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Qualities of Historical Writing Instruction: A Comparative Case Study of Two Teachers' Practices

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This study explored the practices of two high school teachers of U.S. history and their students' performance on evidence-based history essays over 7 months. Data include pre- and posttest essays, interviews, observations, teacher feedback, assignments, and readings. Qualitative and quantitative comparisons of 42 students' work show that one class improved in writing evidence-based history essays whereas the other did not. Qualitative analyses of the teachers' practices suggest that different opportunities to learn to read, write, and think historically are not equally valuable. In particular, the following qualities of instruction support students' development in writing evidence-based historical essays: approaching history as evidence-based interpretation; reading historical texts and considering them as interpretations; supporting reading comprehension and historical thinking; asking students to develop interpretations and support them with evidence; and using direct instruction, guided practice, independent practice, and feedback to teach evidence-based writing. The act of writing alone is not sufficient for growth in evidence-based historical writing.

KEYWORDS: writing, social studies education, instructional practices, history teaching, history learning

American students face a complex, global society in which they will face such questions as how the United States should handle international

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conflicts or whom they should vote for in the next presidential election. Such questions imply a need for analytical thinking in which citizens consider evidence and come to reasoned conclusions. Learning to write supports the preparation of citizens who are capable of disciplined inquiry. In particular, written argument allows the chance to examine the nexus between claim and evidence, which can often be elusive in speech.

Given the nature of historians' work, history classes are prime sites for instruction in these ways of thinking and writing. Historians analyze evidence, weigh conflicting accounts, consider biases, and construct written arguments grounded in evidence. A focus on writing in social studies can thus give educators another avenue to develop their students' literacy skills—an area in dire need of development, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003, 2007). Learning to write historically is inextricably bound to issues of social justice. Without this capacity, the doors of opportunity often remain closed: Children will not make it to college or flourish once they get there if they cannot write or argue effectively.

Background

What Is History?

I approach history as evidence-based interpretation in which inquiry is central. Inquiry involves working with and interrogating historical documents in an effort to understand and explain the past (cf. Holt, 1995). Disciplinary history (Seixas, 2000) emphasizes evidence, narrative, perspective, context, causation, and other ways of historical thinking (Hexter, 1971; Lee, 2005; Mink, 1987). Historical reasoning includes analyzing evidence, interpreting the meaning of evidence, and using evidence to construct and explain historically plausible accounts of the past. Certain kinds of questions put to texts facilitate historical reasoning, such as sourcing, corroboration, and contextualization of evidence (Wineburg, 2001). This view of history contrasts with what may be thought of as more conventional history instruction, which primarily consists of lecture and textbook reading and emphasizes factual recall (Page, 1991; Ravitch & Finn, 1987).

Challenges to Evidence-Based Historical Thinking and Writing

Writing evidence-based historical essays involves sifting through evidence and constructing an interpretation in writing; however, research indicates that students and teachers do not enter classrooms with many of the prerequisites needed for such work. Classroom research confirms that students tend to view history as established fact, not interpretation (VanSledright, 2002). At this more novice level of historical understanding, evidence has no place because historical narratives are given rather than constructed; that is, historical events just happen (Shemilt, 1983). Historical literacy research indicates that students do not naturally read like historians

(Wineburg, 2001). When reading historical texts, students may focus on the literal meaning of documents and miss those intertextual reading strategies that promote interpretive work (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001; Stahl, Hynd, Britton, McNish, & Bosquet, 1996).

Writing text-based interpretation is particularly difficult because it entails synthesizing and organizing information to suit the writer's purposes (for more on this, see Greene & Ackerman, 1996). In one study, college students were asked to read and interpret others' texts to create their own positions; instead of creating original arguments, most simply summarized and shared their ideas in response to the texts that they read (Flower et al., 1990). Greene's work in history (2001) affirms these findings; only one group of college students in his study analyzed facts, whereas the others listed facts and selected relevant facts without analysis or interpretation. Even student teachers have difficulty integrating documentary evidence into written accounts of past events (Bohan & Davis, 1998). Still another challenge in historical writing involves students' lack of historical language, which inhibits their ability to think in terms of another time and context (Edwards, 1978).

Developing Students' Evidence-Based Historical Thinking and Writing

In developing students' historical thinking, the kinds of texts with which students work can influence their reasoning processes. Students are more likely to think analytically and interact with texts if they read primary documents (Rouet, Britt, Mason, & Perfetti, 1996) and documents with "visible" authors (Paxton, 2002). The combination of (a) reading multiple texts that challenge students' preconceptions and (b) engaging in activities such as discussion and group work also appears to encourage historical thinking (Ashby, Lee, & Shemilt, 2005; Bain, 2005; Lee & Dickinson, 1984).

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) have concluded that the process of writing offers a path to deeper understanding and knowledge through "the *transformation* of knowledge already in the mind" (p. 179). Research in history education gives us some clues about how to encourage such transformations. For example, writing argumentative essays from multiple historical texts has been shown to help advanced students (a) progress from listing information to synthesizing texts into an argument (Young & Leinhardt, 1998) and (b) develop deep understanding of content (Voss & Wiley, 2000; Wiley & Voss, 1999). Similarly, problem-based writing tasks, as opposed to writing reports, show more promise in helping college students integrate ideas and information from sources into arguments (Greene, 1994). Explicit instruction in historical thinking and writing helps middle school students with a range of incoming skills produce accurate and persuasive history essays (De La Paz, 2005). Other forms of scaffolding, such as structured reading activities and oral debate, improve high school students' capacities to write persuasive essays (Felton & Herko, 2004). As tested in literacy research, several teaching practices appear to improve students' writing, such as a focus on deep understanding and connectedness of learning across tasks

(Langer, 2001), participatory approaches that actively engage students (cf. Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003), a balance of student-centered instruction and explicit instruction (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001), and teacher-student writing conferences (Sperling, 1990).

Recent reviews of literacy research call for studies that analyze the ways that teachers implement approaches to literacy development (Alvermann, Fitzgerald, & Simpson, 2006; Barr, 2001). History educators still know little about the relationships between teaching and learning with regard to evidence-based writing and reasoning. This study aims to examine qualitative differences in real-world history and writing instruction over time, as well as student performances that result from these practices rather than researcher interventions. This study asked what kinds of teaching would foster growth in evidence-based historical writing; to find out, it examined two teachers' practices with regard to the learning outcome of writing evidence-based essays. Several questions guided this study: How do teachers prepare students to write evidence-based historical essays? What messages about history, evidence, and writing do teachers' practices convey? What opportunities to think and write historically do these teachers provide? How do teachers think about their subject matter, students, and pedagogy? In what ways do teachers' practices coincide with improvements in students' evidence-based historical writing? This report is a comparative case study of teaching, and it uses student performance as a backdrop for claims of teaching effectiveness.

Method

This study used mixed methods in an embedded multiple-case design (Yin, 1994). Comparison of teachers used multiple embedded units of analysis, including writing opportunities, reading opportunities, use of class time, and teacher feedback. Together, these units illustrated representations of history and opportunities to learn evidence-based historical writing. Analyses of student progress within each classroom and between both classrooms entailed a pretest-posttest design to assess any change observed in the students' work.

Participants

Two teachers in two urban schools in Northern California participated in this study. Given the nominations of Bay Area educators, I observed and interviewed several secondary school teachers. The teachers chosen to participate in the study satisfied key criteria. First, each had a degree in history (Ms. Bobeck had a BA in history; Mr. Rossi, a PhD in history); second, both expressed that improving students' writing was one of their main goals; and, third, each reported giving students writing opportunities at least once per week. Both had been teaching for 10 years or more.

Bobeck's school, Hillside High, was a public charter high school centered on preparing its 440 students for college. The student population was

almost evenly split among White, African American, Latino, and Asian American students. Rossi's school, Glenview High, was a large comprehensive public high school that enrolled 2,300 students. Asian Americans and Latinos together composed 75% of the student population, whereas Whites, African Americans, and Filipinos composed the remaining 25%. Thirty-two percent of students at both schools enrolled in the free and reduced-price meals program. The majority of students at both schools spoke English as a first language and had no identifiable learning disabilities.

