask what is different. Lee’s shiny-stagecoach miss is ordinary. Stay with objects whose *use* is visible. If this is still the bottleneck after several weeks of short daily hanging, stay here. A timeline of dates on top of a child who cannot sort pictures will not hold. A human who will sit with two pictures and wait, not with a tablet that narrates, is a reasonable next step if you have tried the small-set work and the sort still does not come.

2. The child recites the book, or the holiday script, and cannot point to a picture.

The cue is still your voice, or a memorized performance. Next move: pictures first, story second, question third. Cover the caption. Finger on the object. The prompt is always through the looking: “What do you actually *see*?” After an attempt, one incorrect example to explain (“this person said 1890 because the photo was brown — what did they use?”). Slow down the “interesting” chapter-book until a sentence can be tied to a picture; a child who can recite a read-aloud and cannot point to the pump is not ready to skip this. Go ahead once they can hang then and now and say one sentence with their eyes on the pictures. A tutor is useful if recitation remains the default after a couple of weeks of daily picture-first work *and* the hour has become a fight.

3. The child will not talk, or every sitting ends in “they were just stupid,” and the silence after your question is a wall.

Talk is the product, and presentism is the mind at rest. Next move: shorter sits, one picture, the opening question from the discussion box, wait three to five seconds twice. If silence is hard, you look at the picture, not at them. An authentic question is one you do not already have the sentence for.⁵⁰ If you hear yourself answering, you have started doing the work. For “they were just stupid,” ask what would have to be true in *their* world. One strange object a week is enough. If the hour has become a fight after a stretch of daily short sits, a human who will wait, not a chatbot that fills the silence, is the release valve.

When to slow down. Pictures still sorted by shine. Recitation still the default. Sits so long that looking never starts. A generated scene doing the work of a source. Those are brakes. “Not ready” because of age is the brake this book will not use. “Not ready” because the pictures have not yet become a time-tool is a real brake.

When to go ahead. Then and now is an easy sort from the things in the picture. The child points, then talks. A map of a known walk has a corner they can show. A relative or a photograph with a maker has produced one sentence. A holiday has a story, not only a slogan. Short sits are ordinary. Then the next chapter’s timeline, state story, and “who made this” have somewhere to sit. Being “good at history” because a child loves a costume is not a reason to skip the looking.

When to get a human tutor. You have run the two-picture sort, or the covered-caption looking, or the wait after the question, for a stretch of daily sittings, and the same diagnosis is still the one in the room, and the hour has become a fight. A tutor is a release valve, not a failure of the sitting. Keep yourself as the person

⁵⁰Nystrand et al., *Questions in Time* (2001); Nystrand, *Opening Dialogue* (1997).

who can still hear a date-quiz and a deficit-past. Outsourcing the hearing is the thing to avoid, not asking for help.

A child who can hang pictures and will not talk is missing one strand. A child who can talk a stream about knights and cannot point to a kitchen is missing another. Hearing which is thin is enough. If the child is missing the sort, model hanging a *different* pair, then guided hanging, then the kitchens. If the child has the sort and the task is a first map, a walk first, then the drawing, is the second sequence.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you, the adult. The full rules live in the history-hour box in the front of this book. This chapter is a pointer, not a second policy paper.

The short version: the child looks and talks first. You hold the pictures and the key. A tool may explain today's idea *to you*, make extra then-and-now pairs with the years on a separate page you keep, write a hint script you read aloud, or help you diagnose work the child has already done. The child looks at paper. The child talks in the room.

Leave these out of the hour: a chatbot as the storyteller; a model pretending to be Grandma; a generated colonial scene treated as a source; "what happened" as the whole sitting; an unsupervised chatbot during the attempt; a tool that writes the caption so the child does not have to look. A generated painting can be a scene to look at together for two minutes — "what did this picture get wrong?" — and then it comes off the table. A named photograph or a real object comes on. A generated picture has no maker in the year under study.

A language model will happily tell the day's story, or invent a letter from a child on the frontier. Treat every model-supplied quotation, date, and "as a pioneer wrote" as untrusted until you find it in a named book, archive, or textbook page.⁵¹ Fluent talk from a tool is performance, not the child's knowledge of then and now. The unaided sentence at the clothesline tomorrow morning is the test.⁵² A high-school

⁵¹William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, "Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT," *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045. GPT-3.5: 55 percent of citations fabricated; GPT-4: 18 percent fabricated. Of the real citations, 43 percent (GPT-3.5) and 24 percent (GPT-4) had substantive errors, including wrong dates. Treat model-supplied quotations, dates, and "as X wrote" as untrusted until found in a named book, archive, or textbook page.

⁵²Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, "Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative

math study found that an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam; that paper is mathematics, not a history trial. The crutch is still the sitting condition. If the tool produces the story, the child is a spectator.⁵³

A string, a clothespin, a spoon, and two photocopies are tools too. Use them, then fade them.

What “done enough” looks like

Placement is by skill, not birthday. A “grade 1 social studies” book is a publisher’s scope, not a legal grade. Story of the World, a library picture book, and a well-used older reader can place the same child in three different rooms, because they cut the grain differently. Choose by fit. This book names those programs as options in the resources chapter. It does not rank them. The transcript, when you need one, still says Social Studies. It does not say a brand.

Checklist before moving on

- The child can sort pictures into then and now by the *things* in the picture, not by shine, dents, or a guessed year.
- When asked what is different, the child points at the picture and says a sentence. Reciting the parent’s paragraph has receded as the way to *do* the hour.
- A simple map of a known walk exists, on paper, and the child can show a corner.
- One relative, photograph, or artifact has a maker the child can name in ordinary language: who had this, who was there.
- One commemorative holiday has a story, told with care, not only a slogan.
- See / think / wonder can be done with one object, in that order, for a few minutes.
- Sits can be short. A spoken sentence or a caption is enough. You did not require a paragraph or a date list.

Review,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–199. Current performance is often an unreliable index of learning.

⁵³Hamsa Bastani, Osbert Bastani, Alp Sungu, Haosen Ge, Özge Kabakcı, and Rei Mariman, “Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning: Evidence from High School Mathematics,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base raised assisted practice grades 48 percent relative to control, then cut unaided exam grades 17 percent, in a high-school mathematics RCT. Not a history trial. The sitting condition — a tool that produces the response — is the mechanism used here.

- You can hear a date-quiz, a deficit-past (“they were just stupid”), and a chatbot-as-Grandma, and you can ask a good question, without taking the looking.

If most of that list is true, go on to a state story, a timeline that can carry a few dates under pictures, and a picture or object as a source, even if the birthday says otherwise. If the birthday says “third grade” and the years are still doing the work of the pictures, stay. The next chapter is the timeline, with the clothesline still in the room.

A path through history is the promise. A culture-war win is not.

Chapter 2

Timeline as a tool: state, early U.S., a source on the table



Figure 6: A kitchen-table still-life: a blank state outline map with a few numbered dots, a picture-timeline with dates written under pictures, a folded letter as an object with an attribution line, and a caption card. No child. No logos.

Why this matters

Last chapter installed then and now as pictures: a clothesline, a walk drawn as a map, a relative who was there, a holiday as a story with care. Keep all of that. This chapter is the bridge: from pictures-in-time to a timeline that can carry a few dates under pictures the child already owns; from “our kitchen” to *this* state’s story and the early story of the United States; from see / think / wonder to a picture or object treated as a source, with a name on it.

The sentence that surprises people is this one: a nine-year-old can investigate a document when you teach the looking — and will almost never do it unless you ask. Keith Barton, in a year-long look at two fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms, found significant strengths in how students understood that sources can be more or less reliable. They rarely examined sources critically *on their own*. When they built an account, they ignored reliability or treated every source as equal.⁵⁴ Bruce VanSledright taught American history as investigation to a class of twenty-three fifth-graders for four months. Task data from a smaller group who completed matched work before and after suggested the approach can teach such fifth-graders to treat documents as evidence, to notice what kind of source they have, to judge perspective, and to check details across accounts. Those results contradict the assumption that fifth-graders are too young for this kind of thought.⁵⁵ They are not too young. They are not historians. Your job is to make the ask explicit, and to keep making it.

Barton and Levstik’s time study is still the clock on the wall. Third- and fourth-graders understand the numerical basis of dates. Only by fifth grade do

⁵⁴Keith C. Barton, “‘I Just Kinda Know’: Elementary Students’ Ideas about Historical Evidence,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 25, no. 4 (1997): 407–430. Year-long qualitative study of two fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms. Students had significant strengths in understanding reliability of sources but rarely examined sources critically spontaneously; when developing accounts they ignored reliability or treated all sources equally. Use of evidence should be a continual and explicit focus of instruction.

⁵⁵Bruce A. VanSledright, “What Can Fifth Graders Learn from Investigating History in the Classroom?,” *Elementary School Journal* 104, no. 3 (2004): 239–262. Design experiment, 23 fifth-graders, four months of American history as investigation. Eight of 23 completed matched performance tasks before and after. Results contradict the assumption that fifth-graders are too young and intellectually unsophisticated for this type of thought. They are not therefore historians. Same classroom in VanSledright, “Confronting History’s Interpretive Paradox While Teaching Fifth Graders to Investigate the Past,” *American Educational Research Journal* 39, no. 4 (2002): 1089–1115: evidence trails are indeterminate; teaching investigation surfaces that paradox.

students extensively connect particular dates with background knowledge they already have.⁵⁶ Last chapter's clothesline is still in range. This chapter puts a few dates *under* the pictures. A slog of dates with no pictures is the miss. A year of "fifty states and capitals" as the purpose is the other miss.

California, Texas, and Virginia print different maps for this band. They rhyme more than they will in middle school. Grade 4 on both coasts is a **state** year — California's changing state; Texas history from early beginnings to the present. Virginia's table names Virginia Studies in grade 4. Grade 5 is a **U.S.** year: California to about 1850, with the people who were already here and those who arrived; Texas a survey from 1565 to the present; Virginia's table, United States History to 1865.⁵⁷ The fork in the end-date is real. Name it. Then teach the early-nation *moves*: a story with names in a place, a Constitution as a written object you can point at, a westward movement as years of people and conflict rather than a week of wagons. A family that does not live in California does not owe a California year. The *move* is your state's story. California already puts a Constitution sentence in the state year: a written document that defines the structure and purpose of the U.S. government.⁵⁸ Texas grade 4 already carries the Texas Revolution, the Republic, and annexation. You will not cover every statute. You will cover a story the child can hold.

C3's 3–5 band is still an Inquiry Arc, not a content list. Compelling questions, disciplinary tools, sources, a conclusion. The Framework's own Revolution example — "Was the American Revolution revolutionary?" — is a *shape* for a question,

⁵⁶Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, "'Back When God Was Around and Everything': Elementary Students' Understanding of Historical Time," *American Educational Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (1996): 419–454. Dates had little meaning before third grade; third and fourth graders understood the numerical basis of dates; only by fifth grade did students extensively connect particular dates with specific background knowledge.

⁵⁷California State Board of Education, *History–Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools*, adopted 9 October 1998: grade 3 Continuity and Change; grade 4 California: A Changing State; grade 5 United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation, to about 1850. Texas SBOE, 19 TAC Chapter 113 attachment, adopted 2022: grade 4 Texas history; grade 5 U.S. survey from 1565 to the present. Virginia Department of Education, 2023 History and Social Science Standards of Learning course table (page stating Board approval 20 April 2023): grade 4 Virginia Studies; grade 5 United States History to 1865. Public-school maps, not homeschool statutes. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026.

⁵⁸California HSS standard 4.5.1 (1998): discuss what the U.S. Constitution is and why it is important (a written document that defines the structure and purpose of the U.S. government and describes shared powers of federal, state, and local governments). Grade 4 is not only state trivia.

not a required grade-5 topic from C3.⁵⁹ You may use that shape. You may not treat C3 as a national syllabus.

What you are teaching is community and region; a state story that is *this* state; an early U.S. story with names, not a slog of dates; a timeline as a tool; a picture or object as a source, attribution visible; and “who made this” before the body, because you asked. Individuals will do most of the work in the child’s first telling. Barton found that elementary students conceptualized historical topics as the intentions and interactions of individuals, with little sense of government or the economy as institutions.⁶⁰ Tell the story. Then ask who else was in the room.

What this band unlocks is a second pass at U.S. history in the middle grades, a paragraph that can make a claim, and a habit of sourcing before reading. Skip the timeline, and later “periodization” has no pictures to group. Skip the ask, and later two accounts of one event arrive as a fight about who is lying. Skip the state story, and later “federal, state, local” is a poster with no place underneath.

You do not need to be a historian. You do need to hear a date slog as “the pictures are missing,” and a fluent recitation of a textbook paragraph as one account, not as the past itself.

For the parent: understand it yourself

Many adults feel rusty because the year they remember was a list of presidents and a blank map of counties. That is ordinary. Five minutes at the end of this section is enough for tomorrow. Last chapter installed pictures, short sits, and “what is different?” Keep all three. The sit can grow a little. The question becomes “who made this?”

Everyday picture. A string from last year, still on the wall, with kitchens and tools. Under three of the pictures you write a year, small: 1860 under a plow,

⁵⁹National Council for the Social Studies, *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013). Compelling-question example, “Was the American Revolution revolutionary?”; C3 does not grade-place it. Inquiry Arc; content left to states.

⁶⁰Keith C. Barton, “‘Bossed Around by the Queen’: Elementary Students’ Understanding of Institutions and Their Role in History,” *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 12 (1997): 290–314. Elementary students showed little understanding of the role of social institutions such as government or the economy; they conceptualized historical topics in terms of the intentions and interactions of individuals.

1918 under a kitchen with a tap, 2026 under ours. The child already owned the pictures. The dates attach to knowledge. That is a timeline. It is not a test of 1860. It is a tool for saying “this was before that.” If you start with a blank line and twenty years to memorize, you have skipped the pictures.

Precise picture. A source, in this band, is a picture, a letter, an artifact, a map, a newspaper, or a short excerpt with a name on it. The Library of Congress still wants Observe, Reflect, Question.⁶¹ Sam Wineburg’s looking move, which you now make explicit, is sourcing: considering who made the document when you decide what it is worth as evidence. In later teaching materials, sourcing means looking at the attribution — author, when, how it came to be — *before* reading the body.⁶² Martin and Wineburg, reporting the 1991 Lexington study, found that historians sourced 98 percent of the time and AP high-school seniors 31 percent of the time.⁶³ Those students were not a weak sample. The finding is that school success does not install the move. You will not copy a grade-11 research coefficient onto this table.⁶⁴ You will copy the *ask*: who made this, before we read. Presentism is still the mind at rest. “They were just stupid” still gets “what would have to be true in *their* world?”

A narrative is how children hold the past, and it is also the trap. Students learn when history is told as a story. They also collapse long processes into short plots

⁶¹Library of Congress, “Getting Started with Primary Sources,” Teachers page, accessed 31 August 2026. Observe, Reflect, Question. Incomplete snippets. Not the same claim as Wineburg’s sourcing-before-the-body.

⁶²Sam Wineburg, “Historical Problem Solving: A Study of the Cognitive Processes Used in the Evaluation of Documentary and Pictorial Evidence,” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 83, no. 1 (1991): 73–87; Wineburg, “Reading Abraham Lincoln,” *Cognitive Science* 22, no. 3 (1998): 319–346. Sourcing: considering the source of the document when determining its evidentiary value. Corroboration: details of one document compared with another before accepting them as fact. Contextualization: creating a spatial and temporal context. Eight historians and eight high-school seniors; one battle; think-alouds. The students were AP-caliber. Not a homeschool trial.

⁶³Daisy Martin and Sam Wineburg, “Seeing Thinking on the Web,” *The History Teacher* 41, no. 3 (2008): 305–319. Sourcing operationalized as considering attribution prior to reading anything else. Historians sourced 98 percent of the time; AP students 31 percent of the time, citing Wineburg 1991.

⁶⁴Avishag Reisman, “Reading Like a Historian: A Document-Based History Curriculum Intervention in Urban High Schools,” *Cognition and Instruction* 30, no. 1 (2012): 86–112. Quasi-experiment, 236 eleventh-graders, San Francisco, six months. Copy the lesson *shape* (question, short background, two or three documents, looking moves, talk), not the coefficients, onto this band. Only nine whole-class text-based discussions in over 100 videotaped lessons: materials do not by themselves get a student talking.

with a handful of agents: a court case ends witch trials; a speech ends prejudice; a few people decide.⁶⁵ Tell the story. Then ask what took years, and who else was in the room. The progress story — everything has gotten better; they didn't have cardboard — is last chapter's deficit-past, still alive. The one true story — the textbook said it, so it happened that way — is the miss Wineburg named when able seniors treated a textbook excerpt as "straight information" and ranked it more trustworthy than eyewitness accounts.⁶⁶ A textbook is one account, written later, by someone who was not there, for a school audience. That sentence is the precise picture. It is not a reason to throw the textbook out.

California grade 3 already wants community founding traced through maps, photographs, oral histories, letters, newspapers.⁶⁷ Grade 5 wants the fifty states and capitals *and* a nation that has a constitution, went through a revolution, sanctioned slavery, and conflicted over land with the original inhabitants.⁶⁸ Standard 5.9 is a tool, not the year's purpose. Texas grade 5 is already a wider sweep than California's. Virginia's table ends the first U.S. course at 1865. Pick the early-nation stretch this family will actually finish. Depth is the hour.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. *You ask what the letter says. The child reads the body first, then shrugs when you ask who wrote it.* Sourcing skipped. The attribution was below the fold, or you never pointed at it. Fold the page so only the byline shows. "Who made this, and what did they want us to believe?" Then the body. If they can say a name and a want before they read, the move is at work. If they cannot, the body was doing the looking.
2. *The child, asked whether a source is trustworthy, can pick the "biased" one*

⁶⁵Barton and Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), on narrative as a cultural tool; Barton, "Narrative Simplifications in Elementary Students' Historical Thinking." Pattern: limited set of people and events; lengthy processes collapsed into short plots. Colorful student transcripts in later retellings are not quoted here as exact wording.

⁶⁶Sam Wineburg, "On the Reading of Historical Texts: Notes on the Breach between School and Academy," *American Educational Research Journal* 28, no. 3 (1991): 495–519. Able seniors treated a textbook excerpt as "just reporting the facts," "straight information"; the textbook, not the eyewitness accounts, emerged as the primary source. Historians ranked the same excerpt last.

⁶⁷California HSS standard 3.3.3 (1998): trace why their community was established, drawing on maps, photographs, oral histories, letters, newspapers, and other primary sources.

⁶⁸California HSS grade 5 opening and standard 5.9 (1998): location of the current 50 states and the names of their capitals. A tool, not the year's purpose.

on a worksheet — and then, when they tell the story, treats every source as equal, or ignores the question. Barton 1997. They can critique when asked. They do not do it spontaneously. Teach the ask. Keep asking. A worksheet that already circled “biased” is recitation of a school word. A sentence that uses an observation as evidence is the product: “I think this poster wanted people to join, because the flag is huge and the words are a command.”

3. *A timeline is twenty dates to recite, with no pictures, or a fifth-grader is still being asked “what year is this?” as the whole hour.* Dates without knowledge. Barton and Levstik: dates begin to attach around grade 5, to pictures and stories the child already owns. Put the pictures on first. Write a few years underneath. If the child can order the pictures and cannot recite 1787, the timeline is still working. If they can recite 1787 and cannot say what picture it belongs to, the number is a trick.
4. *History happens because a queen bossed people, or because one person had an idea, and government, money, and groups never enter.* Individuals-versus-institutions. Tell the story of the named person. Then: “Who else was in the room? What did no one person decide?” You are not assigning a sociology chapter. You are stopping the plot from shrinking to a hero.
5. *A generated “pilgrim diary,” or a chatbot paragraph in a child’s voice, sits on the table as this week’s source — or as this week’s writing.* A generated diary is fiction with a costume. It has no maker in 1621. A fluent paragraph from a tool is performance, not the child’s knowledge of the year. The unaided caption tomorrow, pointing at a real letter or a named textbook picture, is the test. Two minutes looking at a generated scene together — “what did this picture get wrong?” — can be a warm-up. Then it comes off. A named picture comes on.

A sixth you will also hear: the year is a race through every event in the grade-5 book, and no source ever stays on the table long enough to ask who made it. Coverage as the hour. Wineburg’s triage still holds. This week is one story, one place, one looking move.

Five-minute parent warm-up

Do this before the lesson, with one short source and a scrap of paper, no child in the room.

Minute 1. Fold a photocopy so only the byline shows. Say out loud: “Who made

this, when, and what did they want?” Decide the answer you will *not* require the child to match. You are installing an authentic question, not a recitation.

Minute 2. Unfold. Read two sentences of the body. Notice what you would not have known from the byline. That is why the byline comes first — not because the body is useless.

Minute 3. Sketch a timeline as three pictures in a row, years small underneath. Say: “Pictures the child already owns. Dates attach.” If you cannot name the pictures, you are not ready for the dates.

Minute 4. Draw a blob in the shape of *this* state. Mark one river or one city you actually know. Hide a key on the back: six numbers, your answers. That is tomorrow’s map. The child never sees the key.

Minute 5. Write the sentence you will actually say: “Who made this, and what did they want us to believe?” Put the pencil down.

If you can tell a byline from a body, and a picture-timeline from a date slog, you are ready to sit down.

How to teach it this week

A good history hour this week has the same shape as last chapter. The history-hour chapter in the front of this book is the full version. Here is the shape scaled to this band.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Two pictures already owned, now with a year under one of them. Or yesterday’s byline, covered body, “who made this?” Paper. No device.

Short story (5–8 minutes). One named person in a named place, or one short background so the source will mean something. You talk for a few minutes. Then you stop. Story first. A document with no story is a worksheet.

Student looking (12–18 minutes). The longest block. Map, timeline, letter, or excerpt. The child points, talks, writes a caption. You wait. Struggle before rescue. You do not finish the caption. You do not read the body for them until they have said the byline.

One good question. Not “list three causes.” A question that names the idea: “Who

made this?” “What did they want us to believe?” “Who else was in the room?” “What took years?”

Talk and a sentence (5 minutes). Talk plus one caption that uses an observation as evidence. Grade 3: spoken. Grade 4–5: spoken, then written if the pencil will hold it. You are not assigning a five-paragraph essay. That object belongs to a later exam culture, not to this table.⁶⁹

Exit ticket (3 minutes, unaided). A byline on a card, body covered. Who made this? Or two pictures: which came first, and what makes you say that?

Exact wording you can say

On sourcing:

“Before we read: who made this?”

“What did they want us to believe?”

“Point to the name. Then we open the rest.”

On a picture or object:

“What do you actually *see*?”

“What in the picture makes you think that?”

“What does this not tell you?”

On the timeline:

“Which picture is earlier? What makes you say that?”

“Here is a year under a picture you already know. The year is a label, not the story.”

On people and institutions:

“Who else was in the room?”

“What took years, not a day?”

“What did no one person decide?”

⁶⁹Chauncey Monte-Sano and Abby Reisman related work; Chauncey Monte-Sano and Sarah Thomson, on the DBQ as an AP-era assessment and a five-paragraph tendency (2022 neighbor). Architecture of this book: a caption or a sentence in this band; a paragraph in the next; not a five-paragraph document-based essay at grade 4.

On a stuck looking:

“Cover the body. Try the name again.”

“Your eyes on the letter. I’ll wait.”

When you are about to take over:

“Your sentence. I’ll listen.”

Then wait. Three to five seconds after you ask, and three to five after they stop. Rowe’s windows were science classrooms. The silence is still the teaching. Look at the source if the silence is hard. A follow-up that arrives in half a second trains recitation.

First problem for the student

A short excerpt on a card, byline *above* the body, in a type the child can read:

Margaret, a letter to her sister, 1849.

Then two sentences of body about a journey.

Say: “Who made this, and what did they want us to believe? Point at the page. Do not read the body yet.”

Wait. If they dive into the journey, they treated the textbook-habit as the move: start at the first paragraph. Fold the body. If they say “a girl in the olden days” with no name, they used a schema. Finger on *Margaret*. If they say the name, the year, and a want — “she wanted her sister to know she was all right” — they sourced. After they attempt, you may show a worked *incorrect* example: a card that skipped the byline and believed every word as “straight information.” Ask what that person used. Generation first, then the named error.

This is an illustration, not a reported letter. Use a real short excerpt from a book you own, with the real name and date. A generated Margaret is fiction.

Named activity: Your State’s Story Map

Time. Fifteen to twenty minutes of looking and labeling. A second sitting if six numbers is too many.

Materials. A blank outline of *this* state — not California unless you live there. Six to eight numbered dots: a river, a city, a mountain, a port, a capital if you want it as a tool. Parent key on a card in another room. Pencil. No photo of the key. No device that fills the names.

The fun. “This is *our* shape.” A river the family has crossed. A city a relative names. The state becomes a place, not a coloring sheet.

The skill. Region as a tool. Community and landscape as the on-ramp to a state year. California grade 4 is California; Texas grade 4 is Texas; Virginia’s table is Virginia Studies.⁷⁰ The move travels. The content is local.

Say: “Number 3 is a river we can name. What river, and what makes you say that?” If they guess from a cartoon of the state, the picture-schema is doing the work. A named atlas or a road map you actually use comes on the table after they attempt, not before.

Named activity: Timeline as a Tool

Time. Fifteen minutes. Pictures first, dates last, in that order, every time.

Materials. Four to six pictures the child already owns from last chapter or from this year’s early U.S. story — a ship, a document, a farm, a city street, a railroad. A strip of paper. A few years, written small *under* the pictures, only after the order is hung. Not a grade-3 date slog.

The fun. Moving pictures until the order feels right, then discovering that a year is a label you can add. Argument about which picture is earlier is the point.

The skill. Chronology that activates knowledge. Barton and Levstik: dates mean something when they attach. Third and fourth grade can hear that 1800 is before 1860. Fifth grade can begin to say why that year belongs to that picture.

Say: “Hang the pictures first. Then we write a year under two of them.” If they demand a year for every picture, the slog is arriving. Two or three labels are enough this week.

⁷⁰California HSS grade 4 title; Texas 2022 grade 4 introduction (Texas from early beginnings to the present, including the Texas Revolution, Republic, and annexation); VDOE 2023 table, grade 4 Virginia Studies.



Figure 7: A paper strip with four pictures in a row and two small years written under the pictures the child already knew. No faces. No logos.

Named activity: Picture or Object as a Source

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes. One object. A second object is a different sitting.

Materials. One photograph, one letter, or one artifact. Attribution visible: who, when, as much as you honestly have. Library of Congress Observe / Reflect / Question. Product: one caption sentence that uses an observation as evidence.

The fun. Being the person who notices the worn heel, the postmark, the crowd at the edge of the frame.

The skill. A picture or object as a source, not as decoration. Observation as evidence: “I think this is a work shoe because the sole is worn through.” Infer after see.

Say: “What do you see? What do you think — and what in the picture makes

you think that? What do you wonder?” Keep the order. The caption is the think-sentence, tied to a see.



Figure 8: A letter folded as an object, attribution line visible at the top, a caption card beside it. No child.

Named activity: Who Made This, Before We Read

Time. Ten minutes. The looking is the hour, not the whole chapter.

Materials. One short excerpt with the byline *above* the body. Fold or cover until the child has said who, when, why. Martin and Wineburg’s operational definition: attribution before the text.⁷¹

The fun. A small detective move that feels like a secret the book was hiding at the bottom.

⁷¹Martin and Wineburg, “Seeing Thinking on the Web” (2008).

The skill. Sourcing as a looking move, not a course in critical thinking. Parent-prompted. Barton’s finding is your patience: they can do this when asked, and they will not do it as a habit unless you keep asking.

Say: “Who made this, and what did they want us to believe?” Then wait. Then: “Now we read. Does the body match what you thought they wanted?”

Named activity: Community Founding Sources

Time. One sitting to gather, one sitting to look. Or one sitting if you already have two items.

Materials. Maps, photographs, oral histories, letters, newspapers of the family’s *actual* community — the town, the county, the neighborhood. California 3.3.3 is the shape.⁷² A library vertical file, a historical-society photocopy, a relative, a named local history. Not a packet titled “generic colonial town.”

The fun. “This is *our* street, then.” A name the child has walked.

The skill. Why a community was established, traced through sources, not through a paragraph that already decided. Two items beat ten. Corroboration in miniature: does the map and the letter agree about the river?

Say: “Why did people stay here? What in this source makes you say that? What else would we need?”

Named activity: Names, Not a Date Slog

Time. One story sitting, fifteen to twenty minutes, including the follow-up question.

Materials. One named person in a named place in this year’s early U.S. story — a person the book already names, or a person in a short attributed excerpt. A map of that place. No list of ten names.

The fun. A person you can almost hear. Then the turn: the room was not empty.

⁷²California HSS 3.3.3 (1998). Shape for the sitting; the family’s actual community.

The skill. Narrative as a tool, then the repair. Who else was in the room. What took years. What no one person decided. Barton's Queen finding in kitchen language.

Say the story. Stop. Then: "Who else was in the room?" If they add another famous name, ask for a person who was not famous. If they cannot, the map and a second source are next week, not a lecture on "social forces."

Discussion box

This is an illustration, not a reported family. A short letter is on the table, byline above the body, body still covered.

Opening question

"Who made this, and what did they want us to believe?"

Not: "List three causes."

Follow-ups (pick three to five)

1. What do you notice that makes you think that?
2. When was this made?
3. What does it not tell you?
4. What else would we need?
5. What would have to be true in *their* world?

How to wait

Ask. Three to five seconds. Look at the byline, not at the child, if the silence is hard. After they stop, wait three to five seconds more. Then one follow-up, not three in a stack. You do not already have the sentence they must match.

What a stuck silence usually means

The question was recitation in disguise — you wanted "primary source" as a vocabulary word. Or there was not enough story before the letter: background knowledge first, then the document. Or they can critique when asked but do not know you want the *evidence connection* — Barton 1997 in the room. Next move: "Point at the name. Say the want in a sentence. Then we read." Done enough this week: talk plus a sentence that uses an observation as evidence. Not a document-based essay.

Practice that actually builds learning

Blocked, for a new move. The day you introduce byline-before-body, three short cards that are only that: name, year, one sentence of want, body still covered. The day you introduce a picture-timeline, only pictures they already own. The day you introduce the state outline, only this state, six numbers.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, a byline card next to a picture-as-source next to a timeline picture. Mixing is choosing a move: is this a who-made-this, a what-do-you-see, or a which-came-first? A purchased chapter that is all narrative can still be mixed by you putting one attributed excerpt on the table beside it.

Brief retrieval. Two minutes. Yesterday's byline. Last week's two pictures, now with years. Cover the body, cover the dates, ask the question. Retrieval is a second meeting, not a timed drill of capitals. Fifty states and capitals, if you use them, are a tool for the map, not the year's purpose, and they belong in short mixed retrieval after the child can find *this* state unaided.

