

Hynd, C. R. (1999). Teaching students to think critically using multiple texts in history. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 42, 428-436.

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Summary: Two studies were conducted to examine ninth and tenth-grade students' reading of multiple texts in history classes. Findings showed that the students believed history merely described what had happened in the past. When they were asked about what they read they tended to summarize similarities across texts without thinking critically. When multiple texts were provided, the ninth-grade students could see history as arguments. The need for explicit instruction to engage students in reading multiple texts was discussed.

Assumptions:

- Historians reconstruct what took place during a previous era using multiple sources. Thus, students should be encouraged to understand this reconstruction process so that they can learn to read as historians.
- History texts are not retellings of previous events. When students understand the social, cultural, and political climate that may have influenced an author's writing, they can be engaged in critical thinking as they read.
- Using multiple texts in a variety of ways can help teach students to think critically.

Findings:

- The students concentrated on looking for similarities across texts, rather than differences. In addition, they identified the textbook-like accounts of historical events as the most useful.
- The teachers tended to teach history as retellings of historical accounts in chronological order.
- The students believed that history involved summaries of what happened in the past. However, when the ninth graders were provided with multiple texts, they could see texts as arguments.

Conclusions: Students can elaborate their understanding through reading multiple texts. Therefore, explicit instruction is needed to help students read multiple texts and critically reflect on various interpretations of historical events. Teachers should encourage students to think like historians using various strategies such as sourcing, contextualization, and

corroboration when reading historical documents.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Provide instruction in “how to read like a historian.”
- Focus on students’ abilities to find and critique both similarities and differences in historical accounts.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Provide resources for teachers to locate multiple sources.
- Provide professional development to help teachers learn how to incorporate multiple texts in their history classes.