One class period per teacher was chosen for the study. Bobeck's largest class was selected in order to have more student work to examine. Rossi's only U.S. history course was selected to keep the content of this comparison consistent. Forty-two students from these classes participated in pre- and post-assessments of their historical learning.¹ These classes reflected the ethnic makeup of each school. These multiple data points were used to identify patterns of growth (or lack thereof) in each classroom over 7 months. Here, I report on all students' development and use two case students to illustrate the kinds of changes observed in students' work. Each case student satisfied two criteria. First, case students started the year at or below the average performance of their peers, as shown in their essays; second, the trends in case students' development over time represented a trend in the score changes for the class.

Teacher Data

Teacher data were collected from four sources: interviews, observations, feedback, and classroom artifacts (see Table 1). Observations focused on what students did during class; how the teacher represented history; and what opportunities there were to learn evidence-based reasoning, argumentation, and writing. Field notes and data summary charts were completed during and after every observation. Feedback included teachers' oral feedback to students in class or in one-on-one conferences, as well as written feedback on homework and essays. Feedback data were gathered to understand how teachers diagnosed student work; where teachers directed students' attention; and what the teachers' explicit and implicit messages were about history, writing, and evidence. Interview questions asked teachers about goals, views of student progress, sense of students' needs, and the reasoning behind their instructional decisions. Artifacts from each class were collected, including course syllabi, readings, reading assignments, writing assignments, daily activities, tests, teachers' written feedback, and rubrics.

I organized field notes and interview data chronologically and transcribed them. I used memos to track key ideas, to highlight illustrative excerpts of class, and to note what to look for in future observations. Once initial codes were developed and tested, I transcribed excerpts of field notes and interviews that related to research codes in challenging and supporting ways. Data displays showed the amount of time that each teacher devoted to a particular topic, the number of writing assignments per topic, the readings per topic, and key components of assignments. Tracking patterns in assignments, readings,

Table 1
Teacher Data

Teacher Data	When Collected	Relevant Research Questions	How Analyzed
Interviews: 4 per teacher	October, December, February, March/April	How do teachers understand their subject matter? How do teachers understand student progress and learning challenges? How do teachers think about pedagogical decisions? How do these teachers' lessons represent the discipline? What opportunities to think and write historically do these teachers provide?	Multiple analytic passes Within and across case pattern coding Testing propositions, searching for alternative explanations
Observations: 15–20 hrs per teacher	Weekly for first three months, then every 3–4 weeks	How do these teachers' assignments and materials represent the discipline? What opportunities to think and write historically do these teachers provide?	Multiple analytic passes Within and across case pattern coding Complex time series analysis Testing propositions, searching for alternative explanations
Assignments and materials	Daily	How do teachers diagnose student understanding and shape their instruction accordingly? What messages about history and evidence do teachers convey in their feedback?	Multiple analytic passes Within and across case pattern coding Testing propositions, searching for alternative explanations
Feedback	For every essay collected (every 2–3 weeks)		

observations, and feedback led to the development of propositions that were tested and refined with multiple data passes. These data arrangements also allowed for time-series analyses based on key elements of teachers' practices related to these propositions (e.g., use of primary sources, modeling of reading strategies, scaffolding for writing assignments).

Student Data

The pre- and posttest instruments measured how students composed arguments that recognize historical perspectives from multiple documents. The extent to which students accurately interpreted and used the documents was a major part of what was measured. The pretest asked, "Why did the Founding Fathers allow slavery to continue when they wrote the Constitution in 1787?" The posttest asked, "Why did the United States drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, in August 1945?" Both instruments included one page with the question and brief directions, a second page with primary document excerpts from the period in question (e.g., Madison's notes from the Constitutional Convention, Truman's diary), and a third page with excerpts from three secondary sources representing a range of interpretations. Each instrument presented several points of agreement between sources and so allowed for multiple responses to the questions. Researchers who have studied historical reasoning and writing in history have used similarly structured tasks for assessing students' historical reasoning and writing (cf. Lee & Dickinson, 1984; Rouet et al., 1996; Young & Leinhardt, 1998). The level of difficulty of existing tasks for this study (e.g., essay formats found in Advanced Placement [AP], International Baccalaureate, and British A-level exams) were not appropriate for 11th-grade students who demonstrated a range of achievement levels. Therefore, specific instruments were created for the study.

The constraints of working in the classrooms led to certain compromise on the essay topics. In particular, teachers did not give class time for testing unless the topic was consistent with subjects that they were about to study; therefore, each instrument focused on a different topic. Administering the same instrument twice, or counterbalancing and correlating two instruments, would have given greater assurance of internal validity (Krathwohl, 1993). Even so, use of the same instrument could result in problems because contextual changes over the course of multiple administrations can influence results (Krathwohl, 1993). The strength of these instruments lies in their ecological validity as it related to their use in classrooms, even though institutional constraints prohibited the use of parallel tasks.

Additional efforts were made to increase confidence in internal validity. In terms of content validity, the pre- and posttest instruments are consistent with such notions of historical reasoning as analysis of evidence, use of evidence to construct interpretations of the past, and communication of arguments in writing. Such practices are consistent with the work of historians (cf. Collingwood, 1943; Mink, 1987; Wineburg, 2001). These tasks differ from such work in that historians typically come up with their questions and

search out evidence through archival research (cf. Grant, Gradwell, & Cimbricz, 2004). The nature of a timed in-class test does not allow for such a practice. Interviews with three history doctoral students about the pre- and posttests increased confidence in content validity. During individual interviews, the PhD students thought aloud as they read the prompt and corresponding documents, to reveal how the documents worked together in response to the essay question—that is, in what ways they presented evidence for multiple interpretations, if they were historically credible, and where they showed points of corroboration and conflict.² The graduate students concluded that the tests posed credible historical questions and presented historical documents useful in constructing a response.

Except for the topic, each instrument was designed to be as parallel as possible. Both instruments ask a *why* question that prompts students to make a supporting argument explaining why an action was taken in the past. In both cases, representatives of the U.S. government were the main actors. These questions were designed to determine whether students could examine an event with which they might disagree (i.e., slavery, bombing another country) from a historical perspective (i.e., the government, its representatives). I created a matrix of possible answers as suggested by each document to ensure the following: that the documents and questions were not biased toward any single interpretation, that there were conflicting documents for students to navigate, and that students could justify different interpretations of these historical events. To ensure that both instruments were age appropriate, documents were shortened and vocabulary was altered, and anything that might distract students was removed (e.g., ellipses, brackets). Because the pre- and posttest were administered 7 months apart, it was unlikely that the pretest sensitized students to the tests' format.

The pretest served as a baseline from which to assess change over time. An analytic framework of historical thinking (cf. Collingwood, 1943; Hexter, 1971; Mink, 1987; Shemilt, 1983; Wineburg, 2001) and argument structure (cf. Chambliss & Murphy, 2002; Lunsford & Ruskiewicz, 2001; Toulmin, 1958) guided the analysis of students' evidence-based historical writing over the course of 7 months. Propositions developed from individual case studies were tested on all students' writing samples and so led to the creation of a rubric (see Table 2) with two criteria: argumentation and historical reasoning. Students were given scores of 1 through 5 for each criterion (1 = the lowest score). This rubric was used to systematically chart individual progress and compare the relative growth in each class.

Essays were judged on the argumentation criteria by checking for claims, evidence, and analysis that explained the connections between the evidence and the claim (cf. Toulmin, 1958). In assessing essays for the historical reasoning criteria, I sought the following: whether the evidence supported the students' interpretations; the degree to which students accounted for the documentary evidence in their claim; the extent to which students explained the given historical perspective; and whether students placed the evidence into context, accounted for biases in sources, recognized causal relationships, and qualified

Table 2

Development Rubric of Evidence-Based Historical Writing

Level 5

Argumentation: A central claim, or thesis, responds to the question. This claim is clear and specific and makes a *plausible* argument. Incorporates *persuasive* evidence that is specific and relevant to the claim. The weight of the evidence is *convincing*. *Explicit* and clear analysis of why and how the evidence supports the claim. There may be inconsequential factual errors. Essay reads as an integrated whole that weaves claim, evidence, and analysis together coherently.

Historical reasoning: The claim accounts for the evidence at the student's disposal. Essay explains how *multiple contrasting* pieces of evidence generate the claim. Selection and analysis of evidence reveals an understanding of historical significance, causation, or biases of sources pertinent to the topic. Explanation of the connection between claim and evidence *integrates* relevant historical context. Essay demonstrates an awareness of the tentative, complex nature of historical knowledge.