One incorrect example to diagnose. After the child has sourced Margaret, show a card that treated the textbook paragraph as "straight information" and the letter as less trustworthy because it was messy. Ask: "What did this person use to decide which was the real source?" The child names the miss. Wineburg's seniors made that miss. A fifth-grader can hear it when you ask.

Caption as the product. One sentence that uses an observation as evidence. Not a keyword list ("primary, secondary, bias"). Kitchen and a walk can give a second picture of region. They do not replace the map, the timeline, or the unaided caption.

Generated scene, then a named picture. Two minutes, together, of a scene a tool painted: "what did this get wrong?" Then it comes off. A named textbook picture or a Library of Congress photograph, credit line visible, comes on. The skill is the difference between a scene and a source.

A weekly shape: day of a new move, blocked. Same week: mixed retrieval. Later this week: the new move beside an unlike source. Story first, every sitting. You impose that shape on the book you already have. Coverage is the map of the year. Depth is Tuesday.

For the student

You are learning how a timeline works, and how a source has a maker. Pictures you already know can stand in a row. A year can sit under a picture as a label. A letter was written by someone, at a time, for a reason. You look at the name before you read the rest.

Last year you hung then and now. Keep doing that. This year you can say “this was before that,” and you can say who made the page.

Tiny worked example

A card. At the top, before the story:

Jonah, a notice nailed in a town, 1835.

You do not read the notice yet. You say: Jonah made this. In 1835. He wanted people in the town to read it and do something — why else nail it up?

Then you read. Then you say what in the notice matches that want. That is looking at the maker first.

Two tries

1. Cover the body of one short source. Say who made it, when, and what they wanted. Then uncover and read. Point at the page while you talk.
2. Put four pictures you already know in order. Then write a year under two of them. Say which is earlier, and what in the pictures makes you say that.

Write the caption for the first one if the pencil will hold it. If writing fights the sitting, talk it. Your grown-up can remember the sentence.

Explain it back

Tell someone at the table, in your own words, why the name at the top of a page comes before the story. Then point to a timeline and say how a year is a label under a picture, not the whole history. Then say who else might have been in the room besides the famous person in this week’s story.

Challenge

Some people read the story first and never look at who wrote it. Some people can circle “biased” on a worksheet and then believe every source the same when they tell the story. Some people learn twenty years and cannot match them to a picture.

What would those three moves mean? How do you look at the maker first? How do you use one thing you *see* as evidence in a sentence?

You are allowed to struggle. You may fold the page, hang the pictures, ask for a hint — not for the caption. Then try again.

A map of your state is a picture of a place you can travel. Six names are enough this week. A computer picture of “the first Thanksgiving” is a scene. A named painting or a named photograph in a book is the source you point at.

When you talk, a sentence that uses what you saw is enough for today. You do not have to write an essay. That is later. Today you look, you source, you say one true thing you can point to.

If it isn’t clicking

Three diagnostics. Each one has a next move. None of them is a verdict on talent, and none of them is a reason to wait for a birthday.

1. The child still sorts by shine, or cannot attach a year to a picture, or recites dates with no story.

The clothesline is unfinished, or the dates arrived first. Next move: back toward last chapter, without shame. Pictures they already own, in order, no years. Then two years under two pictures. Barton and Levstik: third and fourth grade can hear the numbers; fifth grade connects them to knowledge. If the knowledge is missing, the year will not install it. Stay with fewer pictures and more story. A date list on top of a child who cannot order pictures will not hold.

2. The child reads the body first, or can talk about “bias” without using an observation as evidence, or treats every source as equal when they tell the story.

The ask is not yet a habit. Barton already told you they will not do this spontaneously. Next move: fold the page every time, for a stretch of daily sittings. Who, when, want — then the body. After they attempt, one incorrect example (textbook as “straight information”). Slow down the chapter-book until a caption can be tied to a byline. VanSledright is your permission to keep going: fifth-graders can investigate when taught. They still need you to teach it. A tutor is useful if the body-first habit remains after a couple of weeks of daily folded-page work *and* the

hour has become a fight.

3. The story shrinks to one hero, or the year is a slog, or a generated diary has become the source.

Narrative trap, or coverage as the hour, or a scene treated as evidence. Next move: one named person, then “who else was in the room?” One process that took years, on a timeline that will not collapse it into a speech. Generated scene off the table; named picture on. If the hour is a race through the table of contents, cut the race. Wineburg: repeated passes, not a light-rail tour.⁷³ Pick the early-nation stretch this family will actually finish — to 1850, to 1865, or a Texas-style wider survey with fewer stops. The map varies. The looking does not.

When to slow down. Pictures still unordered. Byline still skipped. Caption still a copied sentence. Sits so long that looking never starts. Those are brakes. “Not ready” because of age is the brake this book will not use. VanSledright contradicted “too young.” “Not ready” because last chapter’s sort is missing is a real brake.

When to go ahead. Pictures in order, with a few years attached. Byline before body, when you ask. A caption that uses an observation as evidence. A state map with a handful of places the child can name. A story with a named person *and* a second person in the room. Then the next chapter’s periodization, two accounts, and a paragraph of argument have somewhere to sit. Being “ahead” because a child loves a president book is not a reason to skip the ask.

When to get a human tutor. You have run the folded-page sitting, or the picture-timeline, or the caption-as-evidence, for a stretch of daily work, and the same diagnosis is still in the room, and the hour has become a fight. A tutor is a release valve. Keep yourself as the person who can still hear a date slog and a body-first read. Outsourcing the hearing is the thing to avoid, not asking for help.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you, the adult. The full rules live in the history-hour box in the front of this book. This chapter is a pointer.

The child looks and talks first. You hold the key. A tool may explain a timeline *to you* from a **named textbook page**; generate discussion questions you vet; make

⁷³Sam Wineburg, “Crazy for History,” *Journal of American History* 90, no. 4 (2004): 1401–1414. Light tours leave few traces; repeated passes; curriculum as triage.

a map-labeling practice with six to eight numbers and the answers on a page the child never sees; write a hint script you read aloud; or help you diagnose a caption already written. The child labels the map on paper. The child sources on paper.

Leave these out of the hour: “write my paragraph”; invent a pilgrim diary or a soldier’s letter; an unsupervised chatbot during the attempt; “what happened” as the whole sitting; photographing the map for a key; a generated diary treated as a source. A two-minute generated scene is a looking object you sit with together, then remove. A named textbook picture or a Library of Congress photograph replaces it.

A language model will happily write the caption, or a diary with a year at the top. Treat every model-supplied quotation, date, and “as a colonist wrote” as untrusted until you find it in a named book, archive, or textbook page.⁷⁴ Fluent writing from a tool is performance, not the child’s knowledge of the year.⁷⁵ The unaided byline tomorrow morning is the test. The math study in the front of this book is still not a history trial. The crutch is still the sitting condition.⁷⁶

A folded photocopy, a state outline, and a string are tools too. Use them, then fade the fold when the child reaches for the name without you.

What “done enough” looks like

Placement is by skill, not birthday. A “grade 4 history” book is a publisher’s scope. All American History, a textbook path, and a narrative spine can place the same child in three different rooms. Choose by fit. The transcript still says Social Studies. It does not say a brand.

Checklist before moving on

- Pictures the child already owns can be ordered, and a few dates sit under

⁷⁴William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045. GPT-3.5: 55 percent of citations fabricated; GPT-4: 18 percent. Of real citations, 43 percent and 24 percent had substantive errors, including wrong dates.

⁷⁵Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, “Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–199.

⁷⁶Hamsa Bastani et al., “Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning: Evidence from High School Mathematics,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Mathematics RCT; not a history trial. The sitting condition is the mechanism.

those pictures as labels. A date slog without pictures has receded.

- When you ask, the child looks at the byline before the body and can say who made this and what they wanted. They do not yet do this as a historian would, unprompted. You still ask.
- A caption uses an observation as evidence, not only a feeling or a copied sentence.
- A blank outline of *this* state can take six places the child can name, with your key hidden.
- One named person in a named place can be told as a story, then repaired with “who else was in the room.”
- One real letter, photograph, or artifact — not a generated diary — has been the source of the hour.
- You can hear a body-first read, a date slog, a hero-only plot, and a worksheet that circled “bias” without evidence, and you can ask a good question without taking the looking.

If most of that list is true, go on to middle-grade world moves and U.S. moves, a period as a tool, two accounts of one event, and a paragraph of argument, even if the birthday says otherwise. If the birthday says “sixth grade” and the body is still being read first, stay. The next chapter is the paragraph, with the byline still at the top.

A path through history is the promise. A culture-war win is not.

Chapter 3

World moves and U.S. moves: a period, two accounts, a paragraph



Figure 9: A kitchen-table still-life: an unbranded world map, three period cards, two labelled document cards side by side, and a paragraph page with a finger-width margin. No child. No logos.

Why this matters

Last chapter installed a timeline that can carry a few dates, a state story, an early U.S. story with names, and “who made this” before the body — because you asked. Keep all of that. This chapter is the middle-grade band: world moves and U.S. moves, taught as *moves*, not as every kingdom and not as every battle. A period as a tool for grouping stories. A civilization as people in a place. Two accounts of one event. A paragraph that makes a claim and points to a source. A second pass at the United States that will not collapse years into a speech.

The sentence that surprises people is this one: there is no national sixth-grade ancient world, and a still-guessing twelve-year-old who cannot source a short document is not “behind in world history.” They are still in a taught-looking stage. California’s 1998 map puts ancient civilizations in grade 6, medieval and early modern times (A.D. 500–1789) in grade 7, and U.S. history from the Constitution through World War I in grade 8. Texas’s 2022 map puts contemporary world societies — listed regions, not an ancient survey — in grade 6, Texas history in greater depth in grade 7, and U.S. history from early colonial through Reconstruction in grade 8, as the first part of a two-year U.S. study. Virginia’s 2023 table splits U.S. history at 1865 across grades 5–6, places civics in grade 7, world geography in grade 8, and delays world history to high school, split at 1500.⁷⁷ The maps differ. Then teach. Middle school is where U.S. public-school maps disagree about when the world year happens. The child still needs world *and* U.S. moves before high school.

As of 31 August 2026, a Texas State Board of Education news release dated 26 June 2026 names newly adopted social-studies standards structured around a chronological framework, with an eighth-grade Texas history capstone as a centerpiece. That

⁷⁷California State Board of Education, *History–Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools*, adopted 9 October 1998: grade 6 World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations; grade 7 Medieval and Early Modern Times (A.D. 500–1789); grade 8 United States History and Geography: Growth and Conflict, Constitution through World War I. Texas SBOE, 19 TAC Chapter 113 attachment, adopted 2022: grade 6 people, places, and societies of the contemporary world (listed regions); grade 7 Texas history in greater depth than grade 4; grade 8 U.S. from early colonial through Reconstruction, first part of a two-year U.S. study completed in §113.41 United States History Studies Since 1877. Virginia Department of Education, 2023 History and Social Science Standards of Learning course table (Board approval 20 April 2023 as stated on the VDOE page): grade 5 U.S. to 1865; grade 6 U.S. 1865 to the present; grade 7 Civics and Economics; grade 8 World Geography; grades 9–10 world history split at 1500. Public-school maps, not homeschool statutes. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026.

page is a press release, not the grade-by-grade TEKS text.⁷⁸ Name the live change. Teach the looking you can actually run this week. Leave 2022 unfrozen. A news story is not a new middle-school order.

C3's 6–8 band is still an Inquiry Arc, not a kingdom list. By the end of grade 8, on that map, students are to evaluate sources, use evidence, and communicate conclusions.⁷⁹ Dimension 2 History already named the work: change and continuity, perspectives, historical sources, causation and argumentation. Going beyond “what happened when?” is the point. C3 still does not assign ancient world to grade 6. A handbook that writes “in sixth grade, students study ancient civilizations” as if it were national has chosen California and ignored Texas and Virginia.

Peter Lee, reporting the British CHATA work, is the household picture of the miss you will hear all year. Younger students often hold that if two accounts differ, one of the stories must be wrong. A fifth-grader's repair was to see what books or encyclopedias say. An eighth-grader could hear that when the Roman Empire ended depends on what you think ended it.⁸⁰ Two honest accounts can answer different questions. That is the year's idea. The other named miss is the textbook as the primary source: able high-school seniors, in Wineburg's Lexington study, treated a textbook excerpt as “straight information” and ranked it more trustworthy

⁷⁸Texas State Board of Education, news release, 26 June 2026, “Texas State Board of Education Adopts New Social Studies Standards and Required Literature Reading List,” <https://sboe.texas.gov/state-board-of-education/sboe-news/texas-state-board-of-education-adopts-new-social-studies-standards-and-required-literature-reading-list>. Newly adopted social studies TEKS “structured around a chronological framework”; “a Texas history capstone course in 8th grade” as a centerpiece. Press release, not the adopted grade-by-grade student expectations. Implementation school year and the fate of grade 6 contemporary world cultures are not taken from this page.

⁷⁹National Council for the Social Studies, *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013). Inquiry Arc; Dimension 2 History (change, continuity, and context; perspectives; historical sources and evidence; causation and argumentation); pathways include 6–8, proficiency suggested by the end of grade 8. Content left to states. Does not assign ancient world to grade 6.

⁸⁰Peter J. Lee, “Putting Principles into Practice: Understanding History,” in *How Students Learn: History in the Classroom*, ed. M. Suzanne Donovan and John D. Bransford (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2005), 31–77. CHATA paired accounts, including different end-dates for the Roman Empire. Younger students: if two accounts differ, one must be wrong; a fifth-grader, Kirsty, would “see what books or encyclopedias say.” An eighth-grader, Lara: it depends on what you think ended it. Knowing when an empire ended is not like knowing when Columbus reached America. Bias treated as a fixed property that renders a source useless; escape when students can ask questions sources were not designed to answer.

than eyewitness accounts.⁸¹ Presentism is still the mind at rest. “They were just stupid” is still the child at rest. Bias treated as a stain that makes a source useless is Lee’s trap. Escape is asking a question the source was not designed to answer.

What you are teaching is periodization as a tool, not a prison; one civilization as people in a place, with a map and an ordinary life, not a list of kingdoms; two short labelled accounts of one event; a paragraph with a claim, a because, and a finger on a real source; a U.S. second pass that lets industrial, Reconstruction-era, or early-twentieth-century processes take years; and a repair for presentism. You will not assign every kingdom. Texas’s own later World History introduction admits the slog problem inside a survey: the expanse of world history and the time limits of a school year mean the scope should focus on essential concepts and skills.⁸² Depth is the hour. Coverage is the map.

Among 6–8-equivalent homeschoolers in the last federal subject table, 82 percent were being taught social science, history, or social studies that year.⁸³ Context, not a ranking. A still-guessing sixth-grader belongs in last chapter’s folded-page work until the byline comes first. Birthday is not placement.

What this band unlocks is a high-school World History and U.S. History that can start *in the middle of a question*, with two documents, without assuming two prior world years. Skip the period as a tool, and later “modern” is a slogan. Skip two accounts, and later a document-based question is a hunt for the true paragraph. Skip the claim-in-a-paragraph, and later an essay has nowhere to sit. Skip the U.S. second pass, and later 1877, or the twentieth century, arrives as a surprise cut.

⁸¹Sam Wineburg, “On the Reading of Historical Texts: Notes on the Breach between School and Academy,” *American Educational Research Journal* 28, no. 3 (1991): 495–519. Able seniors treated a textbook excerpt as “just reporting the facts,” “straight information”; the textbook, not the eyewitness accounts, emerged as the primary source. Eight historians, eight high-school seniors, one battle; students were AP-caliber. Not a homeschool trial.

⁸²Texas SBOE, 19 TAC Chapter 113 attachment, adopted 2022, World History Studies introduction: survey of humankind; because of the expanse of world history and the time limitations of the school year, the scope should focus on “essential” concepts and skills; major emphasis from earliest times to the present. Coverage-versus-depth sentence inside Texas’s own survey course. Named here as a warning the middle-grade year already needs.

⁸³Jiashan Cui and Rachel Hanson, *Homeschooling in the United States: Results from the 2012 and 2016 Parent and Family Involvement Survey*, NCES 2020-001 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), web tables from PFI 2016. Among 6–8-equivalent homeschoolers, 82 percent were taught “social science, history, social studies” that year. The 2023 First Look did not republish subject-taught tables. Context, not a ranking.

You do not need to be a historian. You do need to hear “which one is true?” as the wrong opening question, and a fluent chatbot paragraph as performance, not as the child’s knowledge of the year.

For the parent: understand it yourself

Many adults feel rusty because the year they remember was either a slog of dynasties or a single American story that never looked at a document. That is ordinary. Five minutes at the end of this section is enough for tomorrow. Last chapter installed byline-before-body, a picture-timeline, and “who else was in the room?” Keep all three. The sit can grow. The product becomes a paragraph.

Everyday picture. Two index cards, same event, different jobs. Card A is a short attributed excerpt from a person who was there, complaining about a tax. Card B is a later textbook paragraph explaining the same tax as policy. You do not ask which card is true. You ask: “Can both of these accounts be useful — and for which question?” Card A is useful for what it felt like to pay. Card B is useful for how a later writer framed the policy. Neither is “the past.” Both are accounts. The child writes one paragraph that states a claim, points to one of the cards, and names the other view in a clause.

Precise picture. A period is a grouping tool. “Ancient,” “medieval,” “early modern” — or, if this family is on a contemporary-cultures year, the regions actually chosen — are labels that bundle stories so the mind can hold them. They are not walls in the ground. Virginia splits world history at 1500 in high school. College Board’s optional AP World History: Modern starts around 1200. California’s grade 7 runs to 1789. Those cuts are choices. Put three cards on the table. Name which map this family is using this year. Then group two stories onto a card and leave a third off, on purpose, so the child can see the tool working. Periodization is triage. Wineburg’s sentence still holds: the mind wants pattern; a light-rail tour of every kingdom leaves few traces.⁸⁴

A civilization, in this band, is people in a place: a river or a coast, a way of getting food, a rule, a belief, an object. California’s grade-6 opening already wants everyday lives, problems, and accomplishments, and why civilizations developed

⁸⁴Sam Wineburg, “Crazy for History,” *Journal of American History* 90, no. 4 (2004): 1401–1414. Light-rail excursions through factual mounds leave few traces; repeated passes; curriculum design as triage.

where and when they did.⁸⁵ You do not need California's whole list. You need one map, one object or image, one short story of ordinary life. Kingdom names without a place are a slog.

Argument in a paragraph is claim, because, source. Chauncey Monte-Sano, Susan De La Paz, Mark Felton, and colleagues taught argument writing with historical thinking in diverse middle-school history classrooms: students can be taught to write historical arguments from documents when the teaching is explicit. That work is a research neighbor, not a homeschool trial.⁸⁶ You are not assigning a five-paragraph DBQ. You are teaching one paragraph the child can hold: *I claim X, because this source says Y, while Z says otherwise*. The looking moves from last chapter sit inside that sentence. Reisman's Document-Based Lesson — question, short background, two or three documents, looking moves, talk — is a grade-11 shape you may copy. You will not copy its coefficients onto this table.⁸⁷

Lee's accounts finding is the precise picture of the discussion. Knowing when an empire ended is not like knowing when a ship reached a shore. The question decides the ending. Bias is not a fixed property that retires a source. Historians ask questions sources were not designed to answer. Garbage dumps were not built to fool them.⁸⁸

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

⁸⁵California HSS, grade 6 opening (1998): people and events that ushered in major Western and non-Western ancient civilizations; geography of special significance; everyday lives, problems, and accomplishments; why civilizations developed where and when they did.

⁸⁶Chauncey Monte-Sano, Susan De La Paz, and Mark Felton, "Teaching Argument Writing and 'Content' in Diverse Middle School History Classrooms," *Social Education* 79, no. 4 (2015): 194–199. Argument writing taught alongside inquiry and analysis of evidence in diverse middle-school history classrooms. Research neighbor, not a homeschool trial. Chauncey Monte-Sano, "Disciplinary Literacy in History," *Journal of the Learning Sciences* 19, no. 4 (2010): 539–568, is high-school juniors on a document-based essay, not this band. Chauncey Monte-Sano and Sarah Thomson, "It's Not That Simple," *The History Teacher* 55, no. 3 (2022): the DBQ is an AP-era assessment with a five-paragraph tendency. Architecture of this book: argument in a paragraph in this band; not a five-paragraph DBQ.

⁸⁷Avishag Reisman, "Reading Like a Historian: A Document-Based History Curriculum Intervention in Urban High Schools," *Cognition and Instruction* 30, no. 1 (2012): 86–112. Quasi-experiment, 236 eleventh-graders, five San Francisco public high schools, six months. Copy the lesson *shape* (question, short background, two or three documents, looking moves, talk), not the coefficients, onto this band. Qualitative analysis: only nine whole-class text-based discussions in over 100 videotaped lessons. Materials do not by themselves get a student talking.

⁸⁸Lee, "Putting Principles into Practice" (2005). "Medieval garbage dumps were not constructed to fool historians."

1. *Two accounts differ. The child says one must be wrong, or asks which book to trust so they will not go around telling people the wrong date.* Lee's "one true story." Say: "Can both be useful — and for which question?" If they still pick a winner, name the questions out loud: *what did it feel like* versus *how did a later writer explain it*. If they treat an encyclopedia as the referee, the textbook-as-primary miss is in the room. A textbook is one account.
2. *The child calls a source "biased" and puts it down, as if a stain had made it useless.* Bias as a fixed property. Lee's trap. Say: "What question could we still ask of it?" A tax complaint is "biased" toward the person who paid, and it is still evidence of what they wanted a sister, a neighbor, or a court to believe. Useless is the miss. Useful-for-which-question is the move.
3. *"They were just stupid" — about a belief, a tool, a medical practice, a social rule.* Presentism, the mind at rest.⁸⁹ Wineburg's repair in kitchen language: what would have to be true in *their* world for this to make sense. Not a pep talk that the past was wise. Not a scold. A context question. If they reconstruct *our* common sense in costume, the looking has not yet made the past strange.
4. *A paragraph that is only a retell, or only a copied sentence from the book, or a fluent page a chatbot wrote.* Not yet an argument. Claim missing, or source missing, or the child is a spectator. The product is one claim, one because, one finger on a real source, one other view in a clause. Model closed. If the tool produced the paragraph, tomorrow's unaided page is the test.
5. *The year is every kingdom, or every TEKS "including" clause, or a compacted rush into high-school World while the byline is still being skipped.* Coverage as the hour, or acceleration as a personality. A sixth-grader who cannot source a short document is not ready to skip the looking because a catalog printed "ancient" on the spine. Pick one civilization, one U.S. process. Depth is Tuesday.

A sixth you will also hear: history as a morality play — heroes and villains, one official story replaced by the opposite official story, and the hour as a contest to pick the good guys. Wineburg's warning: mature historical thought navigates

⁸⁹Sam Wineburg, "Reading Abraham Lincoln: An Expert/Expert Study in the Interpretation of Historical Texts," *Cognitive Science* 22, no. 3 (1998): 319–346. Presentism is "our psychological condition at rest."

the familiar past and the strange past; veering to either pole leaves cliché.⁹⁰ The kitchen-table hour is a contest to hear that two honest accounts can answer different questions. It is not a pamphlet.

Five-minute parent warm-up

Do this before the lesson, with two short labelled excerpts and a scrap of paper, no child in the room.

Minute 1. Label two cards A and B, same event, different makers. Write one question each card can actually answer. Write one question neither can answer. That last one is “what else would we need.”

Minute 2. Say out loud: “I will not ask which is true. I will ask which question each one helps.” Decide the sentence you will *not* require the child to match.

Minute 3. Write a three-line paragraph you would accept: a claim, a because that points to card A, a clause that names card B. That is done enough. It is not an essay.

Minute 4. Put three period cards down — ancient / medieval / early modern, *or* three regions this family actually chose. Place one story on a card. Leave one story off. Say: “A period is a grouping tool. This is the map we are using this year.”

Minute 5. Write the sentence you will actually say: “Can both of these accounts be useful — and for which question?” Put the pencil down.

If you can tell a period from a prison, and two accounts from a true/false test, you are ready to sit down.

How to teach it this week

A good history hour this week has the same shape. The history-hour chapter in the front of this book is the full version. Here is the shape scaled to this band.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday’s byline, body covered. Or two period cards: which story belongs where, and why. Paper. No device.

⁹⁰Sam Wineburg, “Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 80, no. 7 (1999): 488–499. Tension between the familiar past and the strange past; veering to either pole “only dulls history’s jagged edges and leaves us with cliché and caricature.” Historical thinking goes against the grain of how we ordinarily think.

Short background (5 minutes). Enough story that the documents will mean something. Reisman’s shape starts here: knowledge first, then the texts.⁹¹ You talk for a few minutes. Then you stop. A document packet with no story is a worksheet.

Student looking (15–20 minutes). Two short labelled excerpts, or a map and an object, or a paragraph draft. The child points, talks, writes. You wait. Struggle before rescue. You do not finish the claim. You do not reconcile the two accounts for them.

One good question. Not “which one is true?” A question that names the idea: “Can both be useful — and for which question?” “What would have to be true in *their* world?” “What took years?”

Talk, then a paragraph (8–12 minutes). Talk first. Then one paragraph: claim, because, source, other view in a clause. Model closed. Phone in another room.

Exit ticket (5 minutes, unaided). A fresh pair of labels, or the same pair in a new order: which question would you take to which card? Or: rewrite the claim in one sentence without looking at your draft.

Exact wording you can say

On two accounts:

“Can both of these accounts be useful — and for which question?”

“What question is each answering?”

“Who made each, when, and why?”

On a period:

“This label groups stories. Which story belongs here, and which does not?”

“What would we lose if we put this story in the other pile?”

On a civilization:

“Who lived here, and what did the place make possible?”

“Show me on the map what had to be crossed.”

On a paragraph:

⁹¹Reisman, “Reading Like a Historian” (2012): Document-Based Lesson designed with background knowledge before interrogation of texts.

“One claim. One because. Point to the source.”

“Name the other view in a clause. Then stop. That is a paragraph.”

On presentism:

“What would have to be true in *their* world?”

“What took years, not a day?”

When you are about to take over:

“Your claim. I’ll wait.”

Then wait. Three to five seconds after you ask, and three to five after they stop. Rowe’s windows were science classrooms. The silence is still the teaching. Look at the two cards if the silence is hard.

First problem for the student

Two labelled cards, same event, different questions they can actually speak to. This is an illustration of *format*, not a pair to invent:

Card A — a short attributed complaint from a person who was there.

Card B — a short later account written for school, named as a textbook paragraph.

Use real excerpts from a book you own. A model-written “eyewitness” is fiction.

Say: “Can both of these accounts be useful — and for which question? Do not pick a winner yet.”

Wait. If they pick the textbook as true because it sounds like a book, Wineburg’s miss. If they pick the complaint as true because “the person was there,” testimony as the only test, Lee’s early stage. If they say both, and can name a question for each, they have the move. After they attempt, show a worked *incorrect* example: a card that says “one of these must be wrong.” Ask what question that person is stuck on.

Named activity: Periodization as a Tool

Time. Fifteen to twenty minutes. Three cards, two stories, one left off.

Materials. Three cards. If this family is on California's middle-grade world pair, the cards can read ancient / medieval / early modern. If this family is on Texas 2022's grade-6 contemporary world, the cards are three regions you actually chose from the listed set. If this family is on Virginia's table, world chronology may wait, and the cards can be U.S. cuts this child is actually in — to 1865, after 1865 — or geography regions. Name the fork in one sentence, then group. Pencil.

The fun. Sorting stories like mail. An argument about a leftover story is the point: the leftover shows the tool.

The skill. A period is a grouping tool, not a prison and not a national law. The child can say which map this family is using this year.

Say: "Put this story on a card. Leave this one off. Why?" If they want a fourth card for everything, coverage is arriving. Three is the sitting.

Named activity: A Civilization as People in a Place

Time. Twenty minutes, including the map.

Materials. One map. One object or named image (a tool, a grain, a boat, a law code as an *object* with a credit line — not a generated temple). One short story of ordinary life: water, food, a day's work. Not a kingdom list.

The fun. Ordinary life is interesting. A river that had to be managed. A market. A kitchen that is not ours.

The skill. People in a place, which is why geography sits inside history this week. California's grade-6 emphasis on everyday lives is the shape, not a mandate to tour every civilization on a poster.⁹²

Say: "Who lived here? What did this place make possible? What had to be true about the river?" If they recite a dynasty list, the map is not yet doing work. Finger on the place.

⁹²California HSS, grade 6 opening (1998). Shape for one-civilization sitting; not a tour of every civilization on the pamphlet's list.



Figure 10: An unbranded map of a river valley with one object — a grain, a boat, a tool — on the table beside it. No logos. No child.

Named activity: Two Accounts, One Event

Time. Twenty minutes. Talk, then a sentence, then (later in the week) the paragraph.

Materials. Two short, labelled excerpts that answer different questions about the same event. Attribution visible on both. Folded until who/when/why is said. Lee/CHATA shape: paired stories, different jobs.

The fun. Being allowed to keep both. The relief of not having to pick a liar.

The skill. “One must be wrong” is the misconception. Useful-for-which-question is the move. Corroboration in miniature: where they agree, where they do not speak.

Say: “Can both of these accounts be useful — and for which question?” Then: “What would we still need?”



Figure 11: Two labelled document cards side by side, attribution lines visible, a third card that says “what else would we need.” No child.

Named activity: Argument in a Paragraph

Time. Fifteen to twenty minutes of writing after the talk. The talk is not optional.

Materials. The two accounts still on the table. Paper. Pencil. No chatbot in the room. No phone.

The fun. A paragraph that is short enough to finish. A claim that is theirs.

The skill. Claim, because, source, other view in a clause. Architecture’s middle-grade product. Not a five-paragraph essay. Monte-Sano’s neighbor finding: explicit teaching of argument from documents. You still have to teach it.

Say: “One claim. Point to one source. Name the other view. Then stop.” If they retell the story, the claim is missing. “So what are you saying is true, in a sentence?” If they copy the textbook, the source is doing the writing. Finger on the other card: “Put that view in a clause.”

Named activity: U.S. Second Pass — What Took Years

Time. One story sitting and a timeline that will not collapse.

Materials. One industrial, Reconstruction-era, or early-twentieth-century process this family is actually in — a railroad built over years, a legal change that took cases, a migration, a strike, a reform. A timeline with more than one date. California grade 8 runs Constitution through World War I; Texas 2022 grade 8 runs colonial through Reconstruction; Virginia’s table has already finished a U.S. pair split at 1865 by the end of grade 6.⁹³ Pick the process on *this* family’s map. The 26 June 2026 Texas release names an eighth-grade Texas capstone as a new centerpiece; until you have the adopted TEKS text, teach the U.S. process you planned. A news story is not a year-by-year chart.

The fun. A story that is allowed to be slow. No single speech does the whole job.

