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Key Words: content area literacy

Summary: This article examines the "thinking aloud" processes of high school students as they read contemporary news. Students from two high schools that were identified as reflecting different approaches to school excellence were given the task to read aloud and comment on the same news articles.

Assumptions:
- Students generally learn their news of history from daily news accounts.
- It is hoped that students will transfer their knowledge of history to other disciplines, but this is not often the case.
- Research has been focused on doing history rather than using history.
- Students need explicit instruction when learning history.

Findings:
- Students expressed their thoughts with the aid of background narratives that contrasted how things were at some point "back then" and how things are now.
- The 2 groups used different historical events and ideas to simultaneously express their background narratives and contextualize each news-story case.
- Students with different background narratives represented the facts of the same news story differently.

Conclusions:
Reading the news is one of many everyday activities that involve thinking about the past to identify and relate current affairs of political import. Students often use narratives to refer to the past but in relation to present events. History teachers should continually connect to current topics of interest to students. By referring to the present when discussing the past, more students will connect with the history being presented.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- History teachers should find ways to connect the study of history to daily events that students care about.
- Then-and-now approaches to history instruction show promise.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Help content teachers see the value of connections (text, self, world) in their teaching.
- Help content teachers see the value of nontextbook resources.