Level 4

Argumentation: A central claim, or thesis, responds to the question. This claim is clear and specific and makes a *plausible* argument. Incorporates *persuasive* evidence that is specific and relevant to the claim. The weight of the evidence is *compelling*. *Explicit* and clear analysis of why and how *some* of the evidence supports the claim. There may be inconsequential factual errors or misinterpretations. Essay integrates evidence, analysis, and claim with more coherence than in a list.

Historical reasoning: The claim accounts for *most* of the evidence at the student's disposal. Explains how *multiple* pieces of evidence generate the claim. Selection and analysis of evidence reveals a *developing* understanding of historical significance, causation, or biases of sources pertinent to the topic. Explanation of the connection between claim and evidence *attends* to relevant historical context and avoids generalization. Essay demonstrates *some* awareness of the tentative, complex nature of historical knowledge.

Level 3

Argumentation: A central claim, or thesis, responds to the question. This claim is clear and *believable* but may not be specific. Incorporates *credible* evidence that is *fairly* specific and relevant to the claim. The weight of the evidence may be *insufficient* to fully warrant the claim. *Explicit* analysis of why and how the evidence supports the claim is *limited* and/or *inconsistent*. There may be minor factual errors or misinterpretations. Essay is logically sequenced but may read more as a list of details that may not cohere.

Historical reasoning: The claim accounts for *some* of the evidence at the student's disposal. Selection and analysis of evidence reveals a *limited* understanding of historical significance, causation, or biases of sources pertinent to the topic (e.g., the author may not explain how pieces of evidence relate and may not distinguish between primary and secondary evidence). The essay may *note* contextual factors; however, the essay may still make *some* generalizations. Essay demonstrates a *limited* awareness of the tentative, complex nature of historical knowledge.

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Level 2

Argumentation: Argumentative statements respond to the question, but the essay may have no central focus. If there is a main claim, it is typically unclear, vague, or weak. Evidence is *limited, irrelevant* to the claim, and/or *incorrectly used*. There is *little or no* analysis of how and why the evidence supports the claim. Essay may contain factual errors or misinterpretations. Explanations of evidence and claim may be illogically sequenced, unclear, or incomplete.

Historical reasoning: Claim attempts argument but *may not account* for evidence at the student's disposal. Selection and analysis of evidence may reveal an understanding of history as a *compilation* of details. This may reveal *little or no* understanding of historical significance, causation, biases of sources, or context. Instead, most of the evidence is treated *equally* (e.g., selection of evidence may seem arbitrary, author may not distinguish between primary and secondary sources). May use contemporary values to judge the past. May use personal views, generalizations, absolutist language, or ahistorical evidence (e.g., use of evidence from the present-day to support an argument about another period).

Level 1

Argumentation: A central statement may describe a topic rather than make an argument; a central claim may not respond to the question; and/or there may be no central claim. If there is a claim, it may be vague, unclear, or *implausible*. *Little or no* evidence. Evidence may be a summative list of detail, irrelevant to the claim, and/or incorrectly used. Essay may contain significant factual errors or misinterpretations. Explanations of evidence and claim may be illogically sequenced, unclear, incomplete, or missing.

Historical reasoning: The essay does not make a plausible historical interpretation in response to the question. If facts are included, they may take the form of a *summary* or *chronology* of the past. Selection and analysis of evidence may reveal an understanding of history as a *compilation* of details. This reveals *no* understanding of historical significance, causation, biases of sources, or context. Instead, the evidence is treated *equally*. May use contemporary values to judge the past. May use generalizations, personal views, absolutist language, or ahistorical evidence to make a case.

their arguments. These criteria are consistent with research on students' historical reasoning, especially that of Lee (2005), Levstik and Barton (2008), Shemilt (1983), VanSledright (2002), and Wineburg (2001). Students were judged not so much on the content of their interpretation as they were their use of evidence in forming and supporting an interpretation and their recognition of historical perspectives and contextual influences of past events.

A series of meetings with three history education experts led to refinements of the rubric and so increased confidence in content validity. These experts included a professor of history education, with a doctorate in educational psychology; a PhD in history education; and a doctoral student in history education. All had experience teaching high school history. Their input addressed historical thinking, argumentation, student learning, and developmental levels of high school students' history writing. Subsequent interrater reliability tests compared my scores to one rater's with 24% of students' pretests and resulted in a reliability coefficient of .83.

Results

The following vignettes convey the opportunities to learn evidence-based historical writing that Bobeck and Rossi provided. Juniors in two U.S. history classes received the same number of writing and reading opportunities, but the teaching in each class differed. In Bobeck's course, students learned the conventions of analytical writing and typically worked in groups to make sense of historical sources. In Rossi's class, students listened to lectures and worked independently, completing essays and reading the textbook. Bobeck's approach was more consistent with disciplinary history (Seixas, 2000) and therefore more in line with the learning goals of this study. Although comparing two teachers with such different approaches is not entirely fair, the comparison is instructive when considering how to develop students' historical thinking and writing. It is with this aim in mind that I proceed with the comparison. I examine reading and writing opportunities, use of class time, and feedback, to illustrate how each teacher's approach to history and writing instruction translates into classroom practices. I share overall class trends on the pre- and posttests, and I analyze two case students' essays to indicate the potential consequences of each approach with regard to learning evidence-based historical writing.

Ms. Bobeck

Bobeck taught the required 11th-grade humanities course at Hillside High School to 20 students with a range of skills and backgrounds. The class met in 1- to 2-hour blocks every day. The structure of the course made it possible for students to explore topics and themes from different historical perspectives: Bobeck spent 2 weeks on an immigration unit and another 2 weeks on the experience of Native Americans. The course structure enabled her to integrate English, history, and writing instruction. Across both disciplines, Bobeck's classes, assignments, and feedback emphasized evidence-based interpretation and multiple perspectives.

Her stated goals were consistent with this approach—that is, with helping students connect claims with evidence. Early in the year, she said,

A big part of what I see myself doing as a teacher is helping kids form opinions about stuff based on things that they see and read and hear. So the whole use of evidence in defending a point is critical to me and part of the overall development of the student and its purpose as an active member, citizen of our society. (interview, November 17, 2004)

Bobeck reiterated this goal later in the year:

When kids think about opinions, they often think that every opinion is right. . . . Whatever your opinion is, there's no right or wrong about it. And therefore, you can't really support it, but you can't really refute it; it's just someone's opinion. That's not something that I particularly

want to encourage. . . . You can support or refute the accuracy of what someone is saying in terms of the evidence that they're using to support that opinion. (interview, January 4, 2005)

Her interest in developing students' abilities to support arguments with evidence appeared in both her classroom talk and her assignments.

Reading. Bobeck's assignments directed students to read different genres, practice comprehension strategies, interpret text, recognize multiple perspectives, and treat text as evidence. On average, Bobeck assigned eight pages of reading every day. The history portion of the reading involved the textbook *The Americans* (Danzer, 2002) and packaged curriculum guides such as *Choices* from Brown University. The remaining readings were split between historians (e.g., Howard Zinn) and primary documents (immigration laws in U.S. history, the Constitution, Andrew Jackson's thoughts on Indian removal, etc.).

Bobeck structured every reading assignment with a set of questions that emphasized a close reading of text and historical perspectives. Reading questions for primary sources (see Table 3) highlighted historical perspectives, the interpretive nature of history, and the text as a source of evidence. These questions also directed students to interact with the text and to make sense of the text through questioning. Each of these assignments directed students to recognize the authors and their ideas. SOAP questions (i.e., questions that asked about the source, occasion, audience, and purpose) took this one step further, by asking students to consider who might have listened to or read the text in its original form. In responding to these questions, the students' task was to understand what the text could tell them about the authors, their views, and the worlds in which they lived. Reading assignments for primary sources also emphasized the relationship between claim and evidence: As part of understanding Jackson's and Theodore Freylinghuysen's arguments, Bobeck directed students to consider the evidence that each provides to support his argument.