The skill. Processes, not only individuals. Barton’s Queen repair, now at middle-grade age: what no one person decided; what took years. Narrative still holds the past. The timeline stops the collapse.

Say the story. Then: “What took years, not a day? Who else was in the room?” If they offer a hero who “realized,” ask what else had to already be moving.

Named activity: “They Were Just Stupid” Repair

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes. One strange past practice. Not a tour of horrors.

Materials. One short attributed description of a practice that will look unreasonable from here — a medical treatment, a farming rule, a religious fast, a legal

⁹³California HSS grade 8 opening (1998): framing of the Constitution up to World War I. Texas 2022 grade 8 introduction: early colonial through Reconstruction. VDOE 2023 table: U.S. pair in grades 5–6, split at 1865. See also note 78 on the 26 June 2026 Texas press release.

category, a tool. Named source. Not a generated “ancient person” speech.

The fun. The click when a strange thing becomes a solution to a different world. Surprise, not superiority.

The skill. Contextualization in kitchen language. Presentism is the mind at rest. Wineburg: the past as a foreign country, strangeness rather than costume continuity.⁹⁴

Say: “What would have to be true in *their* world for this to make sense?” Wait. If they say “they didn’t know science,” ask what they *did* know, as far as this source can tell. If they joke, the joke is presentism with a laugh track. Stay on the source.

Discussion box

This is an illustration, not a reported family. Two labelled excerpts sit side by side. Background has already been told, short.

Opening question

“Can both of these accounts be useful — and for which question?”

Not: “Which one is true?”

Follow-ups (pick three to five)

1. What question is each answering?
2. Who made each, when, why?
3. What would we still need?
4. What took years, not a day?
5. What would have to be true in *their* world?

How to wait

Ask. Three to five seconds. Look at the two cards, not at the child’s face, if the silence is hard. After they stop, wait three to five seconds more. Then one follow-up. You do not already have the winner.

⁹⁴Wineburg, “Reading Abraham Lincoln” (1998), citing David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (1985): underscoring strangeness rather than continuity with today. Wineburg, “Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts” (1999): Derek vignette — an AP student overrode document observations with present assumptions about how “normal people” behave in a fight.

What a stuck silence usually means

The question was recitation — “which is biased” as a vocabulary word. Or there was not enough background, and the documents are noise. Or presentism has filled the gap (“they were just stupid”). Or bias-as-stain has retired one card. Next move: name two different questions out loud, then ask which card helps which. Done enough this week: a paragraph that makes a claim and points to a source. Talk first. Then write. Model closed.

Practice that actually builds learning

Blocked, for a new move. The day you introduce two accounts, only that pair, only the useful-for-which-question ask. The day you introduce a period card, only three cards and two stories. The day you introduce the paragraph, the two accounts stay on the table and the job is four sentences, not a new topic.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, a period sort next to a two-account pair next to a U.S. process that took years. Mixing is choosing a move: grouping, sourcing, arguing, contextualizing. A purchased chapter that is all narrative can still be mixed by you laying two attributed excerpts beside it.

Brief retrieval. Yesterday’s claim in one unaided sentence. Last week’s period cards, one story to place. Cover the documents, ask who made them. Retrieval is a second meeting, not a timed dynasty drill.

One incorrect example to diagnose. After the child has attempted the pair, show a card that says “one must be wrong,” or a card that retired a source as “biased” and therefore useless, or a paragraph that is only a retell. Ask what that person used. The child names the miss.

Paragraph as the product. Claim, because, source, other view. Kitchen talk can warm the claim. It does not replace the unaided paragraph. A map on the table when the story moves is spatial contextualization, not a geography course — that chapter comes later.

Generated scene, then a named map or a named image. Two minutes together: “what did the model get wrong?” Then it comes off. A named map or a reproduction with a credit line comes on. A generated temple is a scene. It has no maker

in the year under study.

A weekly shape: day of a new move, blocked. Same week: mixed retrieval. Later this week: the paragraph that uses this week's pair. Story first, every sitting. You impose that shape on the book you already have. If the book tours every kingdom, you still pick one place. Texas later admits the slog inside a world survey. You do not have to wait for high school to refuse the slog.

For the student

You are learning how a period works, and how two accounts can both be useful. A period is a label that groups stories so you can hold them. It is not a wall. Two people can tell the same event for different reasons. You do not have to pick a liar. You have to say which question each account helps.

Last chapter you looked at the name before the body. Keep doing that. This year you write a paragraph that makes a claim and points to a source.

Tiny worked example

Two cards. Same tax. Card A is a person who paid it, writing to a sister. Card B is a later school paragraph about why the government wanted the money.

Question: can both be useful?

Card A helps: what did it feel like to pay, and what did the writer want the sister to believe.

Card B helps: how a later writer explained the policy.

A paragraph you might write:

The tax was a hardship for the people who paid it, because Card A tells a sister that the payment left no seed for spring, while Card B treats the tax as a policy that funded a road.

That is a claim, a because, a source, and another view in a clause. That is enough.

Two tries

1. With two real short sources on the table, say — before you write — which question each one helps. Then write one paragraph: a claim, a because that points to one source, and the other view in a clause. No chatbot in the room.

2. Put one story onto a period card (or a region card) and leave one story off. Say why the leftover does not belong. Then point to a map and say what had to be true about the place.

Check the paragraph by putting your finger on the source you named. If you cannot point, the source is missing.

Explain it back

Tell someone at the table, in your own words, why two honest accounts can both be useful. Then say what a period is for. Then take one strange practice from this week and say what would have to be true in *their* world.

Challenge

Some people pick the book as true because it sounds like a book. Some people call a source biased and stop looking. Some people say they were just stupid. Some people let a computer write the paragraph. What would those four moves mean? How do you keep both accounts and still make a claim? How do you point at a real source?

You are allowed to struggle. You may fold the byline, use three period cards, ask for a hint — not for the claim. Then try again.

A picture a computer made of a temple is a scene. A named image in a book, with a credit line, is what you point at. A period label is a tool. It is not the past.

When you write, one paragraph is enough for today. You do not have to write an essay. That is later. Today you look, you argue in a paragraph, you name the other view.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics. Each one has a next move. None of them is a verdict on talent, and none of them is a reason to wait for a birthday.

1. The child still reads the body first, or cannot source a short document, or guesses from a generated scene.

The looking from last chapter is unfinished. Next move: back toward the folded page, without shame. Byline, who, when, want — then the body. A still-guessing sixth-grader is not behind in world history. They are behind in taught looking.

Kingdom names on top of a skipped byline will not hold. Stay until a short document can be sourced when you ask. VanSledright already gave permission to teach investigation in grade 5. The permission has not expired. A tutor is useful if the body-first habit remains after a stretch of daily folded-page work *and* the hour has become a fight.

2. Two accounts become a true/false fight, or “biased” retires a source, or the paragraph is only a retell.

The year’s idea is not yet installed. Next move: smaller pair, different *questions* named by you first, then the opening question. Blocked sittings on useful-for-which-question before you ask for a paragraph. When you ask for the paragraph, require the finger on the source. If they retell, ask “so what are you claiming?” If they copy, cover the textbook and leave the shorter excerpt. Lee’s encyclopedia-as-referee is ordinary. It yields when the questions are visible.

3. The year is a slog of kingdoms, or presentism fills every silence, or a chatbot is writing the paragraph.

Coverage, rest, or a crutch. Next move: one civilization, one map, one ordinary life. One strange practice, one context question. Model closed during the attempt. If acceleration into a high-school World book was the plan, and the byline is still skipped, slow the book, not the child’s birthday. If Texas 2022’s contemporary-world year is the map, you already have permission not to tour the ancient list this year — teach people in a place and two accounts anyway. If California’s ancient year is the map, you already have permission not to finish every civilization — teach the moves in one place.

When to slow down. Byline still skipped. One-must-be-wrong still the default. Paragraph still a retell or a tool’s page. Period cards still treated as a quiz of centuries with no stories attached. Those are brakes. “Not ready” because of age is the brake this book will not use. “Not ready” because last chapter’s ask is missing is a real brake.

When to go ahead. Two accounts can both be useful, and the child can name a question for each. A paragraph makes a claim and points to a real source, unaided. A period (or a region) is a grouping tool this family can name. One civilization has been people in a place. One U.S. process has been allowed to take years. Presentism still appears — it is the mind at rest — and the child can stand a context question. Then high-school World History and U.S. History have somewhere to sit. Being “done with ancient” because a spine has four volumes is not a reason to

skip the paragraph.

When to get a human tutor. You have run the two-account sitting, or the unaided paragraph, or the folded byline, for a stretch of daily work, and the same diagnosis is still in the room, and the hour has become a fight. A tutor is a release valve. Keep yourself as the person who can still hear “which is true?” and a fluent page the child did not write. Outsourcing the hearing is the thing to avoid, not asking for help.

History does not automatically mint a citizen. A Flemish cluster trial that taught historical inquiry moved inquiry skills and did not show an overall improvement in democratic skills and dispositions; the authors described limited transfer from historical to democratic skills.⁹⁵ If civics is the aim, teach civics in its chapter, and point to *Publius* for a Federalist week. Teach this year’s looking because it is how history works.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you, the adult. The full rules live in the history-hour box in the front of this book. This chapter is a pointer.

The child looks, talks, and writes first. You hold the key. A tool may explain one periodization choice *to you* from a named textbook page; make an isomorphic map or timeline with answers hidden; write a hint script for a claim; or help you diagnose a paragraph already written. The child writes on paper. The two real sources stay on the table.

Leave these out of the hour: the essay written by a model; inventing a primary; “what happened” as the lecture; an unsupervised chatbot during the attempt; photo-to-key; a generated eyewitness. College Board’s AP exam terms, if this family later sits those exams, already forbid AI-generated exam work.⁹⁶ That is an op-

⁹⁵Marjolein Wilke, Fien Depaepe, and Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse, “Democratic Citizenship through Historical Thinking? A Cluster Randomized Controlled Intervention Study,” NOKSA 2022 conference paper (KU Leuven). Cluster RCT, Flemish history education; control N = 226, intervention N = 402; 12–14 lessons. Inquiry skills moved (B = 4.79); procedural knowledge of inquiry moved (B = 2.06); no significant overall improvement in democratic skills and dispositions. Authors: limited transfer from historical to democratic skills. Flemish secondary; not a U.S. homeschool trial. If civics is the aim, teach civics.

⁹⁶College Board, AP Exam Terms and Conditions for 2026 exams (updated 27 April 2026), Section 4: no part of test answers, work, or submission may be generated in whole or in part using

tional object, not this book's franchise. It lines up with the same split: the unaided page is the test.

Treat every model-supplied quotation, date, and "as an emperor wrote" as untrusted until you find it in a named book, archive, or textbook page.⁹⁷ A generated temple, battle, or "letter from a scribe" is fiction with a costume. Two minutes looking at a generated scene together can be a warm-up. Then it comes off. A named map or a named reproduction comes on.

Fluent paragraphs from a tool are performance, not the child's knowledge of the year.⁹⁸ The math study in the front of this book is still not a history trial. The crutch is still the sitting condition.⁹⁹ Detectors fail often enough that they are not a verdict on a child's paragraph.¹⁰⁰

Two labelled cards, three period cards, and a map are tools too. Use them, then fade the labels when the child can say the maker without the fold.

What "done enough" looks like

Placement is by skill, not birthday. A "grade 6 world" book is a publisher's scope, and on two coasts it is not even the same world. Story of the World, a textbook path, and a document-lesson library can place the same child in three different rooms. Choose by fit. The transcript, in these years, still usually says Social Studies. High-school World History and U.S. History are later titles. They are not a brand, and

any AI tools, including but not limited to ChatGPT. Optional transcript object, not this book's franchise.

⁹⁷William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, "Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT," *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045. GPT-3.5: 55 percent of citations fabricated; GPT-4: 18 percent. Of real citations, 43 percent and 24 percent had substantive errors, including wrong dates.

⁹⁸Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, "Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–199.

⁹⁹Hamsa Bastani, Osbert Bastani, Alp Sungu, Haosen Ge, Özge Kabakcı, and Rei Mariman, "Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning: Evidence from High School Mathematics," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base +48 percent assisted practice, then –17 percent unaided exam. Mathematics RCT; not a history trial. The sitting condition is the mechanism.

¹⁰⁰Weixin Liang, Mert Yuksekgonul, Yining Mao, Eric Wu, and James Zou, "GPT Detectors Are Biased against Non-Native English Writers," *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): 100779. Average false-positive rate 61.3 percent (published) / 61.22 percent (arXiv 2304.02819) on human TOEFL essays. One sentence in the tools box: do not police the child's paragraph with a detector.

they are not this year's paragraph.

Checklist before moving on

- The family can name, in one sentence, which middle-grade map they are using this year — California's ancient/medieval then U.S., Texas 2022's contemporary world then Texas then U.S., Virginia's U.S.-then-civics-then-geography, or another honest mix — and the child has still practiced world *and* U.S. moves.
- A period (or a region set) is a grouping tool. The child can put a story on a card and leave a story off, and say why.
- One civilization has been people in a place: a map, an object or named image, an ordinary life. Not a kingdom list.
- Two labelled accounts of one event can both be useful, and the child can name a question for each. "One must be wrong" has receded as the default.
- An unaided paragraph states a claim, points to a real source on the table, and names another view in a clause. No chatbot in the room.
- One U.S. process has been allowed to take years. One strange past practice has met a context question.
- When you ask, the byline still comes before the body. You still ask.
- You can hear "which is true?," bias-as-stain, "they were just stupid," a coverage slog, and a fluent tool-written page, and you can ask a good question without taking the claim.

If most of that list is true, go on to high-school World History as a path — without assuming two prior world years — even if the birthday says otherwise. If the birthday says "ninth grade" and the paragraph is still a retell, stay. The next chapter is a survey with a question, not a slog with a new spine.

A path through history is the promise. A culture-war win is not.

Chapter 4

World History



Figure 12: A kitchen-table still-life: an unbranded world outline map, two short document cards with attribution lines visible, a paper period bar, a closed pencil. No people, no logos.

Why this matters

High-school World History is how a student learns to put a story in a time and a place that is not theirs — and then to answer a real question from sources that actually exist. It is not a slog of every kingdom. It is not a brand. It is not an exam title unless you chose that exam.

That is worth the struggle because the rest of the high-school sequence hangs on it. U.S. History will ask the same looking, pointed at a national story. Government will ask it of a Constitution. Geography will ask it of a map. A year that races through a table of contents, never sits with two documents, and never lets the student write a claim with a named source is World History in name. Name the year by the regions you actually went into, the questions you actually asked, and the writing the student actually did.

There is no national world-history syllabus. California’s grade-10 course is *The Modern World*, late eighteenth century to the present, after two middle-school world years. Texas’s World History Studies is one high-school credit from “earliest times to the present,” and Texas’s own introduction admits the expanse: the course should focus on essential concepts and skills, not on covering everything.¹⁰¹ Virginia’s table splits world history at 1500 into two high-school courses.¹⁰² None of those maps is homeschool law. None of them is the other coast. If this family did not already spend two years on ancient and medieval world, you are not behind a national clock. You are starting a high-school survey. Teach the moves. Do not assume the California pair.

The registrar word is **World History**. NCAA’s sample transcript uses that ordinary title.¹⁰³ Never write a curriculum brand in the title column. Never write “AP

¹⁰¹California State Board of Education, *History–Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools* (adopted 9 October 1998; CDE Press 2000): grade 10, World History, Culture, and Geography: The Modern World. Texas Education Agency, 19 Tex. Admin. Code §113.42, World History Studies (One Credit), November 2022 SBOE Chapter 113 attachment: “Due to the expanse of world history and the time limitations of the school year, the scope of this course should focus on ‘essential’ concepts and skills that can be applied to various eras, events, and people... The major emphasis is on the study of significant people, events, and issues from the earliest times to the present.” Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026.

¹⁰²Virginia Department of Education, 2023 History and Social Science Standards of Learning course table (Board approval 20 April 2023): World History and Geography to 1500 A.D. (grade 9 on the table); World History and Geography: 1500 A.D. to the Present (grade 10 on the table). The table is a public-school map, not homeschool law.

¹⁰³NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. Sample titles include World History.

World” unless the student is actually sitting that course-and-exam. Story of the World Volume 4 is a narrative spine some families used in middle school. It is not, by itself, a high-school World History year, and Volume 1 is not AP World History: Modern.

AP World History: Modern is an optional College Board object. The current course runs from about 1200 CE to the present, in nine units on the course page.¹⁰⁴ It is an introductory college-level modern world history course. A Story of the World Volume 1 year is not this exam. Historical thinking skills on that page — sourcing, contextualization, claims and evidence, argumentation — rhyme with the looking this book already teaches. They are not a reason to turn this chapter into an AP prep book. Exam timing for the short-answer and long-essay questions is slated to change in May 2027; the course content, as of the page opened for this book, has not.¹⁰⁵ If the student sits the exam, College Board forbids AI-generated answers.¹⁰⁶ Credit is by college. A path through world history does not require the letters AP.

Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour. “Light rail excursions through mounds of factual information may be entertaining, but such dizzying tours leave few traces in memory.” Curriculum design, Wilfred McClay said, “must be an exercise in triage.”¹⁰⁷ Texas already said the same thing in its own World History introduction.

Course name on the worksheet should match the transcript title. Social science is a core area; Division I requires 16 core courses including 2 years social science. CLEP / credit-by-exam is not an NCAA-approved core course.

¹⁰⁴College Board, AP World History: Modern course page, <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-world-history?course=ap-world-history-modern>, accessed 31 August 2026. Overview: introductory college-level modern world history from c. 1200 CE to the present. Nine units on that page: The Global Tapestry; Networks of Exchange; Land-Based Empires; Transoceanic Interconnections; Revolutions; Consequences of Industrialization; Global Conflict; Cold War and Decolonization; Globalization. Historical thinking skills listed there include sourcing and situation, claims and evidence, contextualization, and argumentation. College Board course-and-exam. Credit by college. Full Course and Exam Description PDF not opened for this book.

¹⁰⁵Same AP history course pages, accessed 31 August 2026: “AP History Exam Updates for 2027... Course content has not changed.” Updates apply to AP European History, AP United States History, and AP World History: Modern.

¹⁰⁶College Board, AP Exam Terms and Conditions 2026, Section 4 (updated 27 April 2026): no part of test answers, work, or submission may be generated in whole or in part using AI tools.

¹⁰⁷Sam Wineburg, “Crazy for History,” *Journal of American History* 90, no. 4 (2004): 1401–14, quoting Wilfred M. McClay on triage. “Light rail excursions through mounds of factual information may be entertaining, but such dizzying tours leave few traces in memory.”

You will not finish the world. You will finish some questions, in some regions, with sources on the table.

This week you can learn why this survey starts where it starts, and how to hear a coverage slog as “we need a question and two sources, not another chapter.” Today the student can answer one historical question from two real short sources, pointing at where they agree or do not — model closed.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a historian. You do need to understand today’s idea well enough to hear a period name offered as an explanation, and a fluent paragraph whose sources no one in the house can open, not as cute slips.

Everyday picture. Think of a closet. If you dump every coat, photograph, and shoebox on the floor, you have coverage. If you hang this season’s coats and put last winter in a labeled box, you can find a thing. Periodization is the labeled box. “Medieval,” “early modern,” “c. 1200,” “after 1500,” “the modern world” are not laws of nature. They are ways of grouping stories so a mind can hold them. A different closet — a different map — hangs the coats differently. The coats are still the past. The hangers are a tool.

Precise picture. A *period* is a decision about where a story starts and stops. California’s modern-world course starts late in the eighteenth century because that map already spent grades 6 and 7 on earlier bands. Virginia splits at 1500. AP World History: Modern starts around 1200. Texas tries earliest-times-to-present in one credit and tells teachers to choose essentials. Name which map this family is using. Then use it as a tool, not a prison. If a question about the Mongol exchange needs a century before 1200, go get it. The start date is a door, not a wall.

A *region in depth* is one place, one question, two or three sources, a map, and a claim the student can point at. “East Asia” on a unit list is not depth. A week on how the Ming tribute system looked from a Korean envoy’s report, with a map of the routes, is depth. You will skip kingdoms. That is the triage, not a failure.

A *compelling question* is one the documents on the table can actually speak to. “What caused World War I?” is a semester. “Did this 1914 newspaper treat the July crisis as a local quarrel or as a general war — and how would we know?” is a sitting. The C3 Framework calls this an Inquiry Arc: a question, disciplinary tools,

sources turned into evidence, a conclusion.¹⁰⁸ C3 does not assign ancient world to grade 6, and it does not prescribe your content list. Steal the question shape.

Sourcing is looking at who made a document, when, and why, *before* reading the body.¹⁰⁹ *Corroboration* is comparing the details of one document with those of another before treating those details as fact. *Contextualization* is putting the event in a time and a place — which is why the map comes on the table when the story moves. Those three have names in Sam Wineburg’s language. The next chapter of this book, on U.S. History, will use them on a national story. The sources-and-discussion chapter will slow them down. This chapter needs them enough that two documents and a map are a normal hour, not a special unit.

A generated picture of a caravan or a palace is a scene to look at together. It is not a source. It has no maker in 1271. A model-supplied “as the emperor wrote” is untrusted until you find the line in a named book, archive, or textbook page.¹¹⁰

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. A period name offered as the explanation. “It happened because it was the Middle Ages.” “That’s just how the Renaissance was.”

What it usually means. The label replaced the story. Periodization became a prison. The student (or the hour) used a box-name as if it caused the coats.

What to say. “Medieval is our hanger, not their reason. Who in this source is doing what, in this place, and what would have to be true in *their* world for that to make

¹⁰⁸National Council for the Social Studies, *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013). Inquiry Arc of four Dimensions. C3 “intentionally preserves” content choices for states; it does not prescribe how a bill becomes a law or the difference between a map and a globe, and it does not assign ancient world to grade 6.

¹⁰⁹Sam Wineburg, “On the Reading of Historical Texts: Notes on the Breach Between School and Academy,” *American Educational Research Journal* 28, no. 3 (1991): 495–519; “Reading Abraham Lincoln: An Expert/Expert Study in the Interpretation of Historical Texts,” *Cognitive Science* 22, no. 3 (1998): 319–46 (three heuristics: sourcing, corroboration, contextualization). Daisy Martin and Sam Wineburg, “Seeing Thinking on the Web,” *The History Teacher* 41, no. 3 (2008): 305–19; sourcing as attribution *before* the body; historians sourced 98 percent of the time, AP high-school students 31 percent, citing Wineburg 1991.

¹¹⁰William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045. GPT-3.5: 55 percent of citations fabricated; GPT-4: 18 percent. Of the real citations, 43 percent (GPT-3.5) and 24 percent (GPT-4) had substantive errors, including wrong dates.

sense?”

2. Coverage as the year’s purpose. Forty civilizations named, two finished, no document on the table after October.

What it usually means. The table of contents won. Depth felt like falling behind. Texas already warned that the expanse will eat the year if you let it.

What to say. “We will finish this question in this region. Then another. The transcript will tell the truth about what we studied. A list of kingdoms we sped past is not a year.”

3. One true story. Two accounts differ, so one must be lying — or the textbook is “the” source and the letter is decoration.

What it usually means. The mind wants a single past. Historians use two accounts because they answer different questions, or because each is partial. AP-caliber seniors in a famous study still treated the textbook as the primary source.¹¹¹

What to say. “Can both of these be useful — and for which question? Who made each, and what could they see?”

4. Presentism in a modern voice. “They were just stupid.” “Any sensible person would have...” The past has been upgraded to a failed version of today.

What it usually means. Presentism is not a bad habit. It is the mind at rest.¹¹² The student needs the strangeness prompt, not a scold.

What to say. “What would have to be true in *their* world for this to make sense? We are not asking whether we would do it on Tuesday.”

5. A fluent essay whose sources no one can open. Diction jumped a grade. The “primary” is a diary a model wrote. The citations look real.

What it usually means. The work was outsourced. Language models invent titles, dates, and quotations. A generated letter from a sailor is fiction with a costume.

What to say. “Show me the object. Finger on the line. If we cannot open it, it comes off. You will write the claim with the sources on the table. The model stays closed.”

¹¹¹Wineburg, “On the Reading of Historical Texts” (n. 109): AP-caliber seniors treated the textbook as the primary source.

¹¹²Wineburg, “Reading Abraham Lincoln” (n. 109): presentism “is not some bad habit we’ve fallen into, but is instead our psychological condition at rest.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Write one sentence naming where *this family's* World History survey starts, and why. (Around 1200? 1500? Late eighteenth century? Earliest times, with essentials chosen?) If you cannot say why, you do not yet have a periodization tool. You have a default.
2. Open one short source you will actually use this week. Copy the attribution — who, when, what kind of document — above a blank space. Do not read the body yet. That blank is the sourcing move.
3. Write tonight's question in one line the documents can speak to. Star it if a map would help.

If those three are fluent for you, you can hear a slog and a fake source. That is the job. The student still does the looking.

How to teach it this week

Run the door before you call the year World History.

Is there a question? If the hour is “read chapter 14 and tell me what happened,” you have coverage. Write a question the sources can answer.

Are there real sources? If every “document” is a chatbot summary or a generated diary, stop. Two short, attributed excerpts. Then the map.

Can they source before the body? If they dive into the first sentence, cover the text. Who made this, when, why, for whom — then read.

When the gates are open, here is the shape of a sitting. Warm-up. Short model. Student attempt. One good question. Mixed practice. Exit ticket. The history hour at the front of this book already taught this shape. This chapter fills it with a world survey.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday's region on a blank map: three labels they already know. One “who made this?” on a source card they have already seen. One period name to place on the bar — and one sentence on what that name does *not* explain. No tool.

Short model (5–8 minutes). You put a map and two short sources on the table.

Think aloud: “Here is the question. Here is who made source A, when, and for whom — I am saying that before I read the body. Here is source B. Where they agree; where they do not speak; what I would still need. Here is the place on the map. My claim, which you could argue with, is _____. The because-link is this line in this source.” Keep it short. You are showing triage, not delivering a lecture on a century.

Fade as soon as you can. Second sitting: they explain your sourcing. Third: they source the second document while you watch. Fourth: they write the claim unaided, model closed. Include one incorrect example: a period name as a cause; a generated “letter from a courtier”; a textbook paragraph treated as if it had no author.

Exact wording you can steal.

On the start date: “Our survey starts here because that is the map we chose. If this question needs an earlier century, we will go get it. The date is a door.”

On a region: “We are staying in this place long enough to answer one question. We will skip a list of kingdoms on purpose.”

On sourcing: “Cover the body. Who made this, when, why, for whom? Then we read.”

On corroboration: “Where do they agree? Where do they disagree? Where do they simply not speak? Not speaking is information.”

On the map: “The story moved. The map comes on. What is near? What had to be crossed?”

On presentism: “What would have to be true in *their* world? We are not grading them on our Tuesday.”

On the chatbot: “If we cannot open it, it is not a source. A picture a model made is a scene to look at. It is not a document from that year.”

First problem for the student, after the model. One question, two real short sources, a map. Product goal on a sticky note: a claim in their own words, with a finger on a line, and one sentence on where the two sources agree or do not. Book or packet open. Model closed. You wait. Struggle before rescue. You do not summarize the documents for them. You do not finish the paragraph.

One good question. After the attempt: “If I hid the sources, would your claim

still know where it came from?” The student generates the why.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three short claims of the new type, unaided, after the fade — not five DBQs. Then mix: yesterday’s map labels, last week’s period bar, one “textbook paragraph versus eyewitness,” one “generated scene, then a named map.”

Exit ticket (5–10 minutes, unaided). One question, two named sources already on the table, a three-to-five-sentence claim. Tool closed. You grade the unaided ticket. A fluent essay with unopenable sources is performance. The claim that points is the test.

Every essay the transcript will claim needs an unaided draft the model did not open. That is the year, not a special integrity week. If they sit AP, the exam already says the same thing in its own language.

How to fade help. You source both documents → they explain one → they source the second → they write the claim → they choose the next region’s question with you. When they can name who-when-why without your prompt, put the cover-the-body scaffold away. Bring it back when a new kind of source arrives — a map with a cartographer, a later historian, a website.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You do not become the textbook. You hold the key: is there a question, two real sources, and a claim that points?

Activity 1 — One Region, One Question

Time. One history hour, or two if the sources are dense.

Materials. An unbranded world map or atlas; two or three short, attributed sources on one place (a letter, a decree, a traveler’s report, a later historian’s paragraph — labelled); a sticky note for the question. Digital Inquiry Group’s *Reading Like a Historian* world lessons are a free document path if you want a packet already built around a question; the catalog, on the day this book checked, listed 61 World History lessons.¹¹³ They are looking-move materials, not a year and not a brand

¹¹³Digital Inquiry Group, *Reading Like a Historian* lessons page, <https://inquirygroup.org/>, snapshot 31 August 2026: Intro 21; U.S. History 146; World History 61; History with Digital Literacy 26. DIG is a 501(c)(3) that spun out of Stanford in January 2024 (former Stanford History Education Group). Free document lessons; designed for classrooms. Transcript title remains World History. Organization homepage copy also says “over 160 lessons.”

for the transcript.

The fun of it. Staying put. The student gets to know a coast, a court, or a caravan well enough to argue. Skipping the slog feels like getting away with something. It is the work.

The skill it builds. Triage. One compelling question the documents can speak to. Depth instead of a kingdom list.

How to run it. Name the region. Write the question before you read. Source each document before the body. Then talk. Then a short unaided claim. You will not “do Africa” this week. You will answer one question in one place in Africa, or in one place in the Indian Ocean, or in one place in the Andes — wherever this year’s map actually is.

Activity 2 — Periodization Choice on the Table

Time. Twenty to thirty minutes, early in the year, then a five-minute return when the story crosses a line.

Materials. A paper strip (the period bar); index cards for the start dates you might have chosen: c. 1200 (AP World Modern), 1500 (Virginia’s split), late eighteenth century (California grade 10), “earliest times, essentials” (Texas). A pencil.

The fun of it. The student sees that grown maps disagree, and that disagreement is a tool, not a scandal.

The skill it builds. Periodization as a hanger. Naming this family’s map out loud.

How to run it. Lay the cards down. “Different surveys start in different centuries because they already spent time somewhere else, or because they are trying to do everything in one credit.” Circle the card this family is using. When a question needs an earlier century, walk left on the bar on purpose and say so. The bar is not a prison.



Figure 13: An unbranded world outline map on a table, a pencil pointing at a strait, no people, no logos.

Activity 3 — Two Documents, Corroborate

Time. Twenty-five to forty minutes.

Materials. Two short sources on the same event or question; attribution lines visible; a third blank card headed “what neither says.”

The fun of it. Catching a disagreement, or catching a silence, feels like detective work without a costume.