Secondary-source reading assignments emphasized reading comprehension, authors' perspectives, and history as an interpretive discipline rooted in evidence. Assignments for Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (1980) serve as examples (see Table 4). The first question for each chapter directed students to practice comprehension strategies and to recognize what the text said, before jumping to conclusions. Other questions typically steered students to notice the perspective of the author and to recognize the basis upon which authors make their interpretations. As such, students were in a position to agree or disagree with the authors, as long as their own views were rooted in evidence. Bobeck's response to one student's summary of Zinn's chapter 8 represents her feedback on homework well. When a student wrote that Zinn did not want Americans to forget slavery, Bobeck wrote, "That's true, but it's *not* his main argument." Then she explained Zinn's argument briefly. In response to the student's point that

Table 3

Examples of Bobeck's Primary-Source Reading Questions

Topic and Reading Questions

Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*

1. Look at the story of Demby (pp. 22–23). What does it demonstrate about the moral and legal status of slaves under slavery? What does it suggest about the use and maintenance of power in the slave system? Can you trust Frederick Douglass's interpretation of the Demby story? Why or why not?
2. Given what we consider F. D.'s purpose to be, why do you think he has included such information?

Opposing viewpoints on Indian removal in Georgia

For each document—one by Andrew Jackson and one by Theodore Freylinghuysen—answer the following questions:

1. What does “civilized” mean to him?
 2. What does “savage” mean to him?
 3. What are his arguments *for/against* removal?
 4. What evidence does he provide?
-

Africans were an easy target at the time, she wrote, “Explain. That’s key to his argument.” In these comments and others, she tried to help the student identify the author’s argument.

Class time. The daily structure of Bobeck’s class encouraged interaction with texts, peers, and herself on an individual and whole-class scale. In a typical day, students worked individually or in groups while Bobeck walked around observing them. Later, students often engaged in whole-class discussion facilitated by Bobeck. Students arrived on time, worked productively with their groups, and participated during whole-class discussions.

Bobek frequently used individual and group work activities to ground students’ thinking in textual evidence, prepare them for writing opportunities, and encourage them to interpret historical documents. In one case, Bobek gave students an activity to complete in class that prepared them for the final essay on Frederick Douglass (see Figure 1). During this task, students worked together, flipped through their books, and found quotations to demonstrate that slaves were mentally and physically constrained. Bobek introduced the idea of mental and physical cages as a way of structuring students’ analysis of Douglass’s autobiography and the system of slavery. Students did a similar activity when they selected quotations from Douglass’s *Narrative* (2003) to suggest how he became free. Instead of setting students loose to analyze Douglass’s autobiography, Bobek provided structure for these investigations of the text. Such activities scaffolded writing assignments, thereby training students to connect textual evidence with ideas.

Table 4
Excerpts of Bobeck's Secondary-Source Reading Assignments

Source and Questions

Zinn: Chapter 8

1. First, write a brief summary of Zinn's argument using the summary techniques we discussed in class. Your summary should be approximately 1 paragraph in length. Remember that a summary should address his main argument and supporting information . . .
2. What perspective does the text seem to tell the story from?

Zinn: Chapter 9

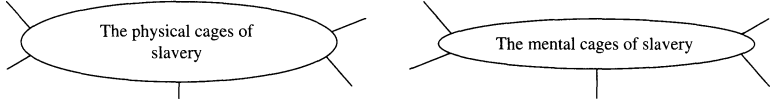
1. First, write a brief summary . . .
 2. Some historians have argued that Africans accepted their servitude. After all, historians reason, if they truly rebelled, wouldn't they have been able to overthrow the slave system? Identify the evidence that Zinn offers to the contrary. (You should have at least 4 examples.)
 3. Would Frederick Douglass agree with that assessment? Provide evidence from his book to support your interpretation.
-

Writing. Bobeck's writing assignments called for students to support ideas with evidence. To this end, Bobeck offered explicit instruction on how to structure an argument, guided opportunities to develop essays, and gave oral and written feedback. Writing assignments and instruction enabled students to make their own interpretations, sustain a focus on one topic, and examine historical perspectives. Bobeck used a variety of essay assignments and topics to develop the students' ability to convey their ideas in writing and support them with evidence. Bobeck offered one writing exercise per day, including formal essays, literature responses, in-class journals, one- to three-sentence reading question responses, and Cornell reading notes. Students wrote history essays every 2 weeks.

The Douglass analytical essay assignment was typical of historical writing opportunities in its emphasis on evidence and argumentation (see Table 5). Explicit instructions about evidence and citing page numbers established an expectation about the use of text. The directions gave students a clear formula for writing an essay. This assignment steered students' attention to the readings and Douglass's perspective. Furthermore, it gave students narrative control by enabling them to build their interpretations.

Bobek gave guidance beyond offering the assignment specifications. For the Douglass essay assignment, she modeled the process of outlining a paper using a five-paragraph essay format and required students to submit an outline before writing the essay. As she modeled outlining, Bobeck went over the key components of an essay: introduction with a thesis; supporting paragraphs with evidence, topic sentences, and analysis; and a conclusion. In discussing supporting paragraphs, Bobeck referred to two methods that

The system of slavery could be described as a cage for slaves. The slaves were limited in both their physical and intellectual activity with the aim of destroying their human spirit and potential. Find examples from *Frederick Douglass* of how the system of slavery created both mental and physical cages for slaves. For each example, find a detailed quotation from the book which illustrates the nature of the cage AND in a brief sentence describe that limitation. Be sure to have a page # for each example. You must have 8-10 examples in all.



The diagram consists of two ovals side-by-side. The left oval is labeled 'The physical cages of slavery' and the right oval is labeled 'The mental cages of slavery'. Each oval has four short lines extending from its perimeter, resembling a cage or a container.

Figure 1. Bobeck's Frederick Douglass assignment: The in-class cages activity.

Table 5
A Sample Essay Assignment in Bobeck's Class

Frederick Douglass Analytical Essay

According to Douglass, what kept the institution of slavery alive? Be sure to address THREE of the following:

- Mental cages
- Physical cages
- Religion
- Economic incentives

This essay should follow all the expectations of a well-written expository piece. Specifically, you should be mindful to include:

- A well-developed, thoughtful thesis statement
- A clear introduction
- Clear, coherent paragraphs with topic sentences and concluding or transitional sentences
- Specific quotations from the text of the book to support your thesis (about 4-6 total) and their page numbers
- A thoughtful conclusion that sums up the major idea of your essay and leaves the reader thinking
- Accurate grammar and spelling

Hillside students were to have learned in the 9th and 10th grades: PIE (which stands for *point, information, and explanation*) and the quote sandwich (which comprises an introduction to a quotation, the quotation, and an analysis). Students were required to use four to six quotations. The presentation and initial scaffolding of the Douglass essay convey the structure of an argument and the use of evidence.

Explicit writing instruction continued the next day, when students worked with their thesis statements. A worksheet structured students' work (see appendix) and gave explicit reasons why certain theses were stronger than others. Not only did this worksheet make the criteria for a strong thesis explicit, but it gave concrete examples of three levels of theses, and it explained the distinctions between these levels. Here, then, the worksheet offered a framework for evaluating a thesis while giving students a chance

to improve their theses. Bobeck used whole-class discussion and lecture to lead students through the ideas and skills embedded in this worksheet and to practice them.

Feedback. Bobeck regularly gave oral and written feedback to students. Such feedback allowed students opportunities to interact with Bobeck: to gain a sense of her expectations, to receive further instruction in writing and evidence use, and to improve their reading comprehension. During lessons, she often walked around and gave feedback on homework from the preceding night. The following are typical of her comments on the Zinn assignment: “In this summary, you really want to focus on what is his argument. You have good facts, but what’s he saying with those facts? What’s he arguing?” and “These are many facts. What’s the main argument?” (field notes, October 18, 2004).

Bobeck also used class time to comment on in-class work. During one class, students worked on a task designed to prepare them for the final essay. As students flipped through their books, some asked which quotations they should choose to explain how Douglass became free. Bobeck replied, “Whatever makes sense to you. Really, it’s your thinking about what makes him get free. It’s not a strict story here; what you think is important” (field notes, October 18, 2004). In her feedback to the whole class, Bobeck emphasized that students had interpretive control over their responses.

Bobeck also gave written feedback on students’ essays. This feedback included rubrics, commentary, and notations about writing mechanics. Three times during the year, Bobeck held one-on-one conferences during class to help students process written feedback and guide revisions. As she spoke with each student for 10 minutes, the rest of the class watched a film on a topic related to the unit of study. The focus of each conference depended on the students’ needs, but it ranged from clarifying theses to specifying evidence to helping students explain the connection between evidence and thesis. For conferences on students’ heritage project rough drafts, Bobeck adapted a rubric to structure feedback around key criteria, including historical context, discussion of American identity and U.S. experiences, written organization and clarity, writing conventions, bibliography, and introduction and conclusion. For each criteria, Bobeck typed comments such as “It’s unclear when they arrive, so there’s little context for what’s going on in the U.S. then.” In addition, she wrote on the actual essay to give grammatical and mechanical feedback.

Student performance in Bobeck’s class. Comparison of the 16 students’ pre- and post-instruction essay scores indicates an overall trend of improvement (see Table 6). Overall, 81% of Bobeck’s students improved in argumentation, and 75% improved in historical reasoning. Furthermore, 12 of Bobeck’s 16 students improved in both argumentation and historical reasoning. One student grew in argumentation but not historical reasoning. The remaining 3 students did not grow in either area.

Table 6
Number of Bobeck's Students in Each Rubric Category
on the Pretest and Posttest

Criteria	Historical Reasoning		Argumentation	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
1	10	2	8	0
2	5	9	7	9
3	1	4	1	7
4	0	1	0	0
5	0	0	0	0
<i>M (SD)</i>	1.44 (0.63)	2.25 (0.19)	1.56 (0.63)	2.43 (0.13)
Overall change (<i>SD</i>)	—	0.81 (0.54)	—	0.88 (0.50)

One student, Asif, represents the improvement trend seen in Bobeck's student work even though his pre-instruction essay score was below the average of his peers. In responding to the pretest question about the founders' allowance of slavery in the Constitution, Asif conveyed his personal views of slaveholders and did not directly answer the question by explaining the founders' perspective. In contrast, his posttest writing was a more considered response to the question; namely, it explained the perspective of the U.S. government at a particular time in history. Although Asif had a strong opinion about the founders' racism, his pretest essay did not directly respond to the question, nor did it contain historical evidence. His example of a slaveholder's treatment of a woman came from the Douglass autobiography—a text written 58 years after the Constitution. When Asif compared the founders to other people, he jumped across periods without offering evidence for the similarities that he pointed out. Although the founders' racism was an important factor in their decision making, citing a singular cause here oversimplified a complex story. Finally, rather than illuminate the world of the founders and why they might have acted as they had, Asif offered personal judgments (e.g., "Slaveholders . . . are terrible people"). Although Asif took a stand in this essay, he did not ground his views in relevant evidence, nor did he historically reason about the question.

But by the end of the year, his arguments were more reasoned. Asif made a clear, focused argument in his post-essay when he stated, "The United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan on August 1945 for many valid reasons." Though vague, this claim responded directly to the question and acknowledged multiple causes for a complex event. Furthermore, the essay remained focused on this argument. Even with vague evidence, the reasons were accurate, relevant, and historically significant given his claim. The post-essay shows Asif's ability to suspend personal opinion and so consider a historical problem from the perspective of the United States in 1945. Consideration of historical perspective and Asif's list of causes

Monte-Sano

established the context of the bombing of Hiroshima to help explain why the United States dropped the bomb.

Asif's two essays represent a larger shift—from disorganized arguments based on personal judgments to logically ordered arguments based on historical evidence. Other students in Bobeck's class displayed similar improvements in their historical writing.

Mr. Rossi

Fifty miles away, Rossi taught an elective AP U.S. history course at Glenview High School. Classes met daily for 50 minutes. Although this course was not required, Rossi's class included 30 students from a range of achievement levels, many of whom he recruited. Rossi believed that participating in an AP course and taking the AP test was a way to help minority low-income students view themselves as being college-bound. To support his approach, he cited a study that indicated that students who took an AP course and took the exam were more likely to graduate from college (see College Board, 2005). He explained, "I'm going to sacrifice pass rate for the knowledge that they have taken the exam and understand what a college class is like" (interview, October 13, 2004).

To that end, Rossi gave students his version of a college experience. He emphasized coverage of material and memorization in preparation for the AP U.S. history exam.³

[I want] to make sure that [students] understand not only the sequence of history but the scope of history. . . . Having them memorize a bunch of facts that may be unrelated is good for testing, but it's not good for learning. But they have to learn facts—they have to learn enough of them, you know, to do multiple-choice exams or to write a good essay. (interview, October 13, 2004)

Rossi explained that knowing facts would help students with multiple-choice questions and essays. Rather than focus on interpretation and evidence, he emphasized recall. The course organization offered students brief opportunities to learn about historical topics in chronological order, from the founding of the American colonies to Bill Clinton's presidency.

Reading. Students regularly read chapters for homework from Bailey and Kennedy's *The American Pageant* (1998), an AP history textbook. Over 20 weeks, students read all 44 chapters of the textbook, or an average of eight pages per day. As is typical with history textbooks, *Pageant* does not provide footnotes or evidence on which the authors' interpretations are based. In the last week of my observation, students read eight primary documents for two practice assignments—namely, two document-based questions (DBQs). The DBQ is one of three essays that students write for the AP exam. The students completed take-home tests and identifications for each chapter that they read. Identifications outlined ideas and details that students

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE TEST

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. David G. Phillips | 1. The United States Senate |
| b. Ida Tarbell | 2. The Standard Oil Company |
| c. Lincoln Steffens | 3. City government |
| d. Ray Stannard Baker | |
1. Match each early-twentieth-century muckraker above with the target of his or her exposé.
- A. a-1, b-2, c-3
 - B. b-2, c-3, d-1
 - C. a-3, b-1, c-2
 - D. a-3, b-2, c-1
2. The idea of “multiple-use resource management” included all of the following practices *except*
- A. Recreation.
 - B. Damming of rivers.
 - C. Sustained-yield logging.
 - D. Summer stock grazing.
3. Teddy Roosevelt believed that trusts
- A. could be destroyed without damage to the American economy.
 - B. Were greedy for power and wealth.
 - C. Were too powerful to be regulated.
 - D. Were here to stay with their efficient means of production.
4. Progressivism
- A. Supported many reforms advocated by feminists.
 - B. Offered little to the ever-growing women’s movement.
 - C. Supported only the demand for woman’s suffrage.
 - D. Followed examples set by women’s reform movements in Europe.

Figure 2. Excerpts from a take-home test of 40 questions from Rossi’s class.

were supposed to extract from the textbook. For chapter 31, on progressivism, students were asked to identify 33 terms, including *Robert LaFollette*, *Payne-Aldrich Act*, *direct primary*, *dollar diplomacy*, and *Hiram Johnson*. Students were expected to define each item by explaining what/who it was and why it was significant. Responses included vast amounts of factual detail. One typical example contained two single-spaced pages of 9-point-font definitions of each term.

The take-home tests (see Figure 2) embodied a similar approach. In class, students traded tests with a partner and graded them as Rossi read aloud the correct answer to each question. Afterward, Rossi began a lecture on the next topic. In many ways, the identifications and take-home test assignments served as students’ reading guides. It is unclear whether students read each chapter or skimmed them enough to answer the questions. Nonetheless, these reading assignments presented history as a fixed story and reading as a process of retrieving information.

Class time. Students received daily lectures in Rossi's class, which effectively reduced the students to the role of silent audience. In a lecture on the American Revolution, Rossi told students,

The important things, quite frankly, are the causes and the effects and the major battles and major innovations and the oddities. We will not spend time on the actual fighting. . . . There has never ever been a question on the AP exam which has required students to know the fighting of battles. (field notes, October 14, 2004)

The AP exam appeared to be the determinant of curricular time in this and other instances. When Rossi reviewed the causes of the Revolutionary War (the Quebec Act, salutary neglect, Battle of Lexington and Concord), he began talking about the war itself. He continued by lecturing,

The war starts in Boston. George Washington is chosen as the commander in chief. Almost immediately, the American coastline is blockaded by the British Navy. They realize they have a strategic disadvantage because trade has been cut off. The second issue is going to be where are they going to get gunpowder? . . . So in the early part of the war, Americans are going to have to pay very high prices for gunpowder and cannons. (field notes, October 13, 2004)

After discussing America's relationship with France, Rossi turned to the effects of the war. His lecture went into detail, covering the time before, during, and after the American Revolution. Rossi's instruction was consistent with his notion of history, but it replaced the textbook with the teacher as the chosen authority.