The skill it builds. Corroboration in Wineburg’s sense: details of one compared with another before accepting them as fact. The lesson *shape* is the Document-Based Lesson: a bit of background, then interrogation of multiple texts.¹¹⁴ That

¹¹⁴Avishag Reisman, “Reading Like a Historian: A Document-Based History Curriculum Intervention in Urban High Schools,” *Cognition and Instruction* 30, no. 1 (2012): 86–112. Quasi-experiment, 236 eleventh-graders, five San Francisco public high schools, six months. Copy the lesson shape (background, multiple texts, looking moves). Do not treat the study’s effect sizes as

shape was studied with eleventh-graders in San Francisco public schools. Copy the shape. Do not copy a coefficient onto your kitchen, and do not treat a downloaded packet as magic. Materials do not by themselves get a student talking.

How to run it. One or two sentences of background so the documents are not fog. Then source, then read, then: agree / disagree / do not speak. The student fills the third card. Then the claim.

Discussion box

Illustration, labelled as such: two short excerpts on a change of rule in one city — a proclamation and a merchant's letter. Composite table, not a reported family.

Opening. “Was this change a revolution for the people in this source — and how would we know?”

Not: “List three causes.”

Follow-ups (pick three to five). Who made this source, when, why? What does the other source say? What is near this place on the map? What would we still need? What would have to be true in *their* world?

How to wait. Three to five seconds after you ask. Three to five after they stop talking. Look at the source if the silence is hard. Wait time of that length is a finding from elementary *science* classrooms, not a history-score promise.¹¹⁵

Stuck silence usually means. The hour was a coverage dump with no document; the question was recitation of a period name; presentism has frozen them; or the model already summarized the sitting and there is nothing left to think. Recitation is the default in classrooms too.¹¹⁶

a kitchen-table promise or as civic virtue. Qualitative analysis: only nine whole-class text-based discussions in over 100 videotaped lessons.

¹¹⁵Mary Budd Rowe, “Wait-Time and Rewards as Instructional Variables, Their Influence on Language, Logic, and Fate Control” (NARST paper, ERIC ED061103, 1972). Elementary science classrooms; wait 3–5 seconds. Not a history-score finding.

¹¹⁶Martin Nystrand and colleagues, *Opening Dialogue* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997), and later CELA report (2001): authentic question = one for which the asker has not prespecified an answer. Dialogic spells in less than 7 percent of 1,151 eighth- and ninth-grade English and social-studies episodes. Classroom studies, not a homeschool trial.

Done enough. A claim with a named real source. An unaided draft if the transcript will claim the essay.

Practice that actually builds learning

Understanding and practice grow together. Practice a new move this week, with a model and a why. A stack of chapter quizzes with no document is assignment, not teaching.

Blocked, for a new move. The day a student first corroborates two sources, a short blocked set is honest: two more pairs, same move, different places. Same for a first unaided claim, a first period-bar choice, a first map-when-the-story-moves.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, mix: a map sitting, a sourcing sitting, a period-bar return, one “generated scene then named map,” yesterday’s claim rewritten without looking. Choosing *when* to go deep is part of the skill.

Brief retrieval. Yesterday’s region; the maker of Tuesday’s letter; the start date of *this* survey in five words. A short oral at the start of the hour. Period names that are not retrieved turn into wallpaper.

One incorrect example to diagnose. Show a fluent paragraph whose only source is “as the sultan wrote,” with no object in the house. Or a timeline that treats “the Renaissance” as a cause. Ask what they thought counted as a source, or as an explanation. Then an isomorphic claim, unaided, from two real cards.

Kitchen and travel can motivate. A family trip, a language the student is learning, a food with a trade history — those are doors into a region. They do not replace the unaided claim. A cookbook will not teach corroboration by itself.

Activity 4 — Map as Spatial Contextualization

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes, whenever the story moves. Not a geography course; that work lives in chapter 8.

Materials. Paper map or atlas; three questions on a card: where, what is near, what had to be crossed.

The fun of it. The story stops being a floating name. A strait or a desert becomes a reason.

The skill it builds. The spatial half of contextualization. Wineburg’s “where” as well as “when.”

How to run it. When the reading names a new place, stop. Map on. Finger. Three questions. Then back to the source. A blank map later in the week, eight numbers, your key hidden, is fair practice. The student never photographs the key into a chatbot.



Figure 14: A paper timeline or period bar with a few century marks, two document cards beside it, no people, no logos.

Activity 5 — Unaided Claim with a Named Source

Time. Fifteen to twenty-five minutes.

Materials. The two sources already used; paper; model closed; your key of what a good claim looks like, hidden.

The fun of it. The sentence is theirs. That click is the point.

The skill it builds. Argument from evidence. A DBQ is one AP-era shape for

this — a handful of documents, a claim, often a five-paragraph habit. It is practice a registrar may recognize. It is not the only way history is written, and historians who have looked at it have wanted more authentic purpose than the artifice.¹¹⁷ Use it as one move. Do not make it the year.

How to run it. Sticky-note product: one claim someone could disagree with; one named source; one because-sentence that is not a restatement; one clause on what the other source does. Tool closed. You are the reader: “I cannot find this in the cards.” You are not the co-author.

Activity 6 — Generated Scene, Then a Named Map

Time. Two minutes of looking, then the generated picture comes off.

Materials. Optional: a generated image of a port, a caravan, or a court — parent account, after the sources are already on the table. Then a *named* map or a named reproduction from a textbook, atlas, or archive.

The fun of it. Catching what the model invented. Students usually like being right about a mistake.

The skill it builds. A generated image is not a source. It has no maker in the year. Looking at it together, then putting it away, keeps the tool from becoming the document set.

How to run it. “What did the model get wrong — sails, clothing, the coastline, a building that belongs to another century?” Two minutes. Then the generated picture leaves the table. The named map or reproduction stays. If you never generate a picture, skip this activity. A named map is enough. Say the limit once: a picture a model made is a scene. It is not evidence from 1498.

If you sample AP-style short-answer items, treat them as a check on the same skills — a short source, a claim — not as the World History course. The unaided claim from real sources is still the kitchen object.

Set the product goal every sitting. Read the claim aloud. Check the trail. Then change one sentence — usually the because-link. Monthly: an unannounced

¹¹⁷Chauncey Monte-Sano and Sarah Thomson, “It’s Not That Simple: Re-Thinking Historical Argument and Document-Based Questions,” *The History Teacher* 55, no. 3 (2022). The DBQ was introduced as an AP assessment; responses tend toward a five-paragraph structure; not the only authentic historical genre.

miniature, sources in the room, tool closed.

For the student

World History is how you answer a question about people in a place that is not yours, using sources someone else could open. It is not a list of kingdoms, and it is not an exam brand unless you chose that exam.

A *period* is a hanger. “Medieval,” “modern,” “after 1500” are names we use so the closet does not dump on the floor. They are not why people did what they did. If a question needs an earlier century than our survey’s start, we go get it.

A *source* is an object you opened. Who made it, when, why, for whom — say that before you read the body. Then read. Then ask what another source says. If they disagree, your claim has to say so. If neither speaks to your question, that is information. You need a third source, or a smaller question.

A map is part of the thinking. When the story moves, the map comes on. What is near? What had to be crossed?

A picture a computer made of a battle or a palace is a scene to look at. It is not a source. It has no maker in that year. A quotation a computer invented is not a quotation.

Tiny worked example. Question: *Did this port’s trade look local or long-distance to the people writing these two sources?*

Source A (attribution already said out loud): a harbor master’s list of cargoes, dated, from this port.

Source B: a letter from a merchant in another city, same decade.

Claim: *To the harbor master, the trade looks like a list of nearby bulk goods; to the merchant, it looks like a delayed payment across a sea — so “the trade of this port” is not one fact until we say whose desk we are on.*

Because: *A list made for fees will catch volume; a letter about credit will catch distance and time. They can both be useful, for different questions.*

The because-sentence is not “because they disagree.” That restates the observation. The because-sentence is the rule about what each desk can see.

Try 1. Cover the body of one short source. Say who made it, when, and why. Then read. Then say what it wanted its first readers to do.

Try 2. Two real sources on the same question. Point to where they agree, disagree, or do not speak. Model closed.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why a period name is a tool and not a cause, and how you would check a quotation tonight without a chatbot.

Challenge. Answer one historical question from two real short sources, with a map on the table, in a paragraph someone could disagree with. Name the sources. If you cannot point at the lines, you are still in summary country. Stay there until the finger works.

You are allowed to struggle. A missing trail is information, not a verdict. Open the object. Write the claim. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 — there is no question, or no source. The student can recite a chapter title and cannot say who made a document. The “year” is a table of contents.

Next move. Stop the slog. One region. One question. Two short sources with attribution above the body. Talk before writing. A calendar-grade 10 student who cannot source a short document is not “behind in World History.” They are still in a taught-looking stage. The survey waits until the looking is prompted. Small inquiry can continue: one question, one source, oral credit.

Diagnostic 2 — a period prison, or a morality play. Every event is “because it was feudal.” Or every past person is stupid, or saintly. Or two accounts appear and the student insists one must be thrown out.

Next move. Put the period bar on the table and say what it cannot explain. Ask what would have to be true in *their* world. Practice “can both be useful — and for which question?” until that sentence is easy. Presentism is the mind at rest. You will ask the strangeness question more than once.

Diagnostic 3 — a fluent page the house cannot reopen. The essay arrived. The

diary is generated. The citations look professional.

Next move. Objects in the hands. Finger on the line. If it cannot be opened, it comes off. Unaided miniature, tool closed. A model-supplied emperor quotation is untrusted until it matches a named page. Detectors are not a verdict; the reopenable trail is.¹¹⁸

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear a period name offered as a cause, even after the five-minute warm-up. Or the student has weeks of two-source sittings, and the unaided ticket is still a dump or a blank. A tutor, a co-op, or a later dual-enrollment world-history survey is a normal plan. Stay the supervisor who can still ask “who made this?” Dual-enrollment social science is a *college* transcript object, distinct from this kitchen year.¹¹⁹ AP World History: Modern is an overlay, not a requirement; credit is by college.

When to go ahead. Questions are real. Two sources can be corroborated, including a silence. Maps come on when the story moves. Periodization is a tool the student can name. Unaided claims point at named sources. Then lengthen: a short paper with three sources; a second region in depth; an optional AP-style sitting if you chose that exam. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student looks. You hold the sources.

AI box — World History

Use a tool to explain *this week’s periodization choice* to you from a named textbook page, to generate extra map-label items with answers hidden from the student, to write a hint script that withholds the claim, or to diagnose a paragraph already written.

The student reads the sources and writes the claim. No “write my

¹¹⁸Weixin Liang et al., “GPT Detectors Are Biased Against Non-Native English Writers,” *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023). High false-positive rates on human TOEFL essays in that study. Detectors are not a kitchen verdict.

¹¹⁹National Center for Education Statistics, Digest Table 225.65 (2019 High School Transcript Study): among 2019 graduates, social science and history dual enrollment 8.7 percent; any dual enrollment 28.4 percent. All graduates’ transcripts, not a homeschool rate. Dual enrollment is a college course.

DBQ,” no invented primary, no unsupervised chatbot during the attempt, no “what happened” as the whole hour.

A model-supplied quotation, date, or “as the emperor wrote” is untrusted until it matches a named book, archive, or textbook page. Find it or drop it.

A generated caravan or palace is a scene to look at together for two minutes. It is not a source. Then it comes off the table.

An atlas, a library database, and a free document lesson are research tools. A chatbot list of “primary sources” is not. In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam.¹²⁰ That study is math, not a World History trial. The same crutch is available here. The unaided claim the next morning is the test.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 10 World History” book is a publisher’s or a state’s scope, not a legal grade and not a national sequence. Done enough is skill, plus regions actually studied, plus writing the student produced.

Checklist before moving on.

- Can name where *this* survey starts, and can use an earlier century on purpose when a question needs it.
- Stays in one region long enough to answer one question from sources, rather than naming a continent.
- Sources a short document (who, when, why) before reading the body.
- Corroborates two real sources: agree / disagree / do not speak.
- Puts a map on the table when the story moves.
- Writes an unaided claim with a named real source; the model did not open the draft the transcript will claim.
- Treats a generated image as a scene, not as evidence from the year.

¹²⁰Hamsa Bastani et al., “Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning: Evidence from High School Mathematics,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base: +48 percent on practice, -17 percent on an unaided exam. Math, not a World History RCT. The paper notes that creative subjects lack math’s objective scoring. The crutch still governs the history hour: the child attempts first; the unaided ticket is the test.

What can still be thin: every unit on an AP list; a second high-school world year; college-density textbooks. Those can travel. The slog of kingdoms with no document cannot count as done.

Transcript. Write **World History**. If the family used a narrative spine, a textbook survey, a classical pairing, or free document lessons *inside* the survey, the description can say so. The title is still World History. Never a brand. If the student sits AP World History: Modern, put the exam on a separate line. Safer kitchen practice is a readable title plus the score as an artifact.

NCAA counts social science as core; records will handle the worksheet. The year on the table is still World History.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know why our survey starts where it starts. I know what a coverage slog usually means. I know what to say tomorrow — a question, two sources, a map. The student still does the looking. We can do this.

Chapter 5

U.S. History



Figure 15: A kitchen-table still-life: a labelled public-domain document as an object, a closed textbook beside it, an unbranded outline map of the United States, a pencil. No people, no logos, no battle scenes.

Why this matters

High-school U.S. History is a survey as a path: a story of a country, told with documents on the table, so the student can make a claim a stranger could check. It

is not a culture-war pamphlet. It is not a contest to pick the good guys. It is not an exam title unless you chose that exam.

That is worth the struggle because adult civic life, and any later Government course, will assume the student has met the Constitution as an object and has practiced looking at a source instead of absorbing a single story. A year that watches a film, skims a chapter, and fills a packet of “causes” is U.S. History in name. Name the year by the documents that were actually read and the writing the student actually did.

There is no national cut point. Texas’s high-school course is United States History Studies Since 1877 — the second half of a two-year U.S. study that, on the 2022 map, began in grade 8. California’s grade 11 course is a twentieth-century story after a review of beginnings. Virginia’s table puts “Virginia and United States History” in grade 11 after a middle-school pair split at 1865.¹²¹ AP U.S. History, if you use it, runs from about 1491 to the present in nine period units.¹²² Teach the survey as a path without claiming every state cuts the century at 1877 or at 1900. Name the fork. Then pick this family’s path and stay on it long enough to think.

The registrar word is **U.S. History**. NCAA’s sample says American History — the same object.¹²³ Never write a curriculum brand in the title column. Never write “which history” as the course name.

The 2022 NAEP U.S. history assessment at grade 8 reported an average of 258,

¹²¹California *History–Social Science Content Standards* (1998): grade 11, United States History and Geography: Continuity and Change in the Twentieth Century. Texas 19 Tex. Admin. Code §113.41, United States History Studies Since 1877 (one credit), November 2022 SBOE Chapter 113 attachment; grade 8 on that map is colonial through Reconstruction as “the first part of a two-year study.” Virginia 2023 SOL course table: grade 11 Virginia and United States History, after U.S. split at 1865 in grades 5–6. Public-school maps, not homeschool law. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026. A 26 June 2026 Texas SBOE news release named new social studies TEKS and an 8th-grade Texas history capstone; grade-by-grade 2026 student expectations were not opened for this book. Name the live change; do not freeze either Texas map as eternal.

¹²²College Board, AP U.S. History course page, accessed 31 August 2026. Overview: introductory college-level U.S. history from c. 1491 CE to the present. Nine period units on that page: 1491–1607; 1607–1754; 1754–1800; 1800–1848; 1844–1877; 1865–1898; 1890–1945; 1945–1980; 1980–Present. College Board course-and-exam. Credit by college. Full CED PDF not opened for this book.

¹²³NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. Sample titles include American History. Course name on the worksheet should match the transcript title. Social science is a core area.

with 13 percent of students at or above NAEP Proficient.¹²⁴ That is context, not a homeschool report card, not a mandate to save the republic, and not “grade level” — NAEP itself says Proficient is not grade-level proficiency as other tests use the phrase. Then teach. The hour in front of you is a document and a question, not a national score.

AP U.S. History is an optional College Board object. Historical thinking skills on the course page rhyme with the looking this book already teaches. They are not a reason to turn this chapter into an AP prep book. Exam timing for some free-response questions is slated to change in May 2027; course content, as of the page opened for this book, has not.¹²⁵ If the student sits the exam, College Board forbids AI-generated answers. Credit is by college. A path through U.S. History does not require the letters AP.

A textbook is one account. It has authors, a publisher, a year, and a plot. It is not “straight information” sitting above history. Sam Wineburg’s study of AP-caliber seniors found they still treated the textbook as the primary source.¹²⁶ Put a document with a maker beside it. The kitchen-table hour is not a contest between one monolithic reading and another. A morality play from the left and a morality play from the right are the same kind of thinking: history as truth issued to be absorbed. Teach the year on the table.

History does not automatically produce civic virtue. If citizenship is the aim, teach Government next. This chapter teaches the survey.

This week you can learn the difference between a textbook paragraph and a document with a maker — and how to hear a morality play as “not yet thinking.” Today the student can source one real document (who, when, why) before reading the body, then say in their own words what it wanted its first readers to do — book open, model closed.

¹²⁴National Center for Education Statistics / The Nation’s Report Card, NAEP U.S. History Highlights 2022 and Fast Facts 1160, accessed 31 August 2026. Grade 8 average 258 on a 0–500 scale; 13 percent at or above NAEP Proficient; 60 percent at or above NAEP Basic. NCES: “the NAEP Proficient achievement level does not represent grade level proficiency as determined by other assessment standards.” National grade-8 sample, not a homeschool report card. Most recent U.S. history NAEP this book uses.

¹²⁵College Board AP history course pages, accessed 31 August 2026: exam updates for May 2027 short-answer and long-essay questions; “Course content has not changed.” AP Exam Terms and Conditions 2026, §4: no AI-generated exam work.

¹²⁶Sam Wineburg, “On the Reading of Historical Texts: Notes on the Breach Between School and Academy,” *American Educational Research Journal* 28, no. 3 (1991): 495–519.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a historian. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear a heroes-and-villains plot offered as analysis, and a fluent paragraph whose "primary source" no one in the house can open, not as cute slips.

Everyday picture. Think of a family argument about a road trip that already happened. One person has the gas receipts. One person has a text sent at the time. One person has the story they always tell at Thanksgiving. All three are accounts. The Thanksgiving story is the most fluent. It is not therefore the most complete. A textbook paragraph is often the Thanksgiving story: smoothed, plotted, useful, and still an account. A letter, a statute, a speech, a photograph is closer to the receipts. You need both. You do not replace the receipts with a different Thanksgiving story and call that thinking.

Precise picture. A *survey* is a path through a national story with a start and a stop you can name. Since 1877 is a path. A twentieth-century course after a review is a path. A full 1491–present course is a path. Coverage is still a map. Depth is still the hour. One question this week, against this family's cut point, beats a race through every heading.

A *primary document* is the raw material of the time under study — a letter, a law, a speech, a census table, a photograph, a map made then.¹²⁷ It is incomplete. It wanted something of its first readers. *Sourcing* is saying who made it, when, why, and for whom, *before* reading the body. *Contextualization* is putting it in a time and a place — which is why a U.S. map and a timeline still earn their keep. *Corroboration* is checking a second account before treating a detail as fact.

The Constitution on the table is an object, not a memorized clause list. The student should be able to point at a stretch and say, in ordinary language, what it is asking someone to do. That unlocks Government. It is also U.S. History: the document is in the story.

Presentism is the mind at rest. "They were just evil" and "they were just like us" are cousins. Ask what would have to be true in *their* world. The looking will not settle the past. Evidence trails are often indeterminate; teaching investigation

¹²⁷Library of Congress, "Getting Started with Primary Sources," accessed 31 August 2026: primary sources are "the raw materials of history — original documents and objects that were created at the time under study"; incomplete snippets; Observe, Reflect, Question. LOC is a curiosity scaffold. It is not Wineburg's sourcing-before-the-body.

surfaces that paradox rather than hiding it.¹²⁸ Do the looking anyway. Do not pretend the hour produced the one true story.

A generated “letter from a Civil War private” is fiction with a costume. A generated painting of a battle is a scene to look at together, not a photograph from 1863. It has no maker in that year. A model-supplied “as Lincoln wrote” is untrusted until you find the line in a named edition.¹²⁹

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. The textbook as the primary source. The student can recap the chapter and treats a letter as extra credit. Asked who wrote the textbook, they look blank.

What it usually means. School trained them to treat the book as the past. The book is an account. It can be a good one. It still has a maker.

What to say. “The textbook is one telling. Who made this letter, when, and what did they want their first readers to do? Then we will see what the textbook did with the same event.”

2. A morality play. Every sitting ends with who the good guys were. The question “was X a good person?” has replaced “what did this document want?”

What it usually means. The past has been hitched to a present need. Wineburg’s warning about a history of unalloyed certainties is about epistemology, not about banning a particular book.¹³⁰ You may read a critical survey or a traditional survey. You may not replace looking with a pole.

What to say. “We are not picking a team today. What did this document want its first readers to do, and what would another person in the room have said?”

¹²⁸Bruce VanSledright, “Confronting History’s Interpretive Paradox While Teaching Fifth Graders to Investigate the Past,” *American Educational Research Journal* 39, no. 4 (2002): 1089–1115. Evidence trails are indeterminate; teaching investigation surfaces that paradox.

¹²⁹William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045.

¹³⁰Sam Wineburg, as quoted in Stanford Graduate School of Education news (2012) from “Undue Certainty,” *American Educator: A People’s History* “substitutes one monolithic reading of the past for another, albeit one that claims to be morally superior.” Wineburg also called Zinn’s book an important achievement against textbooks that presented one view as certain. Page numbers in the original essay were not opened for this book. The load-bearing point is epistemology, not a ban.

3. Coverage as the year's purpose. Reconstruction to yesterday in thirty weeks of headings, no document after Columbus week.

What it usually means. The table of contents won. Triage felt like bias. It is teaching.

What to say. "This week's one question, against our cut point. We will skip some headings on purpose. The folder will show what we actually read."

4. Presentism in a national voice. "Any decent American would have..." The past is a failed version of the parent's politics, or of the student's.

What it usually means. The mind is at rest. Recitation of a culture-war sentence the parent already has is not discussion.

What to say. "What would have to be true in *their* world? We can still judge. We judge after we have heard them, not instead."

5. A fluent DBQ the house cannot reopen. Diction jumped. The soldier's letter was generated. The citations look real.

What it usually means. The work was outsourced. Performance is not learning.

What to say. "Show me the object. If we cannot open it, it comes off. You will write from the documents on the table. The model stays closed."

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Write one sentence naming this family's cut point (1877 / twentieth century after a review / full survey / another honest start). If you cannot name it, you do not yet have a path. You have a stack of books.
2. Open one short document you will actually use. Copy the attribution above a blank space. Do not read the body yet.
3. Write, in one line, what you think that document wanted its first readers to *do*. Star it if you could support that line from the first paragraph.

If those three are fluent for you, you can hear a morality play and a fake primary. That is the job. The student still does the looking.

How to teach it this week

Run the door before you call the year U.S. History.

Is there a document? If the hour is only the textbook, you have one account. Add a maker.

Is there a question the document can speak to? “Tell me about the Civil War” is a semester. “What did this 1862 order ask someone to do?” is a sitting.

Can they source before the body? Cover the text until who-when-why has been said.

When the gates are open, here is the shape of a sitting. Warm-up. Short model. Student attempt. One good question. Mixed practice. Exit ticket. The history hour already taught this shape. This chapter fills it with a U.S. survey.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday’s event on a timeline: one picture or one date they already own. One “who made this?” on a card they have seen. One fact-or-claim about the chapter (a date is a fact; “this speech won the election by itself” is a claim). No tool.

Short model (5–8 minutes). Document on the table, textbook closed beside it. Think aloud: “Here is who made this, when, for whom — before I read. Here is what it asked its first readers to do. Here is what the textbook paragraph does with this event that this source does not. My claim, which you could argue with, is ____.” Keep it short. You are showing an account next to an account, not delivering a lecture on a century.

Fade: they explain your sourcing; they source a second short excerpt; they write the claim unaided. Include one incorrect example: a heroes list; a generated soldier letter; a textbook sentence treated as if it had no author.

Exact wording you can steal.

On the path: “Our survey starts here. If this question needs an earlier decade, we will go get it. We are not racing every heading.”

On the document: “Cover the body. Who made this, when, why, for whom? Then we read.”

On first readers: “What did they want someone to *do* — sign, vote, enlist, obey, donate, change a mind? Point at the line.”

On the textbook: “What plot does this paragraph tell? What does it leave out that the document put in?”

On another person in the room: “Who else was there, and what would they have said? Famous people are not the whole institution.”

On presentism: “What would have to be true in *their* world?”

On the chatbot: “If we cannot open it, it is not a source. A picture a model made of a battle is a scene. It is not a plate from that year.”

First problem for the student, after the model. One short, attributed document. Product goal: who, when, why, then one sentence in their own words on what it wanted its first readers to do. Book open. Model closed. You wait. You do not paraphrase the speech for them.

One good question. After the attempt: “If this had been written for a different audience, which line would have to change?” The student generates the why.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three sourced documents of the new type, unaided, after the fade. Then mix: yesterday’s timeline, a textbook-versus-eyewitness pair, one Constitution clause as an object, one “not a morality play” pair.

Exit ticket (5–10 minutes, unaided). One document, already on the table: source it, then say what it wanted. Tool closed. A fluent essay with unopenable sources is performance. The sourced sentence is the test.

Every essay the transcript will claim needs an unaided draft the model did not open.

How to fade help. You source → they explain → they source → they write a claim from two accounts → they choose next week’s question with you. When who-when-why is habit, put the cover-the-body card away. Bring it back for a new genre: a law, a photograph, a political cartoon, a website.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You do not become a documentary voiceover. You hold the key: is there a document, a question, and a claim that points?

Activity 1 — Primary Document on the Table

Time. Twenty to thirty minutes.

Materials. One short, attributed excerpt (Library of Congress, a textbook's document feature, a public-domain speech, a statute). Attribution above the body. A cover slip of paper.

The fun of it. Handling the thing. A speech as an object feels different from a chapter about a speech.

The skill it builds. Sourcing before the body. The document as raw material, incomplete on purpose.

How to run it. Cover. Who, when, why, for whom. Uncover. Read aloud a short stretch. Then: what did it want its first readers to do? One caption sentence that uses a line as evidence. Digital Inquiry Group's U.S. History lessons are a free document path if you want a packet already built around a question; the catalog, on the day this book checked, listed 146 U.S. History lessons.¹³¹ They are looking-move materials, not a year. The transcript still says U.S. History.

¹³¹Digital Inquiry Group, *Reading Like a Historian* lessons page, snapshot 31 August 2026: U.S. History 146 lessons. Designed for classrooms. Transcript title remains U.S. History.



Figure 16: A labelled public-domain document on a table, attribution line visible, body partly covered by a slip of paper. No people, no logos.

Activity 2 — Survey as a Path, Not a Slog

Time. Fifteen minutes at the start of a unit, five minutes when you skip a heading on purpose.

Materials. A timeline strip for *this family's* cut point; sticky notes for this week's one question and for one heading you will not finish.

The fun of it. Permission to skip. Students can feel the year get possible.

The skill it builds. Triage. Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour.

How to run it. Point at the cut. “We are in this stretch.” Write the week’s question. Write one heading you will pass. Say it out loud so skipping does not feel like secretly failing. If you are on a Since-1877 map and a question needs 1866, walk left and say so.

Activity 3 — Textbook as One Account

Time. Twenty-five to forty minutes.

Materials. One textbook (or OpenStax, or a narrative survey) paragraph on an event; one eyewitness or participant excerpt on the same event, attributed.

The fun of it. Catching the plot. The book suddenly has a voice.

The skill it builds. The textbook is not the primary source. Both accounts can be useful, for different questions.

How to run it. Read the document first, sourced. Then the textbook paragraph. What did the book add, smooth, or drop? This is not a hunt for a villainous publisher. It is how accounts work.

Discussion box

Illustration, labelled as such: a short public-domain excerpt of a wartime order, and a textbook paragraph on the same week. Composite table, not a reported family.

Opening. “What did this document want its first readers to do — and how do we know?”

Not: “Was X a good person?”

Follow-ups (pick three to five). Who made this, when, why, for whom? What does the textbook do with this event that this source does not? What would another person in the room have said? What took years? What would have to be true in *their* world?

How to wait. Three to five seconds after you ask. Three to five after they stop. Look at the document if the silence is hard. That wait is a science-classroom finding, not a U.S. History score promise.¹³²

Stuck silence usually means. A culture-war sentence the parent already has; not enough of the story to think with; presentism; or the model already wrote the DBQ. Recitation is the default.¹³³

¹³²Mary Budd Rowe, wait-time paper (NARST / ERIC ED061103, 1972). Elementary science; 3–5 seconds. Not a history-score finding.

¹³³Martin Nystrand and colleagues, *Opening Dialogue* (1997) and CELA report (2001): authentic questions; dialogic spells in less than 7 percent of 1,151 episodes. Classroom studies, not a homeschool trial.

Done enough. An unaided claim with a named real source. If the transcript claims U.S. History, the folder holds work the child produced.

Practice that actually builds learning

Understanding and practice grow together. Practice sourcing this week. A stack of cause-and-effect worksheets with no document is assignment, not teaching.

Blocked, for a new move. Several short documents in a row, each sourced before the body, when that move is new. Same for a first textbook-versus-eyewitness pair, a first Constitution-as-object sitting, a first unaided claim from two accounts.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week: a timeline retrieval, a map when the story moves, a morality-play repair, yesterday's document with the attribution hidden for a moment. Choosing when the textbook is enough, and when you need a maker, is part of the skill.

Brief retrieval. Tuesday's maker; the cut point of this survey; one clause already pointed at. Oral, at the start of the hour.

One incorrect example to diagnose. A fluent paragraph that answers "was he a hero?" with no document. Or a generated camp letter. Ask what they thought counted as thinking. Then an isomorphic sourced sentence, unaided.

Activity 4 — Not a Morality Play

Time. One sitting.

Materials. Two honest, attributed accounts that complicate a heroes-and-villains plot of this week's story. Not a pile of outrage. Two makers who wanted different things.

The fun of it. The plot thickens without a lecture on bias.

The skill it builds. Complexity as courage to revise, not as a pose. You may still judge. You judge after looking.

How to run it. Source both. "What would each want us to believe? What would we still need?" Do not announce a winner. The product is a claim that lets a reader hear both, then a because-rule for this question.

Activity 5 — Constitution as an Object

Time. Twenty to thirty minutes. Repeat later when a clause returns.

Materials. A pocket Constitution or labelled public-domain pages; one clause the family will actually read; a pencil.

The fun of it. The famous document is suddenly a page with sentences.

The skill it builds. Institutions, not only famous people. Unlocks Government. In U.S. History, the Constitution is in the story, not a civics side quest.

How to run it. Point. Read a short stretch aloud. “What is this asking someone to do?” One ordinary-language sentence. You do not memorize the article numbers this week unless a later Government course wants them. You meet the object.



Figure 17: A simple U.S. timeline strip with a few dated marks and two document cards, no people, no logos, no campaign marks.

Activity 6 — DBQ-Shaped Practice as One Move

Time. Forty to sixty minutes, after sourcing is already habit. Not every week.

Materials. A handful of real short sources (three to five) on one question; paper; model closed.

The fun of it. The student feels the adult shape of the work — a set of documents, a claim — without needing the exam.

The skill it builds. Argument from a set. The DBQ is an AP-era assessment; it tends toward five paragraphs; it is not the only historical genre.¹³⁴ Use it as practice. Do not make it the year.

How to run it. Short background. Source each. Then an unaided claim with because-links to named sources, including a disagreement or a silence. You are the reader. You are not the co-author. If they cannot yet hold a paragraph, stay with one document and a caption. Writing without instruction toward claim-and-evidence does not grow the move by itself.¹³⁵

Kitchen and local history can motivate: a courthouse marker, a family letter, a state story. They do not replace the unaided sourced claim. A field trip will not teach first-readers by itself.

If you sample SAT Reading and Writing, treat a history-flavored passage as a *reading* object, not as a U.S. History exam.¹³⁶ The survey is still the kitchen year.

Set the product goal every sitting. Monthly: an unannounced sourced document, tool closed.

For the student

U.S. History is a path through a national story, with documents on the table. It is not a test of whether you picked the right side this morning, and it is not an exam brand unless you chose that exam.

¹³⁴Chauncey Monte-Sano and Sarah Thomson, “It’s Not That Simple,” *The History Teacher* 55, no. 3 (2022).

¹³⁵Monte-Sano and Thomson (n. 134): regular writing without instruction toward argument and historical thinking was not enough.

¹³⁶College Board, Digital SAT Reading and Writing: short passages from literature, history/social studies, humanities, and science. A reading object, not a U.S. History examination.

A *survey* has a start and a stop your family can name. Since 1877 is a path. A twentieth-century year is a path. A full story from early contact to now is a path. You will skip headings. That is how a mind holds a country.

A *document* is an object with a maker. Who, when, why, for whom — say that before you read. Then ask what it wanted its first readers to do. A textbook is one account of the same event. It can be useful. It is still an account.

Two honest sources can disagree. Both can be useful, for different questions. “Which one is true?” is usually the wrong first question. “What can each see?” is better.

A picture a computer made of a battle is a scene to look at. It is not a photograph from that year. A letter a computer wrote in a soldier’s voice is fiction. If you cannot open the object, it is not a source.

Tiny worked example. Document: a short public order, attributed, on the table.

Who / when / why: *a cabinet officer, this date, telling local officials what to do this month.*

What it wanted first readers to do: *post the order and collect a named tax by a named day — the verbs are in the last two sentences.*

Textbook paragraph on the same month: *tells a plot about a crisis and a speech. It does not mention the tax date.*

Claim: *If we only read the textbook, we hear a speech; if we read the order, we hear a deadline. Both can be useful. They are not the same job.*

Try 1. Cover the body of one short document. Say who made it, when, and why. Then read. Then say what it wanted its first readers to do, pointing at a line.

Try 2. Put a textbook paragraph next to that document. What did the book add, smooth, or drop?

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why a textbook is an account and not “the past,” and how you would check a Lincoln quotation tonight without a chatbot.

Challenge. Two honest accounts that do not fit a heroes-and-villains plot. Write a paragraph that lets a reader hear both, then your because-rule for this question. Model closed. If you cannot point at the lines, you are still in summary country.

You are allowed to struggle. A messy past is information, not a verdict on you. Open the object. Write the claim. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 — no document, or no path. The student can recite presidents and cannot source a paragraph. Or the year has no cut point and is a pile.

Next move. Name the cut. One document a sitting. Cover the body. Talk before writing. A calendar-grade 11 student who cannot source a short text is not “behind in APUSH.” They are still in a taught-looking stage. The survey waits until the looking is prompted.

Diagnostic 2 — a morality play, or presentism. Every answer is a team. Or the past is stupid. Or two accounts appear and one must be thrown out.

Next move. Change the opening question to first readers. Practice “what would another person in the room have said?” Put the Constitution on the table so institutions have a page. Ask what would have to be true in *their* world. You will ask it more than once.

Diagnostic 3 — a fluent page the house cannot reopen. Generated soldier letters. Invented quotations. A DBQ that appeared in twelve minutes.

Next move. Objects in the hands. Finger on the line. Unaided miniature, tool closed. A generated Gettysburg is not a plate. Detectors are not a verdict; the reopenable trail is.

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear a morality play, even after the five-minute warm-up. Or weeks of documents still produce a blank unaided ticket. A tutor, a co-op, or a later dual-enrollment U.S. History course is a normal plan. Stay the supervisor who can still ask “who made this?” Dual enrollment is a college transcript, not a homeschool rate you have to match.¹³⁷ APUSH is an overlay, not a requirement.

¹³⁷NCES Digest Table 225.65 (2019 HSTS): social science and history dual enrollment 8.7 percent of 2019 graduates — all graduates, not a homeschool rate.

When to go ahead. Documents are sourced before the body. Textbook paragraphs are treated as accounts. Claims point. The cut point is named. The Constitution is a known object. Then lengthen: a short paper; a second pass on a process that took years; an optional AP-style sitting if you chose that exam. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student looks. You hold the documents.

AI box — U.S. History

Use a tool to explain *this week’s cut point* to you from a named textbook page, to generate extra sourcing items with answers hidden from the student, to write a hint script that withholds the first-readers sentence, or to diagnose a paragraph already written.

The student reads the documents and writes the claim. No “write my DBQ,” no invented primary, no unsupervised chatbot during the attempt, no fake soldier’s letter.

A model-supplied quotation, date, or “as Lincoln wrote” is untrusted until it matches a named edition. Find it or drop it.

A generated battle scene is a picture to look at together for two minutes. It is not a source. Then it comes off the table.

A library, a National Archives or Library of Congress document, and a free document lesson are tools. A chatbot list of “primaries” is not. The unaided sourced sentence is the test. In mathematics, an unguarded chatbot helped practice and then hurt the unaided exam.¹³⁸ That study is math. The same crutch is available here.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 11 U.S. History” spine is a publisher’s or a state’s scope, not a legal grade and not a national cut point. Done enough is skill, plus documents actually read,

¹³⁸Hamsa Bastani et al., *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Math; GPT Base +48 percent practice / -17 percent unaided exam. The crutch still governs the history hour.

plus writing the student produced.

Checklist before moving on.

- Can name this family's cut point and walk earlier on purpose when a question needs it.
- Sources a short document before reading the body.
- Says, in their own words, what a document wanted its first readers to do, pointing at a line.
- Treats a textbook paragraph as one account, not as the past itself.
- Can hold two honest accounts without turning the hour into a morality play.
- Meets the Constitution as an object — one clause in ordinary language.
- Produces unaided claims with named real sources; the model did not open the drafts the transcript will claim.

What can still be thin: every AP period; a research paper on a historian (that is a documented paper, elsewhere); college-density. Those can travel. The unread famous list cannot count as done.

Transcript. Write **U.S. History**. American History is the same object. If the family used a Christian survey, a secular textbook, OpenStax, or free document lessons inside the survey, the description can say so. The title is still U.S. History. Never a brand. If the student sits AP U.S. History, put the exam on a separate line.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know a document from a textbook plot. I know what a morality play usually means. I know what to say tomorrow — who made this, and what did they want. The student still does the looking. We can do this.

Chapter 6

Government / Civics

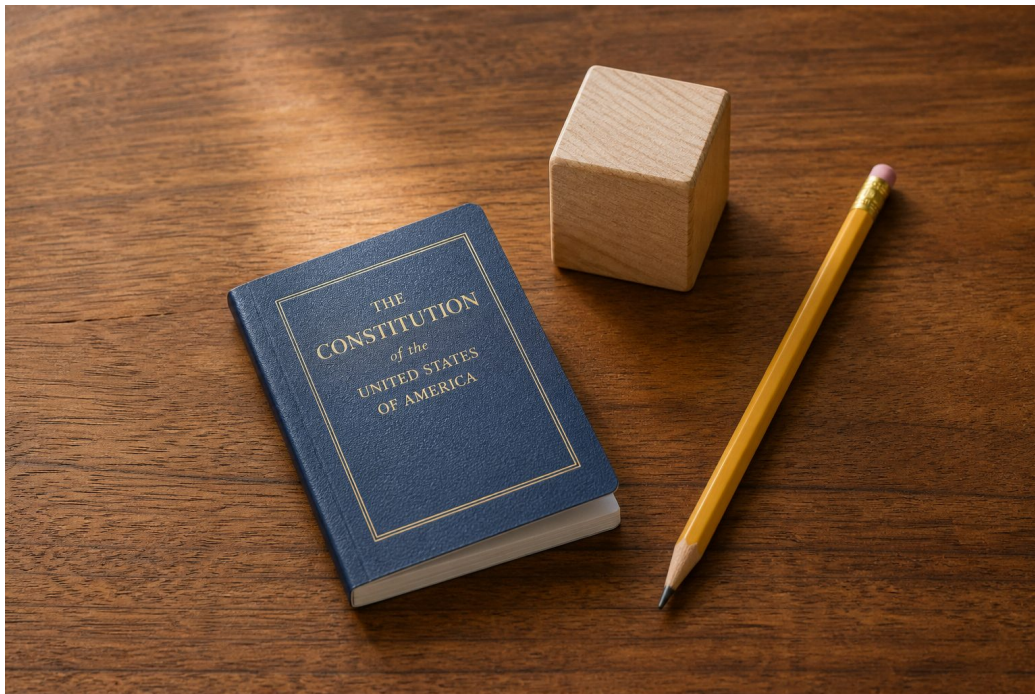


Figure 18: A kitchen-table still-life: a pocket Constitution or labelled public-domain pages, a three-branch diagram drawn by an adult hand, a plain closed bound book as a pointer object. No people, no logos, no campaign merch.

Why this matters

Government is a course a registrar already has a slot for. The student learns how a Constitution, an institution, a right, a bill, a court, and an election actually work, in ordinary language, with a real text on the table. It is not a pamphlet for a party. It is not a sequel to a book of Federalist essays. It is not a promise that last year's U.S. History minted a citizen.

That last sentence needs to be said once, because the research says so. A Flemish cluster trial of historical inquiry moved students' inquiry skills and did not, overall, move democratic skills and dispositions; the authors wrote of "limited transfer from historical to democratic skills."¹³⁹ If civics is the aim, teach civics. Then teach.

That is worth the struggle because adult life will assume it. A person who can source a speech but cannot say, in their own words, what a clause is asking someone to do, or how a bill becomes something a court could later read, is not yet done with this course. A year that memorizes branch names and never opens the document is Government in name. Name the year by the processes the student can actually explain, finger on a page.

Typical U.S. maps often make this a semester. California statute asks for a one-semester course in American government and civics among the social-studies graduation trio. Texas names United States Government as one-half credit. Virginia's table puts Virginia and United States Government in grade 12, and also names a middle-school Civics and Economics in grade 7.¹⁴⁰ None of those is homeschool

¹³⁹Marjolein Wilke, Fien Depaepe, and Karel Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Democratic Citizenship through Historical Thinking? A Cluster Randomized Controlled Intervention Study," NOKSA 2022 conference paper, KU Leuven, <https://www.abo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/NOKSA-2022-Wilke-et-al..pdf>, accessed 31 August 2026. Cluster RCT in Flemish history education (control N = 226, intervention N = 402; 12–14 lessons). Inquiry skills B = 4.79; procedural knowledge B = 2.06; no significant overall improvement in democratic skills and dispositions. Authors: "These results point to a limited transfer from historical to democratic skills." Not a U.S. elementary trial. Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), argue for history as preparation for a pluralist democracy; they do not present an RCT showing that inquiry produces citizens.

¹⁴⁰California Education Code §51225.3: three courses in social studies, including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; a one-semester course in American government and civics; and a one-semester course in economics. California *History–Social Science Content Standards* (1998), grade 12 opening: Principles of American Democracy, naming important historical documents such as the *Federalist Papers*. Texas 19 Tex. Admin. Code

law. A family may run a semester or a year. A family that already did a middle-school civics course still needs the high-school object if the transcript will claim Government. Steal the cluster. You do not have to steal a calendar.

The registrar words are **Government** or **Civics**. Never write a brand in the title column. Never write “good citizenship” as the course name. Never write Critical Thinking 101.

California’s grade-12 opening already names “important historical documents such as the *Federalist Papers*.” That is a pointer, not a sequel. For a Federalist week — the New York campaign, the 30–27 vote, authorship 51 / 29 / 5 — point to *Publius*.¹⁴¹ This chapter will not rewrite that book. One essay, one sitting, then the other book if the family wants the campaign.

AP U.S. Government and Politics is an optional College Board object with five units on the course page.¹⁴² It is an introductory college-level course. College Board maintains a list of required foundational documents; as of the page opened for this book, four additional documents were announced for 2026–27 without this handbook printing an invented list of titles.¹⁴³ If you use AP Government, use College Board’s current list. Credit is by college. A path through Government does not require the letters AP.

The 2022 NAEP civics assessment at grade 8 reported an average of 150, with 22 percent of students at or above NAEP Proficient.¹⁴⁴ That is context, not a score

§113.44, United States Government (one-half credit). Virginia 2023 SOL course table: grade 12 Virginia and United States Government; grade 7 Civics and Economics. Public-school maps, not homeschool law.

¹⁴¹Michael Gannotti, *Publius* (this series). New York ratification 30–27; later authorship attributions commonly divided 51 Hamilton / 29 Madison / 5 Jay. This chapter points; it does not re-litigate those counts.

¹⁴²College Board, AP U.S. Government and Politics course page, accessed 31 August 2026. Five units: Foundations of American Democracy; Interactions Among Branches of Government; Civil Liberties and Civil Rights; American Political Ideologies and Beliefs; Political Participation. College Board course-and-exam. Credit by college.

¹⁴³Same course page, accessed 31 August 2026, notes additional required foundational documents for 2026–27. The updated Course and Exam Description PDF listing those four titles was not opened for this book. Use College Board’s current list if you sit the course. Do not treat an older sample list as the 2026–27 list.

¹⁴⁴NCES Fast Facts 1160, U.S. History and Civics, accessed 31 August 2026. Grade 8 civics 2022: average 150 on a 0–300 scale; 22 percent at or above NAEP Proficient; 69 percent at or above NAEP Basic. NAEP Proficient is not grade-level proficiency as other tests use the phrase. National sample, not a homeschool mandate.

the hour must chase, and not a homeschool mandate. Then teach. Adult civic participation is the unlock, not a NAEP number.

C3 names civics as a disciplinary tool and includes “Taking Informed Action” in Dimension 4.¹⁴⁵ That language is not a homeschool service-hours requirement. A letter to a representative is a family choice.

This week you can learn how a bill, a court, or an election works in ordinary language, well enough to hear a famous-person story as “not yet the institution.” Today the student can point at one clause or one short Federalist excerpt and say, in their own words, what it is asking someone to do — then answer one follow-up without a chatbot.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a lawyer. You do need to understand today’s idea well enough to hear a branch name offered as an explanation, and a chatbot speaking “as Madison,” not as cute slips.

Everyday picture. Think of a household rule about the car. Who may propose a change? Who has to agree before it is a rule? Who interprets it when two siblings fight about what “back by dark” meant? Who enforces it on a Tuesday? If the answer is always “Dad decided,” you have a famous-person story. If the answer is “we wrote it down, both parents initialed it, and when we argued we looked at the paper,” you have an institution. Government is the second picture, scaled up, with a Constitution instead of a fridge note.

Precise picture. A *constitution* is a written set of rules about who may do what. The U.S. Constitution is an object. The student should be able to point at a stretch — not recite article numbers for their own sake — and say what it asks someone to do. Amendments are later written changes. A *right* in this course is a claim the document or a later amendment makes, which a court may be asked to apply. It is not a slogan.

The three branches, in kitchen language: **Congress** makes law (a bill that both houses pass and the president signs — or that Congress passes again over a veto

¹⁴⁵NCSS, *C3 Framework* (2013), Dimension 2 (Civics) and Dimension 4 (Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action). Taking Informed Action is C3 language, not a homeschool service-hours mandate.

— becomes a statute). The **president** executes: carries out, commands the armed forces as the document provides, appoints with advice and consent, and may veto. **Courts** decide cases: they do not “make a law” in the household-rule sense, but they say what a law or a clause means *in this dispute*, and a written opinion can guide the next dispute. That is ordinary language, not a reprint of any state’s “how a bill becomes a law” page. C3 left those particulars to states.¹⁴⁶ The move still belongs at the table.

An *election* is how some of those people get the job, for a term, under rules about who may vote and how votes are counted. The Electoral College is a constitutional mechanism for the presidency, not a personality. A primary is a party’s tool, not a clause in 1787. Say which is which.

Federalist essays were newspaper arguments for ratification, signed Publius. One essay on the table is a civics primary. The campaign, the New York 30–27 vote, and the authorship split 51 / 29 / 5 live in *Publius*. Point. Do not re-litigate those counts here.

Institutions, not only people. Students often tell history as a few famous minds changing other minds.¹⁴⁷ This course is where “who would have to agree” becomes the question. A president cannot be the whole story of a statute. A justice cannot be the whole story of a right.

A chatbot asked to “be Madison” is a companion persona. It is not a Founder. Point to *Publius*. The student reads an essay.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. Branch names with no document. “Legislative, executive, judicial” chanted. Asked what a clause asks someone to do, silence.

What it usually means. Labels replaced the object. The fridge-note never got written down.

¹⁴⁶C3 *Framework*, p. 14: the particulars of content — “such as how a bill becomes a law or the difference between a map and a globe” — are left to states.

¹⁴⁷Keith C. Barton, “Bossed Around by the Queen,” *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 12, no. 4 (1997): 290–314 (and related work): students often tell history as a few individuals. Exact colorful transcripts from classroom talk were not re-opened as page images for this book; the pattern is the load-bearing fact.

What to say. “Finger on the page. What is this sentence asking someone to do? If we cannot point, we do not yet have the branch. We have a vocabulary list.”

2. Famous-person government. “Lincoln freed...,” “Madison wrote...,” as the whole of how a thing happened. No house, no court, no vote.

What it usually means. The Queen-and-heroes habit from earlier history years is still running. Useful for a story. Not yet this course.

What to say. “Who else had to agree? What would have happened if this one person had stayed home? Show me the institution.”

3. A party as the answer. “Is this party right?” fills the hour. The document never opens.

What it usually means. Recitation of a sentence the parent already has. Nystrand’s name for a question with a prespecified answer is recitation. Discussion is a question you do not already have the sentence for.

What to say. “We can have our views. First: if this rule were a person, who would have to agree before it could become a law? What in the document makes you say that?”

4. Rights as slogans. “Free speech” with no amendment text, or a court case name with no excerpt.

What it usually means. The word has floated free of the page. A right in this course is something a text claims and a court might apply.

What to say. “Open the amendment, or open a short excerpt of the opinion. What did the text actually say? Then we can say what it does not say.”

5. Madison in the machine. A fluent explanation “in the voice of a Founder,” or a generated speech filed as a source.

What it usually means. The work was outsourced to a persona. Companion chat is not this course.

What to say. “Publius is a set of essays we can open. We will read one. The model is not a man in 1787.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Point at one clause in a pocket Constitution (or a public-domain page). Write one ordinary-language sentence: what is this asking someone to do?
2. Sketch one of the three processes — a bill, a court case, an election — in four boxes you could draw again at the table. Label who has to agree.
3. If this week includes a Federalist excerpt, copy the essay number and one sentence of what it is urging. If you want the campaign and the 30–27 vote, put *Publius* on the table as a closed pointer. Do not start rewriting it.

If those three are fluent for you, you can hear a branch chant and a persona. That is the job. The student still holds the text.

How to teach it this week

Run the door before you call the year Government.

Is the Constitution on the table? If the hour is a video about “how a bill becomes a law” with no text, you have a cartoon. Add the object.

Is there a process? Pick one this week: bill, court, or election. Do not dump all three in one sitting.

Can they speak ordinary language? If the only sentences are jargon, stop and translate. “Who has to agree?” is the test.

When the gates are open, here is the shape of a sitting. Warm-up. Short model. Student attempt. One good question. Mixed practice. Exit ticket. The history hour already taught this shape. This chapter fills it with a civics object.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday’s clause, said in one sentence without looking. One “which branch does this job?” on a card they have already seen — then “point at why.” One fact-or-claim (the president serves four years is a fact; “the president makes the laws” is a claim to repair). No tool. No persona.

Short model (5–8 minutes). Constitution open. Think aloud: “Here is the stretch. Here is who would have to agree. Here is my four-box flow of a bill (or a case, or an election). I am pointing at the page, not at a memory of a cartoon.” If a Federalist excerpt is this week’s object, source it as a newspaper essay: who, when, why, for whom, then one sentence of the argument in your words. Keep it short.

Fade: they explain your boxes; they draw the twin; they point at a clause unaided. Include one incorrect example: a chant of branches; a party slogan as the answer;

a chatbot “Madison.”

Exact wording you can steal.

On the document: “Finger on the clause. What is this asking someone to do, in words you would actually say?”

On a bill: “Who proposes? Who has to agree? What happens if the president says no? Where is that in the text, not in the cartoon?”

On a court: “What is the dispute? What text are they reading? What would the next person in a similar dispute actually get?”

On an election: “Who is on the ballot? Who counts? What does the Constitution say, and what is a later statute or a party rule?”

On institutions: “If this one famous person had stayed home, what would still have had to happen?”

On Publius: “This is one essay. If we want the campaign, the 30–27 vote, and who wrote how many, that is another book on this table, closed until we finish this sitting.”

On the chatbot: “The model is not Madison. We will read the essay.”

First problem for the student, after the model. One clause or one short excerpt. Product goal: one ordinary-language sentence of what it asks, plus one follow-up you ask and wait for. Text open. Model closed. You wait. You do not finish the translation.

One good question. After the attempt: “Who would have to agree before this could become a law — and what in the document makes you say that?” The student generates the why.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three clause-translations, unaided. Then mix: yesterday’s flow of a bill, one rights excerpt, one “institution not only a person,” one Federalist sentence in their own words if you pointed.

Exit ticket (5–10 minutes, unaided). Point at a clause. Say what it asks. Name who has to agree. Tool closed. A fluent speech the model delivered is performance. The pointed sentence is the test.

How to fade help. You translate a clause → they explain → they translate the next → they draw a process → they handle a Federalist excerpt as a source. When

ordinary language is easy, put the four-box template away. Bring it back for a new process.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You do not become a civics video. You hold the key: can they point, and can they say who has to agree?

Activity 1 — Constitution on the Table

Time. Twenty to thirty minutes. Repeat when a new clause arrives.

Materials. Pocket Constitution or labelled public-domain pages; one clause; a pencil. Depends on U.S. History having already made the document a known object. If it is not, this sitting *is* that meeting.

The fun of it. The famous pamphlet is a page with verbs.

The skill it builds. The Constitution as an object. Ordinary language.

How to run it. Point. Read a short stretch aloud. Student writes one sentence: what is this asking someone to do? Then one follow-up: who would have to agree? No article-number drill unless you need it later for a test the family chose.



Figure 19: A pocket Constitution open to a short clause, a pencil pointing at a line, a simple three-box flow on scrap paper. No people, no logos.

Activity 2 — How a Bill / a Court / an Election Works, in Ordinary Language

Time. One sitting per process. Pick one this week.

Materials. Scrap paper for four boxes; the Constitution or a short, named description of the process from a textbook page you can reopen; no viral infographic as the only source.

The fun of it. Drawing the flow. Students like boxes more than they like lectures about boxes.

The skill it builds. Institutions as sequences of agreement, not as names.

How to run it. You draw once, thinking aloud. They draw the twin from memory, then check the page. Repair one wrong box. If this week is a court, the boxes are dispute → text being read → decision in this case → what a later similar case can

use. If this week is an election, distinguish constitutional rules from party rules out loud.

Activity 3 — Federalist Week Pointer

Time. One sitting for one essay. More only if you open *Publius*.

Materials. One Federalist essay (or a short attributed excerpt); a closed copy of *Publius* as a pointer object.

The fun of it. Reading a newspaper war instead of a summary of Founders.

The skill it builds. A civics primary. Sourcing a ratification essay. A door into another book, not a rewrite of it.

How to run it. Source: newspaper, *Publius*, New York ratification fight. Read a short stretch. Student states the argument in one sentence of their own. Then: “If we want how New York voted 30–27, and how later readers divide the eighty-five essays 51 / 29 / 5, that work lives in *Publius*. We are not doing it in this hour.” Stop. Do not start a second essay because the first felt good.

Discussion box

Illustration, labelled as such: a pocket Constitution open to a short legislative stretch, and four boxes of a bill on scrap paper. Composite table, not a reported family.

Opening. “If this rule were a person, who would have to agree before it could become a law — and what in the document makes you say that?”

Not: “Is this party right?”

Follow-ups (pick three to five). Who made this document? Which branch does this job? What would a court actually do next? What did *Publius* argue in the essay we pointed to, in one sentence of the student’s own? What would have to be true in *their* world in 1787?

How to wait. Three to five seconds after you ask. Three to five after they stop. Look at the clause if the silence is hard.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸Mary Budd Rowe, wait-time paper (NARST / ERIC ED061103, 1972). Elementary science; 3–5 seconds. Not a civics-score finding.

Stuck silence usually means. A branch name with no document; a culture-war sentence the parent already has; or the chatbot “was Madison.” Recitation is the default.¹⁴⁹

Done enough. An ordinary-language account of one process, finger on a real text. Adult civic participation is the unlock, not a NAEP score.

Practice that actually builds learning

Understanding and practice grow together. Practice one process this week. A stack of branch worksheets with no Constitution is assignment, not teaching.

Blocked, for a new move. Several clause translations in a row when that move is new. Same for a first four-box bill, a first court sitting, a first sourced Federalist sentence.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week: yesterday’s clause, a rights excerpt, an “institution not only a person” repair, one election box that is a party rule rather than a constitutional one. Choosing which process is on the table is part of the skill.

Brief retrieval. Tuesday’s clause in five words; who has to agree for a bill; the essay number you pointed to. Oral, at the start of the hour.

One incorrect example to diagnose. A paragraph that names three branches and never points. Or a fluent “Madison” speech. Ask what they thought counted as Government. Then an isomorphic pointed sentence, unaided.

Activity 4 — Rights as a Document, Not a Slogan

Time. Twenty to thirty minutes.

Materials. One amendment, or one short excerpt from a named court opinion the family will actually read. Public-domain text.

The fun of it. The slogan gets a sentence. Students are often surprised by how short the amendment is, or how long the opinion is.

¹⁴⁹Martin Nystrand and colleagues, *Opening Dialogue* (1997) and CELA report (2001). Classroom studies, not a homeschool trial.

The skill it builds. A right as a claim in a text. What the text does not say is part of the learning.

How to run it. Source. Read. “What does this text actually claim? What would a court be asked to do with it? What is *not* in this paragraph?” One ordinary-language sentence plus one limit. You do not need a catalog of famous cases. You need one text this week.

Activity 5 — Institution, Not Only a Person

Time. Fifteen to twenty minutes, attached to this week’s story.

Materials. This week’s event or current process; the Constitution or a statute page; a sticky note headed “what no one person decided.”

The fun of it. The famous name gets company. The story gets larger without getting vaguer.

The skill it builds. Barton’s repair, now at civics age: government as more than people changing minds.

How to run it. Tell the story. Then: “What would still have had to happen if this person had stayed home?” Fill the sticky note. Point at a text if you can.

Activity 6 — Informed Action Is Optional and Local

Time. Zero to one sitting. Optional.

Materials. If you choose it: the address of a real representative, a real local issue, a letter the student writes in their own words. If you do not choose it: skip.

The fun of it. A real envelope, if the family wants one.

The skill it builds. C3 Dimension 4, named so you are not surprised. Not a mandate. Not a politics assignment from this book.

How to run it. If you do it, the looking still comes first: who is this office, what can it actually do, what text governs it. Then a short letter. Then stop. If the sitting becomes a pamphlet, close it. Teach the year on the table.

Kitchen and local government can motivate: a town meeting notice, a school-board agenda, a jury summons in the house. They do not replace the pointed clause. A field trip to a capitol will not teach “who has to agree” by itself.

If you sample AP Government items, treat them as a check on the same skills — a clause, a chart, a claim — not as the kitchen method. Do not print an invented extra-document list. Use College Board’s current list if you sit the course.

Set the product goal every sitting. Monthly: an unannounced clause, tool closed.

For the student

Government is how you explain a rule, an office, a right, a bill, a court, or an election in words a stranger could follow, with your finger on a real text. Civics is the same object with a slightly different course name. Neither is a party, and neither is a chatbot in a costume.

A *constitution* is a written set of rules about who may do what. Point at a sentence. Say what it is asking someone to do. If you cannot point, you do not yet have it.

A *branch* is a job, not a vocabulary word. Congress makes law. The president carries it out, with powers the document names. Courts decide cases and say what a text means in a dispute.

A *right* lives in a text — an amendment, a statute, an opinion — not in a slogan. Read the sentence. Then say what it does not say.

Publius was a name on newspaper essays arguing for the Constitution. If your family reads one essay this week, say what it is urging, in your words. If you want the whole fight — New York’s 30–27 vote, who wrote how many — that is another book. We will not pretend this chapter is that book.

A model is not Madison. A generated speech is not a Founder. If you cannot open the essay, it is not a source.

Tiny worked example. Clause on the table: a short stretch about how a bill is presented to the president.

Ordinary language: *Congress can send a bill; the president can sign it or send it back; if they still want it, they have to agree again in the way the text says.*

Who has to agree: *both houses, and then either the president or a second, harder agreement in Congress.*

Because: *the verbs are in the clause — present, sign, return — not in a cartoon I remember from a video.*

Try 1. Point at one clause. Write one sentence in your own words of what it asks someone to do. Text open. Tool closed.

Try 2. Draw four boxes for a bill, or a court, or an election — whichever you did this week. Label who has to agree. Then check the page.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone the difference between a famous person deciding something and an institution that would still have had to agree if that person stayed home.

Challenge. One short Federalist excerpt, sourced as a newspaper essay. State the argument in one sentence of your own. Then answer: who did Publius need to persuade, and how would we know from the text? If you cannot point, you are still in summary country.

You are allowed to struggle. A clause that will not translate is information, not a verdict. Open the object. Say who has to agree. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 — labels without a page. The student can chant branches and cannot translate a clause. Or Government is a video series with the book closed.

Next move. Constitution on the table every sitting. One clause. One sentence. Talk before any flowchart. A calendar-grade 12 student who cannot point is not “behind in AP Gov.” They are at the door. The exam waits.