During the Revolutionary War lecture, 12 students did other work; 2 students discussed homework for a math class; and 4 students had their heads down on their desks with their eyes closed. Over the course of 15 visits to Rossi's class, an average of 7 students out of 30 were observed doing other work during the class, as indicated by calculators, writing, and/or drawing that had nothing to do with the topic or textbook. During October and December, this number reached as high as 14 and 18. Over the course of the same visits, 1 or 2 students generally had their heads on their desks or were asleep. At least 5 students were late every day I observed.

Writing. Rossi asked students to write an essay, on average, every 2 weeks. He delivered all his writing assignments orally. Rossi's prompts were similar to many of the free-response questions found on the U.S. history exam. These typically end with a period instead of a question mark and include the phrases "analyze and discuss" or "compare and contrast." For example, one prompt delivered in January asked students the following: "Analyze and discuss the causes and effects of the American Industrial Revolution from 1865–1900."

Qualities of Historical Writing Instruction

During the 15 times that I observed his class, Rossi gave students advice about essay writing twice. Each instance was roughly 3 minutes long. The first piece of advice was given 2 weeks into the term. Here, Rossi described the structure that students were to follow for their second essay:

A traditional five-paragraph essay may not be enough. The first paragraph should have an introduction with thesis. The body should have a topic sentence in each paragraph and tell one reason why. Concluding paragraph. (field notes, August 31, 2004)

The second piece of advice emphasized the importance of examples. Rossi told the class,

When you write about that, you need to include specific examples. History essays are always in the past tense and always have specific examples. There is a tendency to be very general, and while your ideas may be great, if there's no history there, you're always going to get a C to a B- just because there's not enough specific examples there. On the AP exam, your essay scores will be in the 1-2 range without specifics. (field notes, September 17, 2004)

Rossi presented this advice the third week into the course, as students prepared to write their third essay. He emphasized the need to include specific examples, but he did not explain what this meant, nor did he model how to do it. Beyond giving the aforementioned instruction, Rossi offered one-on-one conferences outside class time. This approach was consistent with his idea of a college-level course in which students are responsible for seeking help.

Feedback. Rossi generally provided minimal feedback. Chapter identifications and take-home tests received a number grade, with no other feedback. On 63% of all essays, Rossi wrote a number grade at the top (e.g., "85") with no other comments. On the 37% of essays on which he commented, Rossi typically wrote a few brief phrases (see Table 7). Besides focusing on grammar or mechanical corrections, Rossi's comments emphasized evidence in the form of factual detail and summary of information.

Student performance in Rossi's class. Comparison of pre- and post-instruction essay scores for Rossi's students revealed no change, or a decline in the scores (see Table 8). Eight percent, or two of Rossi's students, improved in argumentation and historical reasoning. All other scores did not change, or they declined.

Kim was one of the students in Rossi's class whose scores declined; her pre-instruction essay score was average for her peers. In responding to the pretest question about the founders' allowing slavery in the Constitution, she constructed an argument but did not always interpret or use the documents accurately. Kim's argument emphasized two ideas that influenced the

Table 7
Rossi's Comments by Type, With Examples From Students' Essays (n = 113)

Type of Comment	Examples
Request for factual detail	"EXAMPLES!!!" "NED/Not Enough Detail" "Little historical substance in the essay"
Naming specific facts	"Much too general" "Sugar Act, Stamp Act" "French and Indian war" "Debts" "Quartering Act" "Tea Act" "Salutary Neglect"
Request for more	"Not complete enough" "Expand your ideas more" "Needs more depth" "Are there other causes?" "Essay isn't complete enough!!!" "Expand this section"

Table 8
Number of Rossi's Students in Each Rubric Category on the Pretest and Posttest

Criteria	Historical Reasoning		Argumentation	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Test Score				
1	6	12	3	7
2	15	8	16	12
3	5	6	7	7
4	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0
<i>M (SD)</i>	1.96 (0.66)	1.77 (0.16)	2.15 (0.61)	2.00 (0.15)
Overall change (<i>SD</i>)		-0.19 (0.57)		-0.15 (0.54)

founders' decision to retain slavery: their racism and their interest in profits. Her use of documents demonstrated some understanding of the historical context, perspectives, and causes of the founders' decisions when writing the Constitution in 1787. However, her argument was not always logical or clear. Kim made a claim in her pretest and cited some evidence, but she did not explain how that supported her claim.

Her posttest moved away from argument and in fact used documents even less in constructing the argument. Kim's evidence emphasized two reasons for bombing Hiroshima: saving lives and avenging the attack at Pearl Harbor. Kim may have intended such a thesis, but she did not explicitly state this until the fourth paragraph (i.e., "It was not only for the sake of ending

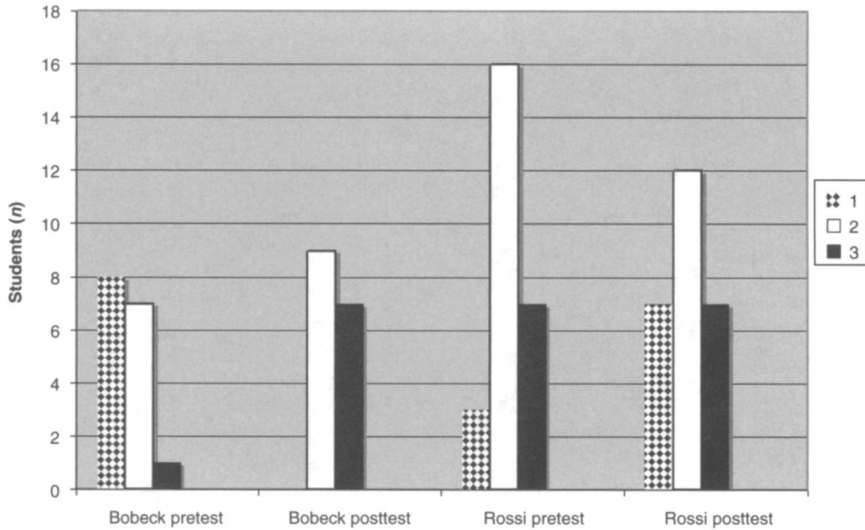


Figure 3. Comparison of pretest and posttest argumentation scores for students in each classroom.

Note. Possible scores ranged from 1 to 5; however, no student scored 4 or 5.

the war, but also for the sake of avenging the lives lost in Pearl Harbor.”). She included more details in her posttest (i.e., nine examples as opposed to eight in her pretest), but these details were largely irrelevant to her claim. Kim’s support for the Pearl Harbor argument did not establish the U.S. perspective in 1945 nor the historical context of the Hiroshima bombing. To make her point, Kim simply described the events at Pearl Harbor rather than integrate evidence of the invasion as a motivation to explain her point. Some of Kim’s statements were historically inaccurate (that conflict with Germany led to the bombing of Hiroshima). Kim’s work was representative of those students whose scores declined in Rossi’s class: fewer argumentative statements, factual detail that was often irrelevant, and little explanation of the historical event or perspective.

Comparative Student Performance

In comparison to Bobeck’s students, Rossi’s students started off the year with higher scores but ended with slightly lower scores. Overall, 81% of Bobeck’s students improved in argumentation and 75% improved in historical reasoning, whereas 8% of Rossi’s students improved in both areas. Although the majority of Rossi’s students experienced no change in scores, roughly one quarter of them had scores that declined. Figure 3 compares the pretest and posttest argumentation scores for each teacher; Figure 4 compares the historical reasoning scores.

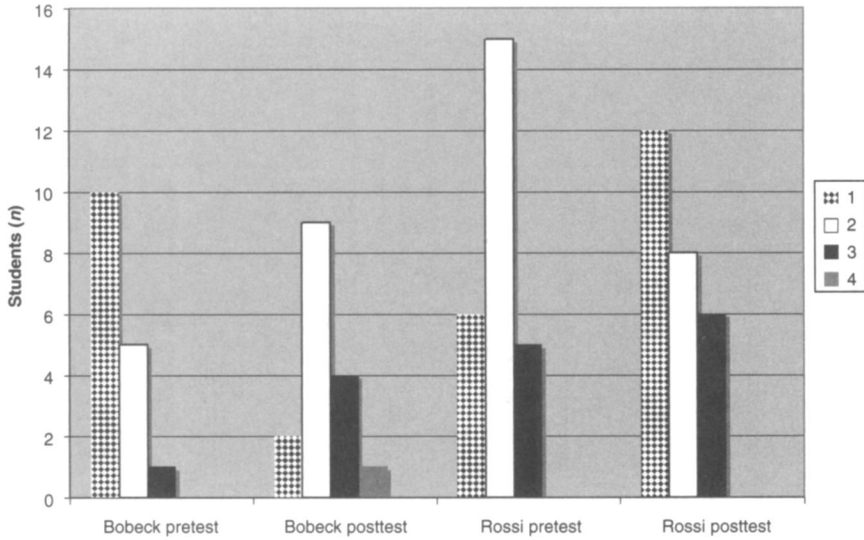


Figure 4. Comparison of pretest and posttest historical reasoning scores for students in each classroom.

Note. Possible scores ranged from 1 to 5; however, no student scored 5.

Discussion

Bobeck and Rossi assigned the same average amount of reading and writing: Their students wrote history essays every 2 weeks and read eight pages per day. However, after 7 months, Bobeck’s students improved their ability to write a historical argument despite the fact that they entered the school year with weaker historical writing skills. Why? Beyond the frequency of assignments and the amount of reading, the teaching practices of Bobeck and Rossi shared little in common (see Figure 5). When it comes to helping students learn evidence-based thinking and historical writing, all reading and writing opportunities are not equally valuable. Bobeck’s practice illustrates qualities of reading and writing opportunities that support such learning. A discussion of these qualities follows.

Quality 1: Approaching History as Evidence-Based Interpretation

That Bobeck’s students improved in evidence-based historical writing more than Rossi’s is hardly surprising. Her situation in a humanities curriculum supported goals that were more consistent with the learning outcomes targeted in this study. In effect, Bobeck’s practice reflects the disciplinary approach to history (e.g., evidence-based interpretation), and Rossi’s reflects

Bobeck

History

- History as interpretation

Reading

- Read primary documents and historians' monographs
- Find evidence to support ideas in text
- Brief reading questions

Writing

- Scaffolded writing opportunities
- Modeling; explicit instruction; coaching; & feedback in writing, reasoning, & argumentation

Class Time

- One-on-one conferences in class
- Interactive discussion & group work

Approach

- In-depth study of topics
- Instruction is responsive to students' incoming skills

Commonalities

- Regular writing opportunities
- Regular reading opportunities
- Textbook reading
- Lecture

History

- History as a set story

Reading

- Text as place to find answers to questions
- Identifications and multiple choice questions as reading guides

Writing

- Broad essay prompts with little guidance

Approach

- Brief study of topics
- Emphasis on memorization and preparation for AP exam
- Gives students college experience regardless of incoming skills

Rossi

Figure 5. Comparison of each teacher's practices.

the school history approach (e.g., history as an established storyline; Seixas, 2000). These different epistemological stances permeated each teacher's worksheets, activities, and assignments. In her efforts to improve students' thinking and persuasive writing, Bobeck embraced notions of inquiry and evidentiary thinking. Whether asking about Zinn's interpretation of African

American history, guiding students to develop their interpretations of Douglass's path to freedom, or reading documents that revealed different perspectives on Indian removal, Bobeck presented history as an interpretive discipline.

Rossi was most interested in his students' performance on the multiple-choice and writing portions of the AP exam. He believed that memorizing facts would help his students perform well on both sections. Although he did not share the AP scores for those students involved in this research, he did explain that his students have historically done poorly on the AP exam (interview, April 5, 2005). Both teachers expressed interest in improving students' writing skills; however, as embedded in their practices, their conceptions of historical writing and their theories of learning differed. Whereas Bobeck emphasized argumentation, Rossi emphasized summary. These orientations contributed to different instructional choices and so had consequences for learning evidence-based historical writing.

It is well established that students enter history classrooms predisposed to trusting textbooks and teachers as authorities (VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 2001). Students' tendencies to recite facts and reproduce others' arguments (cf. Greene, 2001) reflect this static stance toward history. Rossi's practices affirmed these predispositions toward the subject, by representing history in a way that was probably familiar to students (cf. Cuban, 1991). Several studies support the notion that, when faced with activities and readings that represent history as evidence-based interpretation, students learn to think in terms of evidence (Ashby et al., 2005; Bain, 2005; Lee & Dickinson, 1984). Bobeck's tasks, assignments, activities, and readings were more consistent with the interpretive aspects of history and as such gave students more opportunities to think in terms of evidence.

Quality 2: Reading Historical Texts and Considering Them as Interpretations

Although students in both classes read an average of eight pages per day, *what* they read differed. For almost 7 months, Rossi's students read only the textbook. As Wineburg (2001) has stated, "the defining feature of historical discourse—its constant reference to the documentary record through footnotes—is the aspect that drops out when historical texts become history textbooks" (p. 79). That is, history textbooks are often written as though there could be no other interpretation or conflicting evidence. Through textbooks, students come to know history as a body of knowledge that is certain, that has right and wrong answers (rather than layers of complexity and contradiction), and that comes definitively from textbooks and teachers (cf. Paxton, 1999).

By contrast, Bobeck's students read textbooks in addition to monographs written by historians, primary sources, and other secondary sources. Primary sources are the raw materials of history: The interpretation and comparison of multiple pieces of evidence enable historians to gain an understanding of the past and construct historical arguments (cf. Collingwood,

1943). Research on students' reading of various text structures supports the use of sources beyond the textbook (cf. Paxton, 2002; Rouet et al., 1996). Such research indicates that the use of multiple, varied texts in history supports historical thinking.

What students did with the texts that they read is also significant. Teachers' treatment of texts was consistent with their relative areas of emphasis and text selection. Rossi's reading assignments asked students to use text to find factual answers to recall questions and to define terms, names, and events. In contrast, Bobeck's practices promoted finding support for arguments in text. She specifically drew attention to the fact that each text was one author's interpretation and thus relied on a particular set of evidence. Because Bobeck's students were able to consult multiple primary and secondary texts, they could compare evidence and then consider conflicting accounts: history as interpretation. The combination of multiple primary documents with argumentative writing tasks has been found to help students understand content (Wiley & Voss, 1999) and write stronger essays over time (Young & Leinhardt, 1998).

Quality 3: Supporting Reading Comprehension and Historical Thinking

Through summaries, reading questions, in-class activities, monitoring and remediation, feedback, and interactive questioning, Bobeck guided students through complicated texts, emphasizing comprehension and analysis. Specifically, many of Bobeck's initial reading assignments focused on comprehension and were consistent with the National Reading Panel's review (2003) of effective comprehension instruction, including cooperative learning, use of graphic and semantic organizers, question answering, and summarization. When Bobeck asked her students to write Cornell notes and summaries of readings, she gave them research-supported opportunities to comprehend the main ideas of texts. If recent National Assessment of Educational Progress tests are any indication, adolescents need help with comprehension (e.g., only 35% of 12th-grade readers are proficient or better; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). Rossi's emphasis on a college-level experience did not guide the development of students' reading skills. His students did not have to read or comprehend the textbook to complete the identification and multiple-choice assignments.

Beyond emphasizing comprehension, questions that accompanied reading assignments encouraged Bobeck's students to think historically. Specifically, assignments prompted students to question the author, consider multiple perspectives, put documents in historical context, and compare documents. These ways of reading coincide with research on historians' reading and reasoning strategies that facilitate the construction of interpretations (cf. Wineburg, 2001). The iterative process of moving between these kinds of questions and evidence eventually leads historians to make a case for a particular interpretation of the past. When Bobeck asked students to consider whether Douglass would agree with Zinn (see Table 4), she pushed

students to corroborate documents. Students were prompted to source documents and consider perspectives involved in the documents' creation: "Given what we consider F.D.'s purpose to be, why do you think he has included such information?" "What does 'civilized' mean to him?" (see Table 3). When she asked students, "What context or situation encouraged the creation of this document?" (in her SOAP questions), Bobeck prompted them to contextualize a historical document. Prompts that target source information, perspectives, context, and document comparison support students' historical thinking.

Quality 4: Putting Students in the Role of Developing Interpretations and Supporting Them With Evidence

Rossi's essay assignments, feedback, and grades encouraged students to summarize details. Kim's essay grades improved as she abandoned argument and included more factual detail, even though those details were unrelated to analytical points. These practices are consistent with Rossi's belief that memorizing facts improves writing.