Diagnostic 2 — people without institutions, or slogans without texts. Every answer is a president. Or every answer is a party. Or “free speech” with no amendment.

Next move. “Who else had to agree?” as the standing question. Rights sittings always open a text. Change the opening question away from “is this party right?” Presentism still happens in 1787; ask what would have to be true in *their* world.

Diagnostic 3 — a persona did the hour. Fluent Founder-voice. Generated speeches. A letter to Congress the model wrote.

Next move. Objects in the hands. Finger on the line. Unaided translation, tool closed. Point to *Publius* if you want essays. The model is not a man in 1787.

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear a branch chant, even after the five-minute warm-up. Or weeks of clauses still produce a blank unaided ticket. A tutor, a co-op, or a later dual-enrollment American government course is a normal plan. Stay the supervisor who can still ask “who has to agree?” AP Government is an overlay, not a requirement; use College Board’s current document list if you sit it; do not guess titles this book did not open.

When to go ahead. Clauses translate. One process can be drawn and checked against a page. Rights sit on a text. A Federalist excerpt can be sourced and restated. Then lengthen: a second process; an optional informed-action sitting; an optional AP-style check if you chose that exam. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student points. You hold the text.

AI box — Government / Civics

Use a tool to explain *one process* to *you* from a named textbook page (how a bill is presented, what a court does in a case), to generate extra clause-translation items with answers hidden from the student, to write a hint script that withholds who-has-to-agree, or to diagnose a paragraph already written.

The student reads the Constitution and writes the sentence. No “be Madison,” no generated Founder speech, no unsupervised chatbot during the attempt, no pamphlet the model drafted as a letter to Congress.

A model-supplied clause wording or “as Hamilton wrote” is untrusted until it matches a named edition. Find it or drop it.

For Federalist week, point to *Publius*. Do not ask a model to be *Publius*.

A pocket Constitution, a library, and one real essay are tools. A persona is not. The unaided pointed sentence is the test. In mathematics, an unguarded chatbot

helped practice and then hurt the unaided exam.¹⁵⁰ That study is math. The same crutch is available here.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 12 Government” packet is a publisher’s or a state’s scope, not a legal grade. Done enough is skill, plus texts actually read, plus processes the student can explain.

Checklist before moving on.

- Treats the Constitution as an object: points at a clause and says, in ordinary language, what it asks.
- Can explain one process — a bill, a court, or an election — as who has to agree, checked against a page.
- Treats a right as a claim in a text, not as a slogan.
- Can tell an institution from a famous person.
- Can source a short Federalist excerpt and restate it; knows *Publius* is the book for the campaign, 30–27, and 51 / 29 / 5.
- Does not outsource the hour to a Founder persona.
- Produces unaided work the transcript will claim; the model did not open those drafts.

What can still be thin: every AP unit; a semester of case law; a service-hours project. Those can travel. The chant of branches with no page cannot count as done.

Transcript. Write **Government** or **Civics**. If the family used a textbook, a Christian government course, or AP Government as an overlay, the description can say so. The title is still Government or Civics. Never a brand. If the student sits AP U.S. Government and Politics, put the exam on a separate line. Safer kitchen practice is a readable title plus the score as an artifact.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know how a bill, a court, or an election works well enough to hear a famous-person story. I know what to say tomorrow — who has to agree, finger on the page. The student still does the pointing. We can do this.

¹⁵⁰Hamsa Bastani et al., *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Math; unguarded chatbot raised practice scores and cut unaided-exam scores. The crutch still governs the civics hour.

Chapter 7

Sources and discussion



Figure 20: A kitchen-table still-life: two document cards with attribution lines visible, a kitchen timer, a slip of paper covering one body of text, an unbranded map corner. No people, no logos, no chatbot screens.

Why this matters

This chapter is the looking, named. The historian's moves are three: source, contextualize, corroborate. A ten-minute talk is how the student holds an idea instead of nodding while you hold it. A source on the table beats a paragraph about "being critical."

That is worth the struggle because every other teaching chapter in this book already pointed here. Grades 1–2 hung pictures. Grades 3–5 asked who made this. Middle school put two accounts on one event. World History and U.S. History asked for an unaided claim. Government asked for a finger on a clause. None of that is a second course titled Critical Thinking 101. Evaluation lives inside the history hour. Civic Online Reasoning — the digital-literacy curriculum — already lives in *Critical Thinking for Life*. Here you get one looking move, in kitchen language, and a talk you can actually run.

Historical thinking goes against the grain of how we ordinarily think.¹⁵¹ It is taught. It is not a personality, a percentile, or a birthday. Historians, in the study that named the three moves, looked at the attribution of a document *before* reading the body 98 percent of the time; AP high-school students did so 31 percent of the time.¹⁵² Sourcing is that looking. You will prompt it. Students rarely do it unasked.¹⁵³ Fifth-graders can investigate when an adult teaches the moves; they are not mini-historians.¹⁵⁴ High school is not too late and not automatic.

The free document path is Digital Inquiry Group's *Reading Like a Historian* (the materials formerly from the Stanford History Education Group). Each lesson turns

¹⁵¹Sam Wineburg, "Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts," *Phi Delta Kappan* 80, no. 7 (1999): 488–99. Historical thinking "goes against the grain of how we ordinarily think." Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026.

¹⁵²Daisy Martin and Sam Wineburg, "Seeing Thinking on the Web," *The History Teacher* 41, no. 3 (2008): 305–19, citing Wineburg 1991: historians sourced 98 percent of the time; AP high-school students 31 percent. Sourcing = considering attribution *before* the body. Sam Wineburg, "On the Reading of Historical Texts," *American Educational Research Journal* 28, no. 3 (1991): 495–519; "Reading Abraham Lincoln," *Cognitive Science* 22, no. 3 (1998): 319–46 (heuristics: sourcing, corroboration, contextualization, in the 1998 wording used in this chapter).

¹⁵³Keith C. Barton, "'I Just Kinda Know': Elementary Students' Ideas about Historical Evidence," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 25, no. 4 (1997): 407–30. Rarely spontaneous critical use of sources.

¹⁵⁴Bruce VanSledright, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically... and How Do You Teach It?," *Social Education* 68, no. 3 (2004): 230–33; and *In Search of America's Past* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002). Fifth-graders can investigate when taught; they are not historians.

on a central historical question and a set of primary documents.¹⁵⁵ On the day this book checked the lessons page: 21 intro materials, 146 U.S. History, 61 World History, 26 History with Digital Literacy. The organization also says “over 160 lessons.” Use a lesson as a looking-move packet. Do not title the year SHEG or DIG. Copy the *shape* of a Document-Based Lesson — a little background, then two or three texts, then talk — from the grade-11 study that tested it.¹⁵⁶ Do not copy a coefficient onto your kitchen, and do not treat a PDF download as the intervention. In that study, whole-class text-based discussion almost did not happen: nine times in more than a hundred videotaped lessons. Materials do not by themselves get a student talking.

If the source is a website, one looking move: leave the page.¹⁵⁷ New tab. Who is this maker? Then back to the history document. That is the whole digital lesson in this book. The rest is the other book.

Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources shares the table: Observe, Reflect, Question. Primary sources are “the raw materials of history — original documents and objects that were created at the time under study,” and they are incomplete snippets.¹⁵⁸ Observe-reflect-question is a curiosity scaffold. Sourcing-before-reading is a historian’s heuristic. They can share a sitting. They are not the same claim. For younger learners, the vocabulary can be see, think, wonder. This chapter is high-school looking with those tools still allowed.

This week you can learn three looking moves in kitchen language — who made

¹⁵⁵Digital Inquiry Group, *Reading Like a Historian* lessons page, snapshot 31 August 2026: Intro 21; U.S. History 146; World History 61; History with Digital Literacy 26. DIG independent 501(c)(3), spun out of Stanford January 2024 (former Stanford History Education Group; same team including Wineburg and Breakstone). Designed for classrooms. Transcript titles remain World History or U.S. History.

¹⁵⁶Avishag Reisman, “Reading Like a Historian,” *Cognition and Instruction* 30, no. 1 (2012): 86–112. Quasi-experiment, 236 eleventh-graders, San Francisco, six months. Copy the lesson shape. Do not copy η^2 values onto elementary or call them civic virtue. Transfer in that study was contemporary *sourcing items*, not civic virtue. Qualitative analysis: only nine whole-class text-based discussions in over 100 videotaped lessons.

¹⁵⁷Sam Wineburg and Sarah McGrew, “Lateral Reading and the Nature of Expertise,” *Teachers College Record* 121, no. 11 (2019). Leave the page: open new tabs to see who else is talking about an unfamiliar site. Civic Online Reasoning is a separate curriculum; pointer to *Critical Thinking for Life*, not a sequel here.

¹⁵⁸Library of Congress, “Getting Started with Primary Sources,” accessed 31 August 2026. Observe, Reflect, Question. Limits LOC writes: careful selection and lesson planning; sources are incomplete snippets. Not Wineburg.

this, what else says so, what was their world — and how to wait after the question. Today the student can cover the body of one short source, say who made it and when, then read, then say what else we would need — ten minutes, model closed.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a historiographer. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear a recitation question wearing a discussion hat, and a fluent annotation whose quotations no one can open, not as cute slips.

Everyday picture. Think of a group text about a canceled practice. One message is from the coach. One is from a parent who heard it in the parking lot. One is a screenshot with no name. You do not treat them as equal. You look at the sender first. You ask when it was sent. You check whether the second message matches the first before you skip the drive. That is sourcing and corroboration in a minivan. Contextualization is remembering that this team always posts late on Thursdays, so a 9 p.m. message is normal *for them*. History is that habit, pointed at a dead person's paper.

Precise picture. Wineburg's three heuristics, in his language, then in yours.

Sourcing is “the act of considering the source of the document when determining its evidentiary value.” In teaching practice: look at the attribution — who made it, how it came into being — *before* reading anything else. Kitchen: cover the body. Who, when, why, for whom?

Corroboration is that “the details of one document are compared with those of another before accepting such details as fact.” Kitchen: where do they agree, disagree, or not speak? Not speaking is information.

Contextualization is “the act of creating a spatial and temporal context for a historical event.” Kitchen: when, where, what is near, what had to be true in *their* world. Presentism — viewing the past through the present — is not a bad habit. It is the mind at rest.¹⁵⁹ The repair is the strangeness question, not a scold.

C3 says the quiet part: “sources do not, by themselves, constitute evidence.” Evidence is what you make when a source answers a question, including a question

¹⁵⁹Wineburg, “Reading Abraham Lincoln” (n. 152): presentism “is not some bad habit we’ve fallen into, but is instead our psychological condition at rest.”

it was not designed to answer.¹⁶⁰ A harbor list can become evidence about diet if you ask about diet. It cannot become evidence by sitting there.

A ten-minute talk is not a seminar brand. It is one object of joint attention, one authentic question (one you have not already written the answer to), wait time, three to five follow-ups, then stop. Wait three to five seconds after you ask, and three to five after they stop talking.¹⁶¹ That finding is from elementary science classrooms. It is a teaching move, not a history-score promise. Recitation — a question with a prespecified answer — is the default in classrooms; stretches of real dialogue were rare.¹⁶² There is no kitchen-table discussion trial in this literature. Borrow the move. Say it was a classroom study.

Accountable Talk, once, as a checklist, not a franchise: Did we listen? Did we say how we know? Did we connect the claim to the source on the table?¹⁶³

A model-supplied quotation is untrusted until you find it. A generated “primary” is fiction with a costume. Detectors are not a verdict on a student’s paragraph.¹⁶⁴ The reopenable object is.

¹⁶⁰NCSS, *C3 Framework* (2013), Dimension 3: sources do not, by themselves, constitute evidence. D2.His.11: maker, date, place of origin from information within the source. Peter Lee, “Putting Principles into Practice: Understanding History,” in *How Students Learn: History in the Classroom*, ed. M. Suzanne Donovan and John D. Bransford (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2005): evidence as answers to questions the source was not necessarily designed to answer.

¹⁶¹Mary Budd Rowe, wait-time paper (NARST / ERIC ED061103, 1972). Elementary science; mean wait about one second before intervention; 3–5 seconds associated with longer and more student talk. Not a history RCT.

¹⁶²Martin Nystrand and colleagues, *Opening Dialogue* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997), and CELA report (2001): authentic question = one for which the asker has not prespecified an answer. Dialogic spells in less than 7 percent of 1,151 eighth- and ninth-grade English and social-studies episodes. Classroom studies, not a homeschool trial.

¹⁶³Sarah Michaels, Mary Catherine O’Connor, Megan Hall, and Lauren B. Resnick, *Accountable Talk Sourcebook* (University of Pittsburgh Institute for Learning, 2010/2013). Talk accountable to the learning community, to accurate knowledge, and to rigorous thinking. Cross-subject sourcebook, not a history RCT.

¹⁶⁴Weixin Liang et al., “GPT Detectors Are Biased Against Non-Native English Writers,” *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): high false-positive rates on human TOEFL essays in that study (61.3 percent / 61.22 percent in the reported conditions). Detectors are not a kitchen verdict. William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045, on fabricated citations.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. Diving into the body. The student reads the first sentence, then argues. The byline was never said.

What it usually means. School trained them to start at the top of the paragraph. Historians start at the label. Thirty-one percent sourcing is the high-school default until you prompt.

What to say. “Cover the text. Who made this, when, why, for whom? Then we read. We will get to the sentences.”

2. Bias as a stamp that ends the work. “This is biased, so we throw it out.” Or “this is a primary, so it is true.”

What it usually means. Bias has been treated as a property that makes a source useless, or closeness to the event has been treated as a halo. Every source has a maker. Usefulness depends on the question.

What to say. “Biased for what? Useful for which question? What would we still need?”

3. Recitation in a discussion costume. “What are three causes?” “Which one is true?” You already have the sentence. They can hear that you do.

What it usually means. The question was not authentic. Silence will be filled, because it always has been, in about one second.

What to say. “I do not have a sentence in my pocket for this. Look at the source. What do you actually see?” Then wait. Look at the page if the silence is hard.

4. A worksheet that never becomes a talk. The packet is finished. No one spoke. Or you spoke.

What it usually means. Materials sat where discussion should have. Reisman’s classrooms had the packets and still almost never had the talk.

What to say. “The packet was preparation. Ten minutes now. One question. I will wait. Then we stop.”

5. A website believed from its About page. Or a generated letter filed as a source. Or a detector score treated as a grade.

What it usually means. They stayed on the page that wanted to be believed. Or the work was outsourced. Or a tool was asked to be a cop.

What to say. “Leave the page. New tab. Who is this maker? Then we come back. If we cannot open an object, it is not a source. I am not running a detector. I am asking for a trail.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Take one short source. Cover the body. Write who, when, why, for whom. Then uncover and read. Star anything you would have misread without the attribution.
2. Write tonight’s opening question — a how, why, or what-did-this-mean-to-them that you do *not* already have a sentence for.
3. Time yourself waiting five seconds after you say the question out loud to an empty room. It will feel long. That feeling is the point.

If those three are fluent for you, you can hear a recitation and a dive into the body. That is the job. The student still talks.

How to teach it this week

Run the door before you call the week “sources.”

Is there an object of joint attention? If the hour is a lecture about being critical, stop. Put a source on the table.

Is the question authentic? If you already have the answer in your mouth, rewrite the question.

Will you wait? If you cannot bear three seconds, the talk will not start. Practice the empty-room five.

When the gates are open, here is the shape of a sitting. Warm-up. Short model. Student attempt. One good question. Mixed practice. Exit ticket. This chapter is the discussion shape. Later chapters already used it. You can return here when a talk dies.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday’s source: who made it, from memory. One “cover the body” on a new card. One “agree / disagree / silence” on a pair they have seen. No tool.

Short model (5–8 minutes). Two cards. You source the first out loud before reading. You ask one authentic question. You wait, even though you are modeling — count. You show the follow-up order once: observation, source, what else, strangeness, revision. Then you stop talking sooner than feels polite.

Fade: they source the second card; they ask *you* a follow-up; they run a ten-minute talk with you as the waiter, not the speaker. Include one incorrect example: a recitation question; a dive into the body; a website believed from About.

Exact wording you can steal.

On sourcing: “Cover the body. Who made this, when, why, for whom? Then we read.”

On observation: “What do you actually see — a word, a date, a seal, a gap? Not what you think it means yet.”

On corroboration: “Where do they agree? Disagree? Not speak?”

On context: “What would have to be true in *their* world? When is this, and what is near on the map?”

On the talk: “I do not have a sentence in my pocket. I will wait.”

On a website: “Leave the page. New tab. Who is this maker? Then back.”

On a generated primary: “That is fiction with a costume. It has no maker in that year. Off the table.”

On stopping: “Ten minutes. We are done. You hold the idea. I am not going to summarize it back to you.”

First problem for the student, after the model. One short source, body covered. Product goal: who, when, why, then a read, then “what else would we need?” Ten minutes. Model closed. You wait. You do not fill the silence with a lecture on heuristics.

One good question. The opening in the discussion box below. The student generates the why. You do not narrate it.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two sourced cards, unaided. Then mix: a photograph with Observe-Reflect-Question plus one who-made-this; a pair to corroborate; a website leave-the-page; yesterday's claim revised.

Exit ticket (5–10 minutes, unaided). Cover, source, read, one “what else.” Tool closed. A fluent annotation with no object is performance. The sourced sentence is the test.

How to fade help. You source both → they source one → they run the follow-ups → they keep the idea when you stop talking. When who-when-why is habit, put the cover slip away. Bring it back for a new genre.

When to stop talking. After the question and the wait. The student holds the idea. A parent who last wrote a history paper in 2004 can still wait five seconds. Waiting is not the same as lecturing.

Activity 1 — Sourcing Before the Body

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes. Every other chapter's discussion box points here.

Materials. One short source; a slip of paper to cover the body; attribution visible.

The fun of it. The reveal. Students like being right about a maker they named before they read.

The skill it builds. Sourcing as attribution before the body. The 98 / 31 contrast, now as a kitchen habit.

How to run it. Cover. Who, when, why, for whom. Uncover. Read. “Would you have read that sentence the same way without the label?” One caption that uses the attribution as part of the meaning.

Activity 2 — Two Sources, Corroborate

Time. Twenty to thirty minutes.

Materials. Two short, labelled sources on one question; a third card headed “what neither says.”

The fun of it. Catching a silence. The third card is often the surprise.

The skill it builds. Corroboration in Wineburg's wording: details compared before accepting them as fact.

How to run it. Source each. Read. Agree / disagree / do not speak. Fill the third card. Then a claim, unaided. DIG lessons are a free way to get two documents already paired around a question. Use one. Do not download a year.

Activity 3 — Map + When (Contextualization)

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes, attached to the same sources.

Materials. Map; timeline or a date on the card; the strangeness prompt on a sticky note.

The fun of it. The document stops floating. A river or a decade becomes a reason.

The skill it builds. Spatial and temporal context. Presentism repair.

How to run it. When, where, what is near, what had to be crossed. Then: “What would have to be true in *their* world?” If they say “they were stupid,” that is the cue, not a character flaw.



Figure 21: Two labelled document cards side by side, attribution lines readable, a cover slip on one body, a timer at the edge of the frame. No people, no logos.

Discussion box — the template

Illustration, labelled as such: one short public-domain excerpt on the table, body covered at the start. Composite sitting, not a reported family.

Opening. An authentic how / why / what-did-this-mean-to-them about the source on the table, with no prespecified recitation answer. Example shape: “What did this mean to the person who made it — and how would we know?”

Not: “List three causes.” Not: “Which one is true?”

Follow-ups, in this order unless the source demands otherwise. 1. Observation. What do you actually see? 2. Source. Who, when, why — before we argue. 3. What else would we need? 4. Strangeness / presentism. What would have to be true in *their* world? 5. Revision. Do you still think that — what would change your mind?

How to wait. Wait-time 1: three to five seconds after you ask. Wait-time 2: three to five seconds after they stop talking. Look at the source if the silence is hard. Count if you must. It will feel too long. That is the work.

Stuck silence usually means. (a) Wait time has been too short for years, so they learned you will fill it. (b) The question was recitation in disguise. (c) They do not have enough of the story to think with — give two sentences of background and try again. (d) Presentism has frozen them — ask the strangeness question. (e) They can critique when asked but did not know you wanted the evidence connection. None of these is a verdict on character.

Accountable Talk, once. Did we listen? Did we say how we know? Did we connect the claim to the source on the table?

Done enough. Talk plus a sentence that uses an observation as evidence. High school: a claim with a named source. A worksheet completed in silence is not the talk.

Practice that actually builds learning

Understanding and practice grow together. Practice the looking this week. A stack of “be critical” posters with no source is not this chapter.

Blocked, for a new move. Several cover-the-body cards in a row when sourcing is new. Same for a first corroboration pair, a first ten-minute talk, a first leave-the-page.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week: a photograph (Observe-Reflect-Question, then who made this), a pair of texts, a website, yesterday’s claim revised. Choosing *which* move the object needs is part of the skill.

Brief retrieval. Tuesday’s maker; the third-card silence; the opening question from Thursday. Oral, at the start of the hour.

One incorrect example to diagnose. A finished packet with no talk. Or a fluent paragraph whose quotations are not in the house. Or an About-page evaluation. Ask what they thought counted as looking. Then an isomorphic ten minutes, unaided.

Activity 4 — Observe, Reflect, Question

Time. Fifteen to twenty minutes.

Materials. One photograph or object; LOC’s three words on a card; then one Wineburg question (who made this).

The fun of it. Looking before arguing. Younger vocabulary — see, think, wonder — still works when a picture is dense.

The skill it builds. Curiosity scaffold plus one historian’s heuristic. Parent says both names once: “Library of Congress taught us observe-reflect-question. Historians also ask who made this before we decide what it is worth.” They share a table. They are not the same claim.

How to run it. Observe first (only what is visible). Reflect (what you infer). Question (what you still need). Then: who made this? If you cannot tell, that is information. Do not treat a generated picture as a photograph from the year. If you use a generated looking picture at all, say out loud: this is a scene a model made. It is not a source.

Activity 5 — Ten-Minute Talk

Time. Ten minutes. A timer helps.

Materials. One object of joint attention already sourced; one authentic question on a sticky note; a timer.

The fun of it. The timer. Students can see that you will stop. That safety sometimes starts the talking.

The skill it builds. The student holds the idea. Wait time. Authentic question. Reisman's warning: a worksheet question is not the talk.

How to run it. Question. Wait. Follow-ups in the template order. Stop when the timer ends, even if it is going well. You may write one sentence they said. You may not take the idea back and lecture it. If they cannot yet talk, stay with a spoken caption. Do not invent a discussion RCT for your kitchen. Borrow Rowe and Nystrand as moves.

Activity 6 — If It Is a Website, Leave the Page

Time. Five to ten minutes. Then back to the history document.

Materials. One unfamiliar website related to this week's question; a second tab; this book's other title, *Critical Thinking for Life*, as a closed pointer if you own it.

The fun of it. Catching a maker. The About page suddenly looks like an advertisement.

The skill it builds. One digital looking move (Wineburg and McGrew 2019). Not five civic-online-reasoning chapters. Pointer, then back.

How to run it. Open. Leave. Search the name of the site or the author. Who publishes this? Who else mentions them? Come back. Decide whether it stays as a *source* for the history claim. Then put the history document back in the center. Do not let this sitting become a media-literacy course. MLA versus Chicago: pick one citation format for the year and keep it. Named fallacies, if a map wants them, live in English. This chapter will not become a logic textbook.

DIG's Beyond the Bubble assessments exist as optional checks of historical evidence (the organization says over 140).¹⁶⁵ They are not a franchise and not a

¹⁶⁵Digital Inquiry Group homepage, accessed 31 August 2026: Beyond the Bubble, assessments

homeschool requirement.

Kitchen arguments and family stories can motivate. They do not replace the unaided sourced sentence. A museum outing is a size-of-practice fact some families have; it is not the looking by itself.¹⁶⁶

Set the product goal every sitting. Monthly: an unannounced cover-the-body card, tool closed.

For the student

Sourcing is looking at who made a thing, when, and why, *before* you read it. Contextualizing is putting it in a time and a place — their world, not Tuesday. Corroborating is checking a second source before you treat a detail as fact. Those are how history works. They are not a separate course with a clever title.

A source is an object you opened. If you cannot open it, it is not a source. If a tool invented it, it is not a source. A picture a computer made of a battle is a scene to look at. It is not a photograph from that year.

A ten-minute talk is you holding the idea. Your parent will ask one real question and wait. That wait will feel strange. Use it. Look at the page. Say what you see. You are allowed to change your mind when a second source disagrees.

If the source is a website, leave the page. New tab. Who is this maker? Then come back. Then go back to the history document.

Tiny worked example. Card on the table, body covered.

Who / when / why: *a newspaper editor, this city, this date, arguing for a vote next week.*

After reading: *the first readers are voters. The verbs are “go” and “sign.”*

What else we would need: *another paper in the same city that week, or a letter from someone who was not trying to win the vote.*

of historical evidence, “over 140.” Optional checks, not a franchise.

¹⁶⁶NCES NHES:2023 (NCES 2024-113), table A-5: among homeschool students, 43 percent had visited an art gallery, museum, or historical site in the past month. Size of practice, not achievement.

Revision: *I thought this was a report. It is an argument. The attribution was the clue.*

Try 1. Cover the body of one short source. Say who made it and when. Then read. Then say what else we would need. Ten minutes. Model closed.

Try 2. Two sources. Point to where they agree, disagree, or do not speak.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why you look at the label before the body, and what you do if the source is a website you have never heard of.

Challenge. Run a ten-minute talk from the student side: you ask *one* follow-up of your own after the opening question, tied to a line on the page. If you cannot point, you are still in opinion country. Stay until the finger works.

You are allowed to struggle. Silence is part of the work. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 — no object, or no wait. The student can define “primary source” and cannot source a paragraph. Or you fill every silence.

Next move. Cover the body. Timer on. Count to five. Two sentences of background if they do not have enough story. A calendar-grade 11 student who cannot source a short text is not “behind in AP.” They are at the door. Reisman’s study was grade 11 and still had to teach the shape. You will too.

Diagnostic 2 — bias stamps, or recitation. Every source is “biased” and therefore trash. Or every question is “which is true?” Or they can critique when you demand it and never do it unasked — that is normal.

Next move. Useful-for-which-question. Authentic opening. Follow-up order on a card they can see. Barton’s finding: they rarely start this on their own. You will prompt. That is teaching, not a failure of independence yet.

Diagnostic 3 — a trail the house cannot reopen, or a detector grade. Generated primaries. Invented quotations. A website believed from About. A detector score.

Next move. Objects in the hands. Leave the page once. Finger on the line. Detectors fail often enough on human writing that they are not a kitchen cop. The trail is.

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear a recitation question, even after the five-minute warm-up. Or weeks of ten-minute talks still produce only nods. A tutor, a co-op seminar, or a librarian who teaches this skill is a normal plan. Stay the supervisor who can still wait five seconds and ask who made this.

When to go ahead. Who-when-why is habit. Two sources can be corroborated, including a silence. A ten-minute talk happens, with wait, without you holding the idea. Leave-the-page is one move, then back to history. Then return to World, U.S., or Government with the template in your pocket. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student looks and talks. You hold the source.

AI box — Sources and discussion

Use a tool to explain *one heuristic* to *you* from a named page (what sourcing means, why attribution comes first), to generate extra cover-the-body items with answers hidden from the student, to write a hint script that withholds the claim, or to diagnose a sourced paragraph already written.

The student sources, talks, and writes. No invented primary, no “write my annotated bibliography,” no unsupervised chatbot during the attempt, no detector as a grade.

A model-supplied quotation, date, or “as Lincoln wrote” is untrusted until it matches a named book, archive, or textbook page. Find it or drop it.

A generated letter or battle picture is fiction or a scene. It is not a source. Say so if you look at one together. Then it comes off the table.

A library, a LOC photograph, a DIG lesson, and a timer are tools. A chatbot list of sources is not. The unaided sourced sentence, after a wait, is the test. In mathe-

mathematics, an unguarded chatbot helped practice and then hurt the unaided exam.¹⁶⁷ That study is math. The same crutch is available here.

What “done enough” looks like

A “historical thinking” unit in a publisher’s book is a scope, not a legal grade and not a second transcript line. Done enough is habit, plus talks that happened, plus objects you can reopen.

Checklist before moving on.

- Sources a short document (who, when, why) before reading the body.
- Corroborates two real sources: agree / disagree / do not speak.
- Puts a time and a place on the event; can ask what would have to be true in *their* world.
- Can use Observe-Reflect-Question on a picture, then one who-made-this, without mixing the two claims.
- Holds a ten-minute talk: authentic question, wait, follow-ups, stop — the student holds the idea.
- If it is a website, leaves the page once, then comes back to the history document.
- Treats generated text and pictures as untrusted until matched to a real object.

What can still be thin: Civic Online Reasoning as a full curriculum (the other book); every DIG lesson; Beyond the Bubble as a testing system; college historiography. Those can travel. A lecture about being critical, with no source, cannot count as done.

Transcript. Do not write “Historical Thinking” or “SHEG” or “Critical Thinking 101” as a course name. The looking lives inside **World History**, **U.S. History**, or **Government**. Description: “primary documents; sourced claims; discussion.” Never a brand.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know three looking moves in kitchen language. I know how to wait. I know what a stuck silence usually means. The student still talks. We can do this.

¹⁶⁷Hamsa Bastani et al., *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Math; unguarded chatbot raised practice and cut unaided-exam scores. The crutch still governs the history hour.

Chapter 8

Geography and the present



Figure 22: A kitchen-table still-life: an unbranded paper atlas or outline map, a blue pencil line for a river, a blank numbered map face-down, a folded newspaper with a generic masthead. No people, no logos, no readable news UI.

Why this matters

Geography is how a story sits in a place. The present is history that has not settled. This chapter teaches maps, human-environment, and a current-events sitting that

looks instead of lectures. It also names **Geography** and **Economics** as optional transcript titles. It does not dump a year of either into an afternoon.

That is worth the struggle because World History already asked for a map when the story moved, and U.S. History already needed a place for a campaign or a river. A year that names continents from memory and never opens an atlas is geography in name. A dinner lecture about the news, with no looking move, is current events in name. Name the work by the maps that were actually read and the questions that were actually asked.

Geography is not a statutory high-school course on every diploma map. Texas World Geography Studies can fill the world-credit slot on the Foundation pattern described in the TEA Graduation Toolkit then in force. Virginia's table puts World Geography in grade 8. California's 2016 Framework names World and Regional Geography as a grade-9 elective, not as part of the statutory social-studies trio.¹⁶⁸ There is no national requirement that every high-schooler take a year of geography. Among homeschoolers in the last federal subject tables that published this split, geography as a current-year subject was a minority: 41 percent overall, 38 percent in grades 9–12.¹⁶⁹ That is a fit fact, not a scold. If this family wants the line, teach it. If this family puts maps inside World History and U.S. History, that is a path too. The transcript should tell the truth.