Bobeck saw writing differently than Rossi did and expected students to develop arguments about historical topics. She repeatedly challenged her students to find support in texts for their own interpretations. Each essay gave opportunities to interact with text and to construct meaning about particular topics. An emphasis on the connections between evidence and argument pervaded each stage of writing. Bobeck expected students to make interpretations based on evidence, and repeatedly called for evidence to support their ideas. Students who regurgitated or summarized information were encouraged to move away from this habit and toward analytical work. Her approach to history offered many opportunities for students to actively engage with content and develop their ideas.

Research in literacy supports this approach. Vygotsky's theory of learning suggests that social interactions help students advance their writing skills (cf. Sperling & Freedman, 2001). Specifically, active student involvement in classroom social interaction appears to improve reading and writing. Discussion-based approaches to text hold promise for engaging students, promoting thinking, and improving reading skills (cf. Applebee et al., 2003; Chinn, Anderson & Waggoner, 2001).

Quality 5: Using Direct Instruction, Guided Practice, Independent Practice, and Feedback to Teach Evidence-Based Writing

Each teacher's practice implicates theories of learning different from the other's. Rossi's practice indicates an expectation that students learn through listening and independent work. In his class, reading, thinking, and writing remained hidden, unspecified processes. In contrast, Bobeck's practice suggests a belief that students improve if first shown how to read and write and if given practice with guidance and feedback. Indeed, Bobeck enacted a form of cognitive apprenticeship in her practice (cf. Brown, Collins, &

Duguid, 1989), which took the form of modeling, explicit instruction, scaffolding, coaching, and feedback. Bobeck portrayed writing as a process, modeled the different stages of writing, and gave explicit instruction in aspects of constructing a written argument.

Her work with thesis development typified cognitive apprenticeship in several ways—modeling, making tacit processes explicit, scaffolding, coaching, and fading. In a traditional apprenticeship, learners watch craftspeople work, and they mimic experts' actions. In any cognitive apprenticeship, craftspeople must verbalize and make explicit particular ways of thinking so that apprentices may visualize and understand how they should complete tasks and what the work entails. Bobeck made explicit and visible the qualities of strong, proficient, and weak theses; she modeled different levels of theses; she provided support structures to help students write; she gave guided practice; and she offered feedback. Over the year, Bobeck withdrew this level of support as students became more independent. These acts embody the main features of the cognitive apprenticeship model advanced by Brown and colleagues (1989). Each essay assignment in Bobeck's class included similar steps, giving students structured opportunities to learn to write arguments, exercises that broke down the writing into manageable pieces, and practice for writing an essay with feedback. Literacy research supports the notion of explicit instruction in reading (Greenleaf et al., 2001) and writing (Graham, 2005), as well as feedback strategies such as writing conferences (Sperling, 1990).

Conclusion

According to National Assessment of Educational Progress reports of U.S. history and research in social studies classrooms, Rossi's practice is conventional in many ways except one: He asked his students to write essays more often. Students in Rossi's class had semimonthly opportunities to write essays, but in such an environment these were not enough to promote students' historical writing development over time. If all reading and writing opportunities are not equally valuable, what practices support students' development in writing evidence-based historical essays? Based on the growth observed in Bobeck's students and the distinctions between the two teachers' practices, this study points to particular qualities of reading and writing opportunities in developing students' abilities to write evidence-based historical arguments: approaching history as evidence-based interpretation; reading historical texts and considering them as interpretations; supporting reading comprehension and historical thinking; putting students in the role of developing interpretations and supporting them with evidence; and using direct instruction, guided practice, independent practice, and feedback to teach evidence-based writing. These qualities permeated the practices of Bobeck, a teacher who aimed to improve students' abilities to support arguments with evidence. These qualities were absent in the teachings of Rossi, a teacher who wanted his students to pass the AP exam and who saw summary of factual detail as the key to

historical writing. If evidence-based historical writing is an important goal, then Bobeck's practices offer promise. If the goal of learning is to write summaries of information, then Rossi's practice is more appropriate. Absent a comparison of AP test scores, this study is inconclusive regarding which approach boosts those scores.

Certainly, the context in which the teachers worked had an influence on their practices. Multiple variables likely influenced classroom performance, including school context, teacher education background, students' prior coursework in history or writing instruction, families' educational backgrounds, and students' incoming reading and writing skills. At the school level, Bobeck's small class sizes, extended blocks of instructional time, and situation in a humanities course that emphasized English and history probably worked to her advantage given the outcomes measured for this study. Rossi's situation in a tested, standardized course covering all of U.S. history most likely limited his freedom to make alternative pedagogical choices. Furthermore, although graduation rates from both high schools were similar, the graduates of Bobeck's school had a much higher rate of attendance at 4-year colleges. Future study must test the effectiveness of practices that support evidence-based historical writing across a broader range of school contexts. Finally, a more thorough study of writing development would include standardized tests of content knowledge, basic writing and reading tests, and information about students' prior experiences with history and writing. Testing these teaching practices can help us more broadly understand whether and how particular approaches are more effective with some students than with others, as well as if particular practices are more feasible in some contexts than others.

This study observed what may best serve those students with weak incoming skills: a combination of explicit instruction and a constructivist approach in which students have opportunities to inquire about historical topics and develop interpretations of the past. Practice is not enough to develop evidence-based historical writing. Not only do students require the skills entailed in evidence-based writing, but they also need opportunities to employ the reasoning embedded in this kind of writing and to see history as an interpretive discipline in which they must make an argument. In a classroom where students only read textbooks and listen to lectures, few such opportunities exist, even given regular writing assignments.

Although teaching students to write good history essays is hard work, the work is well worth it. Developing the capacity to express a historical argument in writing teaches students that they have the power to make their own interpretations and to do so based on evidence rather than uncritical acceptance of other people's claims. Such skills prepare students to understand the complexities of our social world, evaluate information responsibly, ask difficult questions, and succeed in college. Learning about evidence-based historical writing is the foundation to studying the past and to promoting a literate citizenry capable of analysis and reasoned argument in its own behalf.

Appendix:
Thesis Development Worksheet From Bobeck's Class

What makes a good thesis statement? As we already know, a thesis statement is our argument in the essay, the opinion that we are trying to prove. But what distinguishes a good one from a not-so-good one? Let's look at a few things...

See the grading rubric for our thesis statements (below). Let's take a look at what these explanations mean. Read the examples below that respond to the question "What makes Frederick Douglass's autobiography an effective, persuasive narrative?"

Approaches standards:

"Frederick Douglass wrote a persuasive piece because of his language, imagery, and content in the book."

What makes this statement "approach standards"? It

- ✓ answers the question accurately
- ✓ addresses the various aspects of the argument (language, imagery & content)
- ✓ asserts an idea that can be reasonably proved in a 5-7 paragraph essay

Now let's improve that thesis:

Meets standards:

"Interesting content combined with clear language and strong metaphors make Frederick Douglass's autobiography a persuasive one."

What makes this statement "meets standards"?

- ✓ It addresses the first three points in the thesis that approaches standards *and*
- ✓ It provides more "thoughtful analysis" of the topic because of its assertions of "interesting content," "clear language" and "strong metaphors."

Now let's improve that thesis even more:

Exceeds standards:

"Repeated Christian imagery, vivid language, and an almost scientific attention to details make Frederick Douglass's autobiography a gripping abolitionist statement."

What makes this statement "exceed standards"?

- ✓ It addresses the first three points in the thesis that approaches standards *and*
- ✓ There are more self-generated ideas in here. The author talks about "Christian imagery" and "vivid language" with a "scientific attention to details." These descriptors require more deep and complex analysis of the written work. Moreover, they show that the reader has come up with some interesting ideas of her/his own to discuss in the essay.

Now it's your turn:

Write your thesis or the thesis of a classmate in the space below. Then rank it according to the rubric above and explain why you chose that evaluation. Finally, tweak or improve the rubric to make it a bit more deep and complex. Sample thesis:

Evaluation: Exceeds standards Meets standards Approaches standards
Why did you choose that evaluation?

Now, improve the thesis to make it more complex.

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¹Four students from each class did not participate, because of incomplete consent forms, absences on testing days, and changes in student schedules.

²The think-aloud technique allows researchers to monitor cognitive processes of readers as they read and respond to written texts. This technique enables researchers to gain insight into participants' intermediate thought processes (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995).

³The Advanced Placement exam for U.S. history includes 80 multiple-choice questions, two essays, and one document-based essay. The multiple-choice section and writing section each count for one half the exam score. For more on this test, see College Board (2007).

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