AP Human Geography is an optional College Board object with seven units on the course page.¹⁷⁰ It is an introductory college-level human geography course. It is not the kitchen method, and it is not required for a Geography title.

¹⁶⁸Texas 19 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 113, World Geography Studies (one credit); TEA Graduation Toolkit 2025 (indexed 31 August 2026) describing a Foundation pattern in which world history or world geography can fill a world slot. Virginia 2023 SOL course table: grade 8 World Geography. California Department of Education, *History–Social Science Framework* (2016), chapter 14: World and Regional Geography as a grade-9 elective; the statutory trio remains U.S. history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; one-semester American government and civics; one-semester economics (Education Code §51225.3). Public-school maps, not a national homeschool geography requirement. Access date for URLs in these notes: 31 August 2026.

¹⁶⁹National Center for Education Statistics, *Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2016* (NCES 2020-001), PFI 2016: geography taught that year 41 percent of homeschoolers overall; 38 percent among 9–12-equivalent homeschoolers. Social studies / history that year: 78 percent overall, 81 percent in 9–12. The 2023 First Look did not republish these subject-taught tables.

¹⁷⁰College Board, AP Human Geography course page, accessed 31 August 2026. Seven units: Thinking Geographically; Population and Migration; Cultural Patterns and Processes; Political Patterns and Processes; Agriculture and Rural Land-Use; Cities and Urban Land-Use; Industrial and Economic Development. College Board course-and-exam. Credit by college.

Economics, when a family wants it, is often a semester. California statute names a one-semester economics course in the social-studies trio. Texas names Economics with Emphasis on the Free Enterprise System and Its Benefits as one-half credit.¹⁷¹ Those are public-school maps. A later personal-finance add-on on a public-school diploma is not a homeschool requirement and is not this book's job. One sitting of scarcity and markets in ordinary language is enough for this chapter to *name* the optional title. The rest, if you want a full course, is a textbook or a later semester — not a dump here.

NCAA counts social science as core: Division I asks for 16 core courses including two years of social science.¹⁷² Records will handle the worksheet, the 10/7 rule, and proof of graduation. This chapter owns maps, place, and the present.

This week you can learn that a map is how you put a story in a place, and that today's news is history that has not settled — so we look, we do not lecture. Today the student can put this week's story on a real map, say what had to be crossed, then (if news) leave the page once to see who the maker is — model closed.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a geographer. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear a capital-name offered as place, and a generated map offered as the atlas, not as cute slips.

Everyday picture. Think of a grocery run. “The store” is a name. The actual job is: which road, what is next to it, what do you have to cross, why is the milk at the back, why did the strawberries come from farther than the eggs. Geography is that noticing, scaled to a river, a pass, a port, a drought, a border. Current events are the same noticing pointed at a story that is still moving, which means you do not yet have the textbook chapter. You have a maker, a place, and a lot you do not

¹⁷¹California Education Code §51225.3 (one-semester economics). Texas 19 Tex. Admin. Code §113.31, Economics with Emphasis on the Free Enterprise System and Its Benefits (one-half credit).

¹⁷²NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*, and Division I Initial-Eligibility fact sheet opened 31 August 2026: social science is a core area; Division I, 16 core courses including 2 years social science. Sample titles include Geography, World History, American History, Government, Western Civilization, Economics. CLEP is not NCAA core. Records chapter owns the worksheet, the 10/7 rule, GPA, and proof of graduation. Division II year-counts were not re-opened as a number for this book.

know.

Precise picture. A *map* is a picture of a place made by someone, for a purpose, at a time. It is already an account. Who made this map, and for whom, is a sourcing question. C3 treats geography as a disciplinary tool — location, place, human-environment, movement, region — and leaves “the difference between a map and a globe” to states.¹⁷³ You do not need C3’s numbering. You need the map on the table when the story moves.

Place is more than a point. What is near? What had to be crossed? What could not be crossed this season? *Human-environment* is the two-way: what the land and water made possible or costly, and what people did to the land and water. One river, one pass, one port, one drought this week beats a slog of capitals.

Current events as unsettled history means: one news item, one looking move (who made this; if a website, leave the page), then talk without a lecture. You will not settle it. VanSledright’s interpretive paradox still holds when the ink is wet: the evidence trail is incomplete. Do the looking anyway. Do not pretend the hour produced the last word.

A generated map can be a looking object for two minutes — what did the model get wrong about this coastline? Then it comes off. A named atlas or textbook map stays. A generated map is not a source. It has no cartographer in 1847, and it has no cartographer this morning either, in the historian’s sense.

This stream of research did not fetch a standalone trial that “maps in history class raise scores by X.” Put a map on the table because contextualization has a spatial half, not because a coefficient was promised.¹⁷⁴

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. Capitals as the course. Fifty names, no river, no “what had to be crossed.”

What it usually means. Place was reduced to a quiz. California’s fifty-states tool in an earlier grade is a tool, not a high-school purpose.

¹⁷³NCSS, *C3 Framework* (2013): geography as a disciplinary tool in Dimension 2; content particulars such as map versus globe left to states (p. 14).

¹⁷⁴No standalone map-cognition RCT in a history classroom was fetched for this book. Put a map on the table as the spatial half of contextualization (Wineburg 1998), not as a promised effect size.

What to say. “Name is a label. What is near this place, and what had to be crossed for this story to happen here?”

2. A floating story. The chapter names a city. No map comes on. The war, the trade, the drought happens in mid-air.

What it usually means. Coverage ate the hour. The spatial half of context was skipped.

What to say. “The story moved. Map on. Finger. Where, near, crossed.”

3. News as a lecture. You explain the world. They nod. No maker, no second tab, no map.

What it usually means. Recitation of a sentence you already have. Current events became a sermon.

What to say. “Who made this page? If it is a website, leave it. What would we still need before we treated this as settled history?”

4. A generated map as the atlas. The coastline looks right enough. The student cannot find the same strait in a named book.

What it usually means. The picture was outsourced. Performance is not a map skill.

What to say. “Two minutes: what did the model get wrong? Then this picture leaves. The atlas stays. Show me the strait on the named map.”

5. Economics as a dump, or as personal finance. A week of vocabulary, or a checkbook unit, swallows the chapter.

What it usually means. Optional titles felt like they needed to be finished today. This book named them as titles, not as this afternoon’s curriculum.

What to say. “Scarcity and markets in ordinary language, one sitting, if we want the line. A full Economics course is a later object. Personal finance is not this chapter’s job.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Open a named map of this week's place. Write three words: where, near, crossed.
2. If there is a news item, open it, leave the page, and write one sentence on who publishes it.
3. Write tonight's opening question: "What had to be true about this place for this story to happen here?" Star it if you do not already have a sentence in your pocket.

If those three are fluent for you, you can hear a capital-quiz and a lecture. That is the job. The student still looks.

How to teach it this week

Run the door before you call the year Geography — or before you fold maps into World History and tell the truth about that.

Does the story have a place? If the hour never opens a map, you have names. Add the picture of the place.

Is the present being settled too fast? If you are lecturing the news, stop. One item. One looking move.

Is the map named? If the only map is generated, you do not yet have a source.

When the gates are open, here is the shape of a sitting. Warm-up. Short model. Student attempt. One good question. Mixed practice. Exit ticket. The history hour already taught this shape. This chapter fills it with a map and, sometimes, a newspaper.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday's place on a blank outline: three labels they already know. One "who made this map?" if the atlas page has a credit. One "near or crossed?" No tool. No photo of your answer key.

Short model (5–8 minutes). Map on. Think aloud: "Here is the story. Here is the place. This is near. This had to be crossed. This river (or pass, or port) is why the story is here and not a hundred miles over." If news: "Here is who made this page. I left it. Here is what another tab said about the maker. We are not settling this today." Keep it short.

Fade: they point; they fill a blank map with your key hidden; they leave a page once. Include one incorrect example: a capital list; a lecture; a generated coastline

treated as an atlas.

Exact wording you can steal.

On the map: “The story moved. Map on. Where? What is near? What had to be crossed?”

On place: “What had to be true about this place for this story to happen here?”

On a map as an account: “Who made this map, and for whom? A map is already a choice.”

On news: “Who made this page? If it is a website, leave it. What would we still need before we called this settled?”

On a generated map: “What did the model get wrong? Then it comes off. Show me the named atlas.”

On economics, if you use the sitting: “Scarcity means you cannot have all of it. A market is how people trade what they have for what they want. That is today’s whole dump. We can do a semester later.”

On stopping: “We looked. We are not going to lecture the rest of the world tonight.”

First problem for the student, after the model. This week’s story on a real map. Product goal: where, near, crossed, in their own words, finger on the page. Atlas open. Model closed. You wait. You do not trace the route for them.

One good question. After the attempt: “If this place were a hundred miles inland, which part of the story would break?” The student generates the why.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three map sittings of the new type. Then mix: a human-environment river, a blank map with hidden key, one news leave-the-page, yesterday’s World History claim put on a map.

Exit ticket (5–10 minutes, unaided). One place, named map, three sentences: where, near, crossed. Tool closed. A generated map labelled perfectly is performance. The finger on the atlas is the test.

How to fade help. You point → they explain → they point → they fill a blank map → they leave a news page. When where-near-crossed is habit, put the three-question card away. Bring it back when a new kind of map arrives — a thematic map, a historical map, a weather map.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You do not become the evening news. You hold the key: is there a named map, and did they look?

Activity 1 — Map on the Table When the Story Moves

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes, whenever the story moves. Not a national geography credit by itself.

Materials. Paper map or atlas; three questions on a card: where, what is near, what had to be crossed.

The fun of it. The story stops floating. A strait becomes a reason.

The skill it builds. Spatial half of contextualization. Place as a tool inside history, and as Geography if you title the year that way.

How to run it. Stop the reading. Map on. Finger. Three questions. Then back. Repeat all year, including inside World History and U.S. History. This activity is allowed to live in those chapters. This chapter names it so you do not skip it.



Figure 23: An unbranded outline map on a table, a finger-width of river in blue pencil, a numbered blank map face-down at the edge. No people, no logos.

Activity 2 — Human-Environment in One Place

Time. Twenty to thirty minutes.

Materials. One river, mountain pass, port, or drought the family is actually in this week — from the history story or from a named news item; a map; one short attributed source if you have it.

The fun of it. The land does something. Students like a pass that explains a war better than a date does.

The skill it builds. Human-environment: what the place made possible or costly, and what people did back.

How to run it. Name the feature. Map. “What did this make easy? What did it make expensive? What did people build, plant, dam, or abandon?” One ordinary-language paragraph. Not a slog of biomes.

Activity 3 — Blank Map, Hidden Key

Time. Ten to fifteen minutes.

Materials. Outline map with 8 numbered sites from this week’s story; your answer key hidden (in a drawer, not on a screen the camera can see).

The fun of it. The small quiz that is actually retrieval. Eight is enough.

The skill it builds. Isomorphic practice: the same places, unaided. Allowed parent-side use of a tool to *make* the numbered blank, answers hidden from the student. No photo-to-key.

How to run it. They number. You check later from the hidden key. Mix in one “near” and one “crossed,” not only names. If a chatbot fills the map from a photo, that sitting does not count.

Discussion box

Illustration, labelled as such: a paper atlas open to a coast, and a folded news page whose masthead is generic. Composite table, not a reported family.

Opening. “What had to be true about this place for this story to happen here?”

Not: “Name the capital.”

Follow-ups (pick three to five). What is near? What had to be crossed? Who made this map, and for whom? If this is today’s news, who made *this* page — and what does another tab say about the maker? What would we still need before we treated this as settled history?

How to wait. Three to five seconds after you ask. Three to five after they stop. Look at the map if the silence is hard.¹⁷⁵

Stuck silence usually means. Recitation of place-names; a lecture filling the hour; or the chatbot already “explained the news.” Recitation is the default.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵Mary Budd Rowe, wait-time paper (NARST / ERIC ED061103, 1972). Elementary science; 3–5 seconds. Not a geography-score finding.

¹⁷⁶Martin Nystrand and colleagues, *Opening Dialogue* (1997) and CELA report (2001). Classroom studies, not a homeschool trial.

Done enough. A spoken claim tied to a named map or a named news page the child actually opened. Geography or Economics as a transcript line only if the work matches.

Practice that actually builds learning

Understanding and practice grow together. Practice where-near-crossed this week. A stack of capital worksheets with no story is assignment, not teaching.

Blocked, for a new move. Several map-when-the-story-moves stops in a row when that habit is new. Same for a first human-environment sitting, a first blank map, a first leave-the-page on news.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week: yesterday's World History claim on a map, a drought, a blank map, one news item, one "generated then named." Choosing when the present needs looking rather than a lecture is part of the skill.

Brief retrieval. Tuesday's river; what had to be crossed; who published Thursday's page. Oral, at the start of the hour.

One incorrect example to diagnose. A fluent news summary with no maker and no map. Or a generated peninsula that does not match the atlas. Ask what they thought counted as place. Then an isomorphic finger on a named map.

Activity 4 — Current Event as Unsettled History

Time. Fifteen to twenty minutes. Not daily unless you want it, and never as a lecture.

Materials. One news item the family is willing to look at; a second tab; a map of the place.

The fun of it. The present feels like the same job as last week's letter — because it is, except no one has written the chapter yet.

The skill it builds. Looking move from the sources chapter, pointed at ink that is still wet. Talk without a lecture.

How to run it. Who made this? If a website, leave the page. Map the place. What would we still need? Then stop. You will not settle it. A second sitting later in the week, on the same story, is fair: what changed, and who is saying so now?

Activity 5 — Generated Map, Then a Named Map

Time. Two minutes of looking, then the generated picture comes off.

Materials. Optional generated map, parent account, after a named atlas is already in the room. Then the atlas.

The fun of it. Catching a wrong coastline. Students like being right about a machine's mistake.

The skill it builds. A generated map is not a source. Looking, then putting it away.

How to run it. “What did the model get wrong?” Two minutes. Off the table. Finger on the named map. If you never generate a map, skip this activity. The atlas is enough. Say the limit once: a picture a model made is a scene. It is not evidence from 1847 or from this morning.

Activity 6 — Optional Economics as a Transcript Title

Time. One sitting if you want the line. Not a dump.

Materials. A kitchen example of scarcity (only so much milk, only so much time); a named textbook page if you have one, for markets in ordinary language. Not a personal-finance workbook as this book's job.

The fun of it. The household already knows scarcity. Giving it a calm name is satisfying.

The skill it builds. Enough ordinary language to mean an **Economics** title honestly if you later run a semester. Not HB 27, not a California personal-finance add-on, not a homeschool mandate.¹⁷⁷

How to run it. Scarcity: you cannot have all of it, so you choose. Markets: people trade what they have for what they want, at a price that moves. One because-sentence each, from a kitchen example and, if you have it, a named page. Then stop. If you want a full course, choose a textbook later and transcript Economics.

¹⁷⁷Texas public-school mixes of economics and personal finance (including legislation discussed as HB 27 in some 2020s diploma conversations) and California's later personal-finance graduation add-on are public-school diploma objects. They are not homeschool requirements and are not this chapter's course. California ethnic-studies add-ons likewise.

Combining a little economics into Government or Geography does not authorize a franken-title. The transcript still says the work that was done.

Kitchen travel, weather, and a museum map can motivate. They do not replace the unaided finger on a named atlas. A family outing is not the course.

If you sample AP Human Geography items, treat them as a check on place and data, not as seven units dumped into the kitchen. The seven unit names exist on the course page if you need them; they are not this week's method.

Set the product goal every sitting. Monthly: an unannounced blank map of places already taught, tool closed, key hidden.

For the student

Geography is how you put a story in a place. The present is history that has not settled yet — so you look, you do not pretend you already have the last chapter.

A map is a picture of a place, made by someone. Who made it, and for whom, matters. When the story moves, the map comes on. Where? What is near? What had to be crossed?

A river, a pass, a port, or a drought can explain a story better than a capital name. That is human-environment: what the place made possible, and what people did to the place.

If you are looking at today's news, who made this page? If it is a website, leave it. New tab. Then come back. Then say what you would still need before you treated the story as settled. You will not finish the present in one sitting. That is the point.

A map a computer made is a scene to look at. It is not an atlas. Two minutes, then the named map.

Economics, if your family wants that title, starts as two ordinary ideas: you cannot have all of it (scarcity), and people trade (markets). A full course is later. A checkbook is not this chapter.

Tiny worked example. Story: *grain moving out of a port in a dry year.*

Where: *this coast, this harbor, on the named atlas, not on a memory.*

Near: *a river that brings the grain down; a sea lane out.*

Crossed: *the bar at the river mouth; open water; a border if the buyer is in another country.*

What had to be true: *the river had to be high enough to float the load, or the story is a different port.*

If this were news today: *who published the page, left once, and we still would not call the drought “over.”*

Try 1. Put this week’s story on a real map. Say what had to be crossed. Atlas open. Tool closed.

Try 2. If there is news, leave the page once. In three sentences: who made it, what another tab said about the maker, what you would still need.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why a capital name is not a place yet, and why today’s news is not settled history.

Challenge. One human-environment sitting: a river, pass, port, or drought. Write a paragraph on what the place made easy or expensive, finger on a named map. If you cannot point, you are still in name country.

You are allowed to struggle. A blank map is information, not a verdict. Open the atlas. Leave the page. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn’t clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 — names without a place. The student can list capitals and cannot say what had to be crossed. Or the history year never opens a map.

Next move. Map on every time the story moves. Three questions only. A calendar-grade 9 student who cannot point at a coast is not “behind in AP Human Geography.” They are at the door. The elective waits. Maps inside World History still count as looking.

Diagnostic 2 — lectures, or generated coastlines. News is a sermon. Or the only good map appeared in twelve seconds from a model.

Next move. One item. Leave the page. Timer on the talk. Generated map for two

minutes, then off. Unaided finger on a named atlas. If they cannot talk yet, stay with where-near-crossed spoken, not a paper.

Diagnostic 3 — titles that do not match work. The transcript says Geography and the folder is three capital quizzes. Or Economics and the folder is a brand workbook you never opened. Or personal finance wearing an Economics hat.

Next move. Tell the truth on the transcript. Add map work, or take the title off. A full Economics semester is a later object if you want it. This chapter will not become that semester overnight.

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear a floating story, even after the five-minute warm-up. Or weeks of maps still produce a blank unaided outline. A tutor, a co-op, or a later dual-enrollment geography or economics course is a normal plan. Stay the supervisor who can still put the atlas on the table. AP Human Geography is an overlay, not a requirement.

When to go ahead. Maps come on when the story moves. Where-near-crossed is habit. News is looked at, not lectured. A generated map is never the source. Then lengthen: a Geography semester if you want the line; an Economics semester if you want that line; more human-environment depth in the history years you already run. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student looks at a named map. You hold the key.

AI box — Geography and the present

Use a tool to explain *this week's place to you* from a named atlas page, to generate a blank numbered map with answers hidden from the student, to write a hint script that withholds what-had-to-be-crossed, or to diagnose a paragraph already written.

The student points at the named map and talks. No photo-to-key, no unsupervised chatbot during the attempt, no “explain the news” as the whole hour, no generated map filed as a source.

A model-supplied border, date, or quotation is untrusted until it matches a named atlas, textbook, or news page the family opened.

Find it or drop it.¹⁷⁸

A generated map is a scene to look at together for two minutes. It is not a source. Then it comes off the table.

An atlas, a library, and a second tab are tools. A chatbot weather lecture is not. The unaided finger on a named map is the test. In mathematics, an unguarded chatbot helped practice and then hurt the unaided exam.¹⁷⁹ That study is math. The same crutch is available here.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 9 World Geography” elective is a publisher’s or a state’s scope, not a legal grade and not a national requirement. Done enough is habit, plus maps actually used, plus looking at the present without a lecture.

Checklist before moving on.

- Puts a named map on the table when the story moves.
- Can say where, what is near, and what had to be crossed, pointing.
- Can do one human-environment sitting on a river, pass, port, or drought.
- Treats a map as an account (who made it, for whom) when the credit is there to read.
- Treats current events as unsettled history: who made this, leave the page if it is a website, what we would still need.
- Treats a generated map as a scene, not as the atlas.
- If the transcript claims Geography or Economics, the folder holds matching work — not a dump of seven AP units, and not a personal-finance substitute.

What can still be thin: a full AP Human Geography year; a full Economics semester; GIS; every capital. Those can travel. The floating story with no map cannot count as done.

Transcript. Write **Geography** if the work was a geography course. Write **Economics** if the work was an economics course. Write **World History** or **U.S. History** if the maps lived inside those years — and say so in the description. Never a

¹⁷⁸William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045. Model-supplied citations and dates untrusted until matched.

¹⁷⁹Hamsa Bastani et al., *PNAS* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Math; unguarded chatbot raised practice and cut unaided-exam scores. The crutch still governs the map hour.

brand. NCAA sample titles include Geography and Economics; records owns the rest of the athletic worksheet. If the student sits AP Human Geography, put the exam on a separate line.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know a map is how a story sits in a place. I know today's news is not settled. I know what to say tomorrow — where, near, crossed, and who made this page. The student still looks. We can do this.

Chapter 9 — Records

The history *work* can be as serious as any school's. The *credit* is a family claim until a stranger can use it — a college admissions reader, an NCAA Eligibility Center staffer, a public-school counselor placing a transfer. That stranger will not have sat at your kitchen table. They will have a page.

This chapter is how you make that page. It is not a law office. It is not a fifty-state encyclopedia. It is the export of the work you already taught: titles a stranger can file, a description that names the texts and the writing, a signature that means you checked.

This week you can take last year's history folder and write one course line a counselor would recognize. Today the student can list the books they actually finished and the documents they actually read.

Illustration. A folder spread with dummy titles only: U.S. History, World History, Government. Dummy text. No real names. No portraits.

What you are making

You are making a record of history, not a national diploma.

There is no federal homeschool diploma and no national history credit a registrar already files. The Texas Education Agency says the State of Texas does not award a diploma to students who are home schooled.¹⁸⁰ North Carolina's Division of Non-Public Education says the State does not issue a diploma or a transcript; the

¹⁸⁰Texas Education Agency, "Home Schooling," <https://tea.texas.gov/families-and-students/finding-school-your-child/home-schooling> (accessed 31 August 2026). "The State of Texas does not award a diploma to students that are home schooled."

home-school chief administrator does.¹⁸¹ New York’s education department says a high school diploma may only be awarded to a student enrolled in a registered secondary school.¹⁸² The NCAA Eligibility Center treats proof of graduation as a document the family or an umbrella school issues.¹⁸³ A parent-issued diploma can be a real piece of paper. It is not a registrar’s national history credit.

Pennsylvania has its own statutory path: a supervisor-issued diploma on a department form, or a diploma from an approved organization, after the listed graduation courses, including three years of social studies.¹⁸⁴ That is Pennsylvania. It is not the law in Texas or New York, and it is not a U.S. Department of Education diploma.

Four other objects get mixed with the transcript and should not be. Dual-enrollment U.S. History lives on a *college* transcript. AP and CLEP are exam scores. A state-compliance packet — a Pennsylvania evaluator letter, a Virginia evidence-of-progress file, a North Carolina test score kept on hand, a New York quarterly — is what your statute asked for. A college that wants a transcript, a counselor letter, and scores is asking for a different envelope. Keep the envelopes honest. Each object does its own job.

Titles a stranger can read

Use titles a counselor already has a slot for:

Social Studies, U.S. History, World History, Government, Civics, Geography,

¹⁸¹North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education, “Home School Records Retention & Diplomas FAQs,” <https://www.doa.nc.gov/divisions/non-public-education/home-schools/faqs/records-retention-diplomas> (accessed 31 August 2026). The State does not issue a diploma or a transcript; the chief administrator does.

¹⁸²New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers,” <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers> (accessed 31 August 2026). A high school diploma “may only be awarded to a student enrolled in a registered secondary school.”

¹⁸³NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*, http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/Home_School_Toolkit.pdf. Item A is a homeschool transcript; Item D is proof of graduation, a family- or umbrella-issued artifact.

¹⁸⁴24 P.S. § 13-1327.1(d), (d.1), Pennsylvania General Assembly, <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/LI/US/HTM/1949/0/0014.013.000.027.001..HTM?68=>. Graduation minimums include three years of social studies. The supervisor-issued or approved-organization diploma is a Pennsylvania statutory path.

Economics.

Those are the names this book uses. They travel. NCAA’s own sample home-school transcript uses ordinary high-school titles in that family: Geography, World History, American History, Government, Western Civilization, Economics. The Core-Course Worksheet says the course name on the worksheet should be the same as the title on the transcript.¹⁸⁵ That is good practice even if no one in the house will ever play college sports.

American History on that sample is the same object as **U.S. History** on this list. **Western Civilization** maps if that is the work done. **Participation in Government** is a close analogue of Government or Civics in some catalogs. Pick one title and stay with it.

The title is the genre. The program you bought is the method. *The Story of the World*, Tapestry of Grace, Notgrass, All American History, *Reading Like a Historian*, a McGraw Hill or OpenStax survey — those may appear in a description or a parent log. They are not the course name. “U.S. History — Exploring America” is still a brand in the title column. “Critical Thinking 101” is not a history credit. A tool is not a title.

You have two honest shapes, and both map.

One keeps **Social Studies** in the earlier years, with world, U.S., and civics named inside the descriptions, then splits in high school: **World History**; **U.S. History**; **Government** or **Civics**.

The other names those high-school lines from the start of ninth grade, and adds **Geography** or **Economics** when that is the work. Geography as a separate current-year line is optional, not a scold. Economics is a real title when you taught it. Either shape is mappable. Social Studies is the usual elementary and middle-school title. The work is real. The high-school credit clock has not started.

There is no national Carnegie-unit law hanging over the kitchen. NCAA’s “year” of social science is an athletic-eligibility object, not a federal credit statute. Public-school diploma maps are useful pictures of titles a stranger already knows: California’s state minimum names three social-studies courses, including U.S. his-

¹⁸⁵NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*; Core-Course Worksheet, http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/Core_Course_Worksheet.pdf. Sample titles include Geography, World History, American History, Government, Western Civilization, Economics. “Name of the course should be the same as the title on the transcript.”

tory, world history, a semester of government, and a semester of economics.¹⁸⁶ Texas’s Foundation pattern names U.S. History, government one-half, economics one-half, and world history or world geography.¹⁸⁷ Those pages describe public-school diplomas, not homeschool law.

What belongs on the history line

A usable record is made of objects families already produce. For each high-school history or social-studies course, write:

- the **title** from the list above, or a close analogue a stranger can file (American History, Participation in Government);
- the **year**, and the grade equivalent you actually used;
- the **credit** — commonly 1.0 for a year-long course; NCAA’s sample treats 1.0 as the increment on a single line; New York’s “unit” is a time object, 6,480 minutes, not a brand;¹⁸⁸
- the **grade** you assigned, and the scale somewhere in the packet (A = 90–100, or whatever scale you truly used);
- a **brief description** of readings, documents, and writing — not a brand;
- **who taught and who graded**;
- your **signature** and a date;
- **external artifacts** when they exist: SAT Reading and Writing as a *reading* object that sometimes uses history-flavored passages; ACT Reading; an AP score; a CLEP score; a college transcript from dual enrollment; a state-required test or evaluator letter.

The description is the part a stranger actually reads. Name the texts. Name the writing and discussion load. Name the grading basis. A sentence that says only “Notgrass” is a brand, not a course. A sentence that says “survey of U.S. history,

¹⁸⁶California Education Code § 51225.3, as displayed on the California Legislative Information site (accessed 31 August 2026); California Department of Education, “State Minimum High School Graduation Requirements,” last reviewed 7 January 2026. Public-school diploma map, not homeschool law.

¹⁸⁷Texas Education Code § 28.025 pattern as restated in TEA’s Graduation Toolkit 2025: U.S. History; U.S. Government (½); Economics (½); World History or World Geography. Public-school Foundation program, not a TEA homeschool diploma.

¹⁸⁸N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 8, § 100.10, via Cornell LII, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/new-york/8-NYCRR-100.10>. A unit means 6,480 minutes of instruction per school year. New York time object, not a national credit law.

colonial period through the late twentieth century; Constitution and selected primary documents; two unaided essays; one short research paper; weekly discussion from a document on the table” is a course.

Here is an illustration, not a reported family:

U.S. History · 2025–26 · 1.0 credit · Grade: A (A = 90–100, B = 80–89)

Survey of United States history from the colonial period through the late twentieth century. Readings: [named textbook or reader]; the Constitution as an object; selected letters and speeches from the Library of Congress and Founders Online. Writing and talk: two unaided essays, one short research paper citing named documents, weekly discussion from a document on the table. Grading: 40 percent unaided writing, 40 percent discussion and document work, 20 percent tests. Instructor: [parent name]. Signature: _____
Date: _____

Change the books to the books on *your* table. Change the count of papers to the papers in the folder. The shape stays.

If you keep a document folder — unaided essays, a short research paper, a few sourced documents with the attribution line still on them — you already have the evidence the description claims. The folder is not the transcript. The transcript is the map to the folder.

A year that mixed history, English, and Bible still splits on the transcript: **U.S. History** or **World History**; English for the literature and writing; a Bible or religion line if the family wants one. Comparative religion or philosophy is a possible extra NCAA core area. It is a separate line.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹Notgrass History, *Exploring America* (5th edition, 2026) and *Exploring World History* (3rd edition) package pages, shop.notgrass.com (accessed 31 August 2026). The publisher describes history, English, and Bible credit for a completed year. NCAA *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*: comparative religion or philosophy is a possible additional core area; CLEP and credit-by-exam are not NCAA core.

The law is a pattern, not one form

U.S. homeschooling is state law plus compulsory-attendance exceptions. There is no federal history office. Typical moving parts look like this: whether a state agency regulates homeschooling at all; **notice** to a division or a superintendent; whether someone reviews a plan; an annual **test**, **portfolio**, or **evaluator** in some states; whether history or social studies is a *named* subject; and **who issues the diploma** — commonly the parent or an umbrella, not the U.S. Department of Education.

That is a pattern of *kinds of objects*. Dates, ages, subject lists, and exemptions change. Read your current department page and the statute it cites. A color-coded chart on a membership site is not your statute.¹⁹⁰

Five official-page examples show the range. They are examples. They are not your homework unless you live there.

Texas. The Texas Education Agency does not regulate, index, monitor, approve, register, or accredit home-school programs.¹⁹¹ Home schooling has been a legal alternative since 1994. Parents follow a bona fide written curriculum that includes reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and a course in good citizenship. History is not named as a word. “Good citizenship” is the nearest object on that page; it is not a Government credit and not a civics exam. Texas does not award a home-school diploma. A public-school transfer is treated like a transfer from an unaccredited private school; the district may assess for placement or credit.

North Carolina. Notice of Intent to the Division of Non-Public Education. Operate on a regular schedule at least nine calendar months. Each year, a nationally standardized achievement test that includes English grammar, reading, spelling, and mathematics; keep the scores and show them if asked.¹⁹² The test does not

¹⁹⁰Official department pages illustrate a pattern, not a fifty-state code. This chapter is not legal advice. A membership organization’s chart is not a statute.

¹⁹¹TEA, “Home Schooling”; TEA, “Alternative Schooling,” <https://tea.texas.gov/families-and-students/finding-school-your-child/alternative-schooling> (accessed 31 August 2026). The Agency “does not regulate, index, monitor, approve, register, or accredit” home-school programs. Bona fide written curriculum: reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and good citizenship. *Leeper et al. v. Arlington ISD et al.* cited on the page.

¹⁹²North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education, “Starting a Home School,” <https://www.doa.nc.gov/divisions/non-public-education/home-schools/requirements-recommendations> (accessed 31 August 2026; page last modified 3 August 2026). Annual test must include English grammar, reading, spelling, and mathematics. Five hours a day is a

include history. The division does not prescribe your history books. The home school, not the State, issues the diploma. A five-hour school day is a *recommendation* on that page, not the statute.

Pennsylvania. Before you start, and each year by 1 August, a notarized affidavit or unsworn declaration to the district superintendent, with an outline of objectives by subject. District *approval is not required* once the paperwork is filed. Each year, an evaluator's report by 30 June. In grades 3, 5, and 8, the portfolio includes a reading/language-arts and mathematics test — not a history test.¹⁹³ History is on the required-course list: geography, U.S. and Pennsylvania history, and civics at elementary; social studies (civics, world history, U.S. and Pennsylvania history) at secondary; three years of social studies for graduation. That is Pennsylvania naming the subject, not a national history exam.

Virginia. Notice of intent to the division by 15 August, a list of subjects, and evidence that the parent meets one of four qualification options. By 1 August after the year of instruction, evidence of progress: a composite score in or above the fourth stanine on a nationally normed test, **or an equivalent score on the ACT, SAT, or PSAT**, or an evaluation or college transcript the superintendent accepts.¹⁹⁴ The Code asks for a *list of subjects*, not a mandated history course. Virginia will take those college-admissions tests as *one* evidence-of-progress option. That is Virginia. It is not a national rule that “homeschoolers take the SAT instead of a diploma.”

New York, as a heavier-process illustration: a letter of intent, then an Individualized Home Instruction Plan the superintendent reviews, quarterly reports, and an annual assessment. Required courses include United States history in grades 1–6, history and geography in 7–8, and four units of social studies in 9–12, including

recommendation, not law.

¹⁹³Pennsylvania Department of Education, Home Education Program BEC, 24 P.S. § 13-1327.1, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/resources/policies-acts-and-laws/basic-education-circulars-becs/purdons-statutes/home-education-program> (accessed 31 August 2026). Affidavit by 1 August; evaluator by 30 June; tests in grades 3, 5, and 8 in reading/language arts and mathematics. 22 Pa. Code § 11.31a: district approval is not required once required paperwork is filed. Statute (c): geography, U.S. and Pennsylvania history, and civics at elementary; social studies including civics, world history, U.S. and Pennsylvania history at secondary.

¹⁹⁴Virginia Department of Education, “Home Instruction,” <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/parents-students/for-parents/home-instruction> (accessed 31 August 2026); Code of Virginia § 22.1-254.1, <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14/section22.1-254.1/>. Notice by 15 August; evidence of progress by 1 August; SAT/ACT/PSAT as one test-option equivalent. Curriculum description limited to a list of subjects.

American history, participation in government, and economics.¹⁹⁵ Home instruction does not yield a local or Regents diploma. Instruction for a six-year-old, New York says, should be geared to the student's needs and previous achievement — placement by skill, not by the birthday that triggered compulsory attendance.

If you live in none of those states, you still have a department page. Open it. Your filing date lives there.

If they transfer

Transfer into a public school is a local placement problem. Texas districts commonly assess mastery and treat the student like a transfer from an unaccredited private school. New York leaves grade placement to the principal, as with any transfer, and may award credit from assessment or evidence of completed work. North Carolina's division notes that a conventional-school principal has no legal obligation to accept home-school credit, especially in grades 10–12.¹⁹⁶ None of those pages promises that a brand in the title column will be read as U.S. History. Another reason the title should already look like U.S. History.

College-ready objects — not the course

Scores help a stranger believe the transcript. They do not replace the reading and the talking. A high SAT Reading and Writing score with an empty document folder is a score, not a U.S. History course.

SAT and ACT are not history tests. The current digital SAT Reading and Writing section uses short passages from literature, **history/social studies**, the humanities, and science.¹⁹⁷ That is a *reading* object that sometimes uses a history-flavored

¹⁹⁵NYSED, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers”; 8 NYCRR 100.10(e). Grades 1–6 include geography and United States history; grades 7–8, two units of history and geography; grades 9–12, four units of social studies including one unit of American history, one-half unit in participation in government, and one-half unit of economics.

¹⁹⁶TEA, “Home Schooling”; NYSED Q&A; North Carolina DNPE neighboring FAQ on records and diplomas (accessed 31 August 2026).

¹⁹⁷College Board, “The Reading and Writing Section,” SAT Suite, <https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/sat/whats-on-the-test/reading-writing> (accessed 31 August 2026). Passages represent literature, history/social studies, the humanities, and science. SAT is not a U.S. History exam.

passage. It is not AP U.S. History and does not certify a U.S. History survey. ACT English and Reading are likewise reading and language objects. A history hour spent actually reading a document is better preparation for those passages than a trivia list. The sitting is still not the course.

AP United States History, AP World History: Modern, and AP United States Government and Politics are optional exam objects. None has a required prerequisite course on the student pages. Credit is set by each college.¹⁹⁸ AP U.S. History is a two-semester introductory college survey, 1491 to the present. AP World History: Modern runs from about 1200 to the present — not a stone-age-to-now survey, and not *The Story of the World* Volume 1. AP U.S. Government and Politics is a one-semester introductory college course. AP Human Geography is a further optional geography exam.¹⁹⁹ If the student sits an exam, put the score on its own line. Until you have confirmed how a home course may carry the AP title, the safer transcript line is **U.S. History, World History, or Government**, with the exam score as a separate artifact. One exam does not stand in for the year.

If a Federalist week is on the table, *Publius* is the companion for those essays.

CLEP history and government exams may become college credit. They are not NCAA core. College Board's history-and-social-sciences list includes History of the United States I (early colonization to 1877), History of the United States II (1865 to the present), Western Civilization I and II, American Government, and Social Sciences and History. The American Council on Education's typical recommendation is a score of 50 for three semester hours (six for Social Sciences and History). Each college sets its own policy.²⁰⁰ A CLEP score may be college

¹⁹⁸College Board AP Students, AP United States History, <https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-united-states-history>; AP World History: Modern, <https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-world-history-modern>; AP United States Government and Politics, <https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-united-states-government-and-politics> (accessed 31 August 2026). Recommended prerequisites: none. Credit is institution-specific. AP World History: Modern begins c. 1200.

¹⁹⁹College Board AP Central, AP Human Geography, <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-human-geography> (accessed 31 August 2026). Optional geography exam object. Homeschool AP Course Audit rules were not treated as settled; safer practice is a non-AP title plus the exam score.

²⁰⁰College Board CLEP exam-topic pages and ACE credit-recommendation table (accessed 31 August 2026): History of the United States I, <https://clep.collegeboard.org/clep-exams/history-of-the-us-1>; History of the United States II, <https://clep.collegeboard.org/clep-exams/history-of-the-us-2>; American Government, <https://clep.collegeboard.org/clep-exams/american-government>; ACE table, <https://clep.collegeboard.org/for-educators/for-colleges/clep-scores/understanding-scores/ace-credit-recommendations>. Typical ACE recommendation: score 50, 3 semester hours

credit. It is not a homeschool U.S. History year for NCAA. Audited, CLEP, and credit-by-exam courses are not NCAA-approved core courses.

Dual or concurrent enrollment is a college course taken during high school, not AP and not CLEP. Among 2019 high-school graduates nationwide, 8.7 percent of transcripts showed a social-science or history dual-enrollment course; 28.4 percent showed any dual enrollment. That is all graduates, not a homeschool rate.²⁰¹ Access at home is local: a North Carolina dual-enrollment page is written in public-school eligibility language; New York generally keeps home-instructed students out of the district's instructional program; Virginia will accept a college transcript as one form of evidence of progress. Map the course to **U.S. History** or **World History** or **Government**, with the college named in the description. The college's own transcript is the credit-bearing object. NCAA wants dual-enrollment coursework clearly designated on the homeschool transcript as a college course, with the college name and location, and a separate official college transcript sent.²⁰²

None of these overlays is required for a serious history sequence. They sit on top. The kitchen method is still the story, the document, the unaided claim.

NCAA, if athletics are in view

If Division I or Division II sports might be in the picture, social-science planning starts in ninth grade.

Social science **is** a core area. A core course meets high-school graduation requirements in English, math (Algebra I or higher), science, **social science**, world language, or comparative religion or philosophy.²⁰³

(Social Sciences and History: 6). Each institution sets policy. *NCAA Home School Toolkit 2025–26*: CLEP is not NCAA core. Exam fee on the topic list that day was \$97.00, plus possible center or remote-proctoring fees — a snapshot, not a locked price.

²⁰¹NCES Digest table 225.65 (2019 High School Transcript Study): among 2019 graduates, any dual enrollment 28.4 percent; social science and history dual enrollment 8.7 percent. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_225.65.asp. All graduates, not homeschoolers. NCES Data Point 2019-176 defines dual/concurrent enrollment as postsecondary credit during high school, excluding AP and IB.

²⁰²*NCAA Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. Dual-enrollment coursework designated on the homeschool transcript as a college course, college name and location, plus a separate official college transcript.

²⁰³*NCAA Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. A core course meets graduation requirements in English, math (Algebra I or higher), science, social science, world language, comparative religion or

Division I asks for **sixteen** NCAA-approved core-course credits in four consecutive academic years from the start of ninth grade, including **two years of social science**. Ten of the sixteen core courses, including seven in English, math, or science, must be finished before the seventh semester — the 10/7 rule. Minimum core-course GPA is **2.3**. Proof of graduation is required.²⁰⁴ If Division II sports are in view, open the current Division II academic-standards sheet for that year's year-count. This chapter locked the Division I number: two years of social science.

The homeschool packet the Eligibility Center describes includes a homeschool transcript (with a ninth-grade start date and an administrator signature), an administrator statement that instruction followed *state* law, a Core-Course Worksheet for each core course signed by the parent, and proof of graduation. Evaluation begins after those documents are in **and** an NCAA school has placed the student on an Institutional Request List.²⁰⁵ CLEP, credit-by-exam, and audited courses do not count as core. A year of U.S. History the child did not do cannot be wished onto the worksheet.

Hawaii and New York have a graduation-proof rule, not a social-science rule: the Eligibility Center cannot accept proof of graduation from a diploma issued by a homeschool in those states. A district or state letter, or a state-recognized equivalency exam after the class graduation date, is the toolkit's stated path.²⁰⁶

If athletics are not in view, the same titles and descriptions still serve colleges and transfers. The honesty is the point either way.

philosophy.

²⁰⁴NCAA Eligibility Center, Division I academic-standards fact sheet, http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/DI_ReqsFactSheet.pdf (accessed 31 August 2026). Sixteen core courses including 2 years social science; 10/7 rule; minimum 2.3 core-course GPA.

²⁰⁵NCAA *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*; homeschool-student documentation. Evaluation after documents are in and an NCAA school has placed the student on an Institutional Request List.

²⁰⁶NCAA *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. Hawaii and New York: Eligibility Center cannot accept proof of graduation from a homeschool-issued diploma. Graduation-proof rule, not a social-science rule.

Place by skill, not birthday

A publisher’s “grade 4 history book” is a scope, not a legal grade. New York’s home-instruction page already says instruction should match the student’s needs and previous achievement.²⁰⁷ Several programs you may already own say some version of the same thing in their own words: designed primarily for grades 1–4 and extendable; grades 5 to high school, adaptable younger; AP student pages list no prerequisite course.

For history, two questions do most of the work.

Can the child follow a story and retell it? If not, they are still in a narrative-and-picture year, whatever their age. Can they source a short document — who wrote this, when, why — without an adult holding the answer? If not, they are still in a taught-looking stage, whatever year the transcript shows.

High-school *titles* can still be U.S. History while the description tells the truth about supports. A title that matches a fourteenth birthday and not the work helps no college and hurts an NCAA file.

A template, a signature, and the truth

A tool, including an AI helper on your side of the table, may draft a **template**: blank lines for title, year, credit, grade, texts, writing and discussion load, grading basis, signature. That is a form. It is not a record until you fill it from the folder.

You read every line. You check the books against the shelf. You check the essay count against the writing folder. You check the documents against the ones actually read. You check the hours, if your state asks for hours, against the log you actually kept. Then you sign.

Hours that were not taught are a false statement, not a kindness to the file. A polished paragraph the child did not write is not the child’s history. A model-supplied date or “as Lincoln wrote” is untrusted until you find it in a named book, archive, or textbook page. The signature means you stand behind the page.

The tool may format. You attest.

²⁰⁷NYSED, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers.” Instruction “should be geared to the level appropriate to the student’s needs and previous level of achievement.”

For the student

Your transcript is a picture of work you did. You read the books. You looked at the documents. You talked. You wrote.

When a parent asks you to list what you finished this year, that list is not busywork. It is how a stranger will understand your history. Name the books. Name the papers. Name two documents you actually held. If a line on the page is not true, say so before anyone signs.

You do not have to enjoy filing. You do have to own the work the file describes.

What “done enough” looks like

You can hand a stranger one page per high-school history course. The title is from the list a counselor already knows: Social Studies, U.S. History, World History, Government, Civics, Geography, Economics. The description names texts, writing and discussion load, and grading basis. Your name is on it, and you would still sign it tomorrow morning. State-compliance objects, if your state asks for them, sit in their own envelope. SAT and ACT scores sit as reading objects, not as a history exam. AP scores, if any, sit on their own lines. CLEP, if any, is college credit in the packet and is not labeled as NCAA core. If athletics might be in view, ninth-grade social science already has a mappable title and a worksheet behind it. The folder matches the page. That is enough.

Chapter 10 — Resources

This chapter names programs families actually use. It does not rank them. It does not sell them. It is a fit list so you can match a stack to the table you already have: how much of the talking you will carry, whether the spine is a story, a classical year-plan, or a textbook, whether the house wants a religious frame or a secular one, and whether the publisher describes a high-school credit shape.

A “grade 6 history book” is a publisher’s scope, not a legal grade. Placement is by skill. The transcript, as Chapter 9 said, still says Social Studies, or World History, or U.S. History. Combining two honest programs does not authorize a franken-title.

This week you can name *why* the books on your shelf fit this child. Today the student can read one page from a book that is actually in the house.

Illustration. A table of books as objects — closed spines, a folded map, a public-domain letter as an object. Not product-pack shots. No brand logos. No portraits.

How to read a program

Five questions do the work.

Parent load. Is the adult reading aloud and picking from an activity book? Hosting a whole-family discussion from a year-plan? Sitting nearby while an independent high-schooler works a survey? Building lessons around a dense textbook?

Spine. A narrative the child can follow and retell? A classical, whole-family year-plan? A school-shaped textbook? A document lesson with a question at the top? Those are different jobs.

Religious or secular. Some programs say so on the first page. Some do not market a worldview. Fit is a house decision, not a ranking.

High-school credit shape. Does the publisher describe a year of U.S. History or World History a stranger could file? Or is this an early-and-middle-grades story? A publisher’s “credit” sentence is a scope. The registrar still wants a mappable title and a description of the work.

Placement. The grade on the cover? “Extendable”? “Adaptable younger”? A high-school survey the child can actually read? Skill first.

Where a company makes a strong claim — independent learning, a biblical lens, inquiry in every chapter, a two-to-three-hour daily lesson — that claim is the company’s. This chapter reports what the page said. It does not certify the slogan.

The Story of the World

Susan Wise Bauer’s *The Story of the World*, from Well-Trained Mind Press, is a four-volume narrative spine the publisher describes as suitable for early and middle grades. The volumes on the support pages are Volume 1, Ancient Times; Volume 2, The Middle Ages; Volume 3, Early Modern Times; Volume 4, The Modern Age. An Activity Book is sold to turn each volume into a year of history and geography: instructor pages with review questions, narration, pronunciation, reading lists, and activity directions, plus consumable student pages for coloring, maps, and review cards. Tests exist for older students. Audio exists. The publisher says the Activity Book is designed primarily for grades 1–4 and is extendable for grades 5–8, and that you need not use every assignment with every child.²⁰⁸

A 25th Anniversary Expanded Edition of Volume 1 is sold alongside a Revised Edition. The store treats them as distinct products. Editions are not silently interchangeable.

Fit. Parent load is moderate if you read aloud and pick from the Activity Book;

²⁰⁸Well-Trained Mind Press, *The Story of the World* series page, <https://welltrainedmind.com/c/series/the-story-of-the-world/>; support article “Tell me about The Story of the World Activity Books,” updated 21 March 2025, <https://support.welltrainedmind.com/hc/en-us/articles/4408237709459-Tell-me-about-The-Story-of-the-World-Activity-Books> (accessed 31 August 2026). Four volumes named on the support article; Activity Book designed primarily grades 1–4, extendable 5–8. Company copy. 25th Anniversary Expanded Edition of Volume 1 sold as distinct from the Revised Edition.

higher if maps, narrations, and extra reading are all done. Narrative, not a high-school textbook and not a document seminar. On the pages opened for this book it is not marketed as a Christian-worldview curriculum. (The same press sells a separate *Telling God's Story* line. Those are different books.) High-school credit: the publisher's own band is early and middle grades. A Volume 4 year is not AP World History: Modern, and it is not a high-school World History line unless the actual work matches a high-school survey — which this publisher does not claim.

Transcript. Social Studies in elementary and middle school. Not “SOTW 2.” If a later high-school year still uses Volume 4 as a spine, the description tells the truth about the work. The title is still World History only if the work is a high-school world survey.

Tapestry of Grace

Lampstand Press describes Tapestry of Grace on its homepage as Christian, classical homeschool curriculum for the whole family. The same page names history-based activity books, a community for training, and Lucerna Academy — paid classes using Tapestry.²⁰⁹

This chapter names that description. It does not reprint a year-by-year cycle. Open the current year-plan from the publisher if you use the program, and write the transcript from the work the child actually did.

Fit. Parent load is high in the parent-as-teacher model the homepage describes: you host the discussion, with community training and teacher scripts for projects as helps, and a paid academy as an alternative when you do not carry the talk. Classical and Christian on the publisher's own first page. Whole-family, not a single-grade basal. High-school credit: Lucerna Academy is named as paid classes. If rhetoric-level work is a high-school year in your house, the transcript still says **World History** or **U.S. History** matching the work, not a program nickname.

Transcript. Social Studies; World History; U.S. History. Not “TOG.”

²⁰⁹Lampstand Press, Tapestry of Grace homepage, <https://www.tapestryofgrace.com/> (accessed 31 August 2026). “Christian, classical homeschool curriculum for the whole family.” Lucerna Academy named as paid classes. Year-plan mechanics are left to the publisher's current year-plan; this chapter does not reprint a cycle.

Notgrass History

Notgrass History publishes *Exploring America* and *Exploring World History* as Christian high-school paths. The mission line on the pages opened for this book: materials centered in Scripture that help parents train children to honor God with heart, soul, and mind. The high-school catalog also names *Exploring Economics*, *Exploring Government*, and *Exploring World Geography*.

Exploring America, 5th edition, published 2026, is described as one year of U.S. history, English, and Bible for high school. The package is in two parts — Columbus through the late 1800s, then the late 1800s to the present — plus *American Voices*, an assigned reader of original documents, speeches, poems, stories, and hymns. The publisher says this edition is not compatible with previous editions, and that students can earn history, English, and Bible credit. Independent learning is part of the marketing.

Exploring World History, 3rd edition, is described as one year of world history, English, and Bible. Completing the full course, the publisher says, provides a year's high-school credit in each. History credit: the lessons and the original documents in *In Their Words*. English credit: writing assignments and assigned literature. Bible credit: large portions of the Bible and a Bible-study lesson each unit. Time on that page: depending on reading speed and projects, an average of two to three hours for each daily lesson of the *integrated* course. Part 1 runs Creation through the Middle Ages; Part 2, the Renaissance to the present.²¹⁰

Fit. Parent load is lower day-to-day than a discussion-heavy classical year-plan if the student works independently, as the publisher markets; the adult still hosts the worldview and the grading. Narrative textbook plus assigned primary-source readers — not a Digital Inquiry Group lesson and not a secular basal. Religious: explicitly Christian. High-school credit: the publisher's three-credit language is a publisher's scope, not an NCAA or registrar decision. NCAA still needs mappable

²¹⁰Notgrass History, *Exploring America* 5th edition curriculum package, <https://shop.notgrass.com/shop/high-school-exploring-america-5th-edition-exploring-america-packages-46/eacp-exploring-america-curriculum-package-5th-edition-1580>; *Exploring America* marketing page, <https://shop.notgrass.com/exploring-america>; *Exploring World History* 3rd edition package, <https://shop.notgrass.com/shop/ewcp-exploring-world-history-curriculum-package-3rd-edition-647> (accessed 31 August 2026). Company copy, including independent-learning language, biblical-worldview language, three-credit language, and the 2–3 hour integrated-lesson figure. A parent testimonial mentioning CLEP American History I and II is testimonial, not a pass-rate. ISBN on the *Exploring America* package page: 9781609991982.

titles and a Core-Course Worksheet for the history line.

Transcript. U.S. History or World History; English for the literature and writing; not “Exploring America.” Government and Economics, if the family used those Notgrass titles, map to **Government** and **Economics**. Bible or religion is a separate line if you want one.

A textbook path

Some families want a school-shaped survey: whatever the local district uses, a used Glencoe or Holt McDougal or Pearson volume, or a current basal.

One currently sold high-school example is McGraw Hill *United States History*, Student Edition, copyright 2023, grades 9–12. The company’s page describes an abundance of primary and secondary sources, Essential Questions, inquiry-infused content, and activities that connect past and present. School bundles with an Inquiry Journal are sold as multi-year subscriptions. The marketing on that page is classroom and district marketing. Homeschool use is possible the way any high-school textbook is possible.²¹¹

OpenStax *U.S. History*, from Rice University, is a free survey under a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA license: web and PDF at no cost, low-cost print. The preface says it is designed to meet the scope and sequence of most introductory courses, with both a top-down political story and eyewitness, lived-experience accounts, and particular attention to race, class, and gender. Publication date 30 December 2014, with ongoing web updates. It is secular. It is college-density prose. Parent load is high if you have to build lessons around a chapter written for an intro-college course.²¹²

Fit. Parent load is high if you run a basal as designed (teacher edition, assessments, inquiry journal); moderate if you use it as a student-facing survey and skip the apparatus. Textbook, not a read-aloud narrative and not a one-document seminar.

²¹¹McGraw Hill, *United States History*, Student Edition, <https://www.mheducation.com/prek-12/product/united-states-history-student-edition-mcgraw-hill/9780079023131.html> (accessed 31 August 2026). ISBN 9780079023131; copyright 2023; grades 9–12. Classroom and district marketing.

²¹²P. Scott Corbett, Volker Janssen, John M. Lund, Todd Pfannestiel, Sylvie Waskiewicz, and Paul Vickery, *U.S. History* (OpenStax / Rice University), preface, <https://openstax.org/books/us-history/pages/preface> (accessed 31 August 2026). CC BY-NC-SA 4.0; publication date 30 December 2014, with ongoing web updates. Designed for introductory-course scope and sequence.

Religious versus secular: secular school and open texts. High-school credit: this is the *shape* of a U.S. History year. Placement is the publisher’s high-school or intro-college label — a publisher’s scope.

Older school basals occupy the same fit slot. If a family holds a used copy, name the book they hold.

Transcript. U.S. History. Not “McGraw Hill 2023.” Not “OpenStax.”

Reading Like a Historian

Digital Inquiry Group, formerly the Stanford History Education Group, publishes *Reading Like a Historian* as free document lessons. DIG spun out of Stanford in January 2024 as an independent nonprofit, with a licensing agreement to distribute the university materials at no cost. Sam Wineburg is named as founder; Joel Breakstone as executive director. Materials are free with a DIG (or existing SHEG) account.

Each lesson revolves around a central historical question and a set of primary documents designed for groups of students with a range of reading skills. The lessons teach sourcing, contextualizing, corroborating, and close reading. The lessons page in late August 2026 listed introductory materials, 146 U.S. History lessons, 61 World History lessons, and a History with Digital Literacy set.²¹³ The group reports large download and user numbers; those are the group’s figures, not a federal count.

Lessons are designed for classrooms. Homeschool use is possible as a looking move inside a survey year. This book uses that move once in a history hour — who made this, when, why; if it is a website, leave the page — not as a second critical-thinking course. Civic Online Reasoning is a separate digital-literacy curriculum. The pointer lives in *Critical Thinking for Life*. It is not this book’s spine.

Fit. Free document lessons and historical thinking, not a 180-day survey. Parent load is the discussion you already run: a document on the table, one good question,

²¹³Digital Inquiry Group, homepage, <https://www.inquirygroup.org/>; *Reading Like a Historian* history-lessons page, <https://www.inquirygroup.org/history-lessons> (accessed 31 August 2026). Independent 501(c)(3) as of January 2024; Stanford licensing agreement for free distribution. Lesson counts on the lessons page that day: Intro 21; U.S. History 146; World History 61; History with Digital Literacy 26. Download and user figures on the homepage are organization claims, not NCES. Civic Online Reasoning is a separate curriculum.

a wait. Combine inside a narrative or textbook year. Combining does not mint a new title.

Transcript. U.S. History or World History. Not “SHEG.” Not “DIG.”

All American History

Celeste W. Rakes’s All American History, from Bright Ideas Press, is a two-volume U.S. narrative the publisher describes as a complete two-year U.S. history curriculum for students in grades 5 to high school, adaptable for younger students. Thirty-two weekly lessons per volume. A Companion Guide supplies note-taking pages, lesson reviews, tests, unit wrap-ups, answer keys, further-study questions, games, hands-on activities, timeline and mapping, and reading lists. Volume I units include the Age of Exploration, colonization, the American Revolution, establishment and expansion. Volume II runs from the mid-1800s forward. The Volume II page describes looking at the past through a distinctly Christian lens, and a full year’s worth of history for grades 6–12.²¹⁴

This is a Christian narrative U.S. survey with a companion. It is not a *Reading Like a Historian* document lesson. Primary sources are not the spine on the pages opened for this book; the spine is the student reader.

Fit. Parent load is the weekly lesson plus companion, in the middle between a read-aloud narrative and a high-school basal. Religious: Christian, named as such. High-school credit: the publisher describes a two-year U.S. path that can reach high school. The transcript still says **U.S. History**.

Transcript. U.S. History. Not the volume name as the course title.

Public-domain documents

You do not need a boxed kit to put a real document on the table.

²¹⁴Celeste W. Rakes, All American History Volume I and Volume II, Bright Ideas Press, <https://brightideaspress.com/shop/all-american-history-volume-i/>; <https://brightideaspress.com/shop/all-american-history-volume-ii/>; overview <https://brightideaspress.com/us-history/> (accessed 31 August 2026). Company copy: two-year U.S. history, grades 5 to high school, adaptable younger; 32 weekly lessons per volume; Volume II “distinctly Christian lens.” Snapshot prices on that day are omitted here as a snapshot, not a locked list.

The Library of Congress treats primary sources as “the raw materials of history — original documents and objects that were created at the time under study.” Its Teaching with Primary Sources pages offer letters, photographs, maps, and broadsides, with an Observe–Reflect–Question scaffold for looking. The Library’s own limits are worth keeping: sources are incomplete snippets; successful looking takes careful selection; younger learners can start at see, think, wonder.²¹⁵ That scaffold shares a table with a historian’s sourcing-before-reading. They are not the same claim. Curiosity first is still a good hour.

Founders Online, from the National Archives, collects papers of the Founding generation — Washington, Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, and their correspondents — as searchable public texts.²¹⁶ A Constitution week, a Federalist week (point to *Publius* for the essays), a letter as an object with an attribution line: those sit here at no cost.

Public-domain is a copyright status, not a quality stamp. Check that the text in front of you is the document you meant to assign, with a maker, a date, and a place you can name. A generated “letter from a Civil War private” is fiction with a costume. A Library of Congress scan of a letter that has a maker in 1863 is a source.

Your public library still matters: a used textbook, an atlas, a museum afternoon. Digital Inquiry Group lessons, above, are another free document path. None of these is the course name.

Combining honestly

A family may combine. Honest combinations follow the products’ own jobs.

The Story of the World in the early years, with maps and narration. A McGraw Hill or OpenStax or Notgrass year later, when the child can hold a survey. *Reading Like a Historian* lessons as the looking move inside any of them — one document, one question, a wait. All American History as a Christian two-year U.S. path in the

²¹⁵Library of Congress, “Getting Started with Primary Sources,” <https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/> (accessed 31 August 2026). Primary sources as “the raw materials of history.” Observe, Reflect, Question. Limits in the Library’s own words: incomplete snippets; careful selection and lesson planning.

²¹⁶Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/> (accessed 31 August 2026). Public texts of the Founding generation’s papers. A source library, not a curriculum.

upper-elementary through high-school band. Tapestry of Grace as a whole-family classical year when that is the house.

The child who cannot yet follow a story and retell it is still in a narrative-and-picture year, whatever the birthday. The high-schooler who cannot yet source a short document is still in a taught-looking stage, whatever the transcript year. High-school *titles* can still be U.S. History while the description tells the truth about supports.

Combining does not mint a new course title. The transcript still says **U.S. History**, or **World History**, or **Government**. The description may say “narrative spine X; document lessons from *Reading Like a Historian*; Constitution as an object.” A stranger can file that. A kitchen nickname is a kitchen nickname.

What “done enough” looks like

You can say, in one sentence, why this year’s history stack fits *this* child: parent load you can actually carry, a spine the child can follow, a religious or secular frame the house chose on purpose, a high-school credit shape only where the work is a high-school survey, and placement by skill.

The programs have names. The transcript has titles a stranger can read. The two lists are not the same list.

A Note on Sources

Studies named in the chapters are listed in Notes, in one series at the back. That is where the full citations live, so the teaching pages can stay a teaching voice.

Some items the research behind this book did not open stay out of the teaching voice. I did not invent a coefficient, a statute, or a product feature to fill a hole. If a study is in the chapter, it is in the notes. If we could not open it, it is not used as a finding here.

Program prices and credit claims in the resources chapter are taken from the companies' own pages. Access date 31 August 2026.