

Early College Folio

The House of Education Needs Overhaul

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What is History and How Do We Study History?

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EDITORS' NOTE: *This lesson plan is one of five projects created out of the Bard Early College Fellowship, which have been highlighted for the first issue of Early College Folio. Read Ligaya Franklin's "[Early College Pedagogy: An Introduction to the Bard Early College Fellowship](#)," for a comprehensive review of the fellows, their pedagogical approaches, and the broader goals of the fellowship.*

SUMMARY

These lessons help set the foundations of writing a historical research paper by asking the students to answer the following questions: *Why does history matter? Moreover, how do we study history?*

OVERVIEW

Over the course of these six lessons, students explore the questions *Why does history matter? And how do we study history?* Through writing and thinking practices. Using the first two chapters of Lynn Hunt's *History: Why it Matters*,¹ excerpts from W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America*,² and interviews with their Bard professor's students are provided with a framework to understand the importance of history, the dilemmas that are faced when trying to determine historical truths, and the perplex and arduous nature of research.

In order to get the most out of these lessons, students should have some knowledge of the following: primary and secondary sources, sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration, as well as some knowledge of how to highlight and annotate secondary sources. You may wish to consult Stanford History Education Group's *Reading Like a Historian* introductory materials³ in order to create that base of knowledge before these lessons or embed them within these lessons to add to students' overall knowledge of history as a discipline.

These lessons were employed in a 9th-grade *History of the Americas I* course with some scaffolding but can be used in a historical methods course or Y1 and Y2 seminar with no scaffolding. When using these lessons in a 9th-grade course

it is important to coach them through challenging texts and become their biggest cheerleader. I often reminded them of the following:

1. Historians often use too many little details that do not always add to understanding but add to our confusion. Skip over those little details and think about ideas as a whole (the teacher may also want to cross those details out themselves beforehand);
2. if you find something difficult to understand, it has nothing to do with your intellectual capabilities. We all struggle with texts, and in the struggle, we become better readers, and our critical thinking skills will improve over time; and
3. we are in this together. Gather your questions and we will answer them together in discussion.

ISSUES ADDRESSED

- Students do not always understand the importance of studying history and why it matters to them in their everyday lives. Hunt's *History: Why it Matters* and DuBois's *Black Reconstruction in America* deal with that head-on through their discussions of historical monuments, nationalism, and textbooks.
- Students sometimes get discouraged when researching and give up when frustrated. Through the interviews with their teachers, they understand that research takes a lot of time and perseverance, but they can do it.
- Students do not always understand the difference between facts and interpretation and how they both work together to determine historical truths. That is something that Hunt uncovers in *History: Why it Matters*.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will understand the following:

- History is important to study because:
 - Historical truths are continuously changing as new evidence is always being gathered.
 - History will always be contested, and that contestation is evident in textbooks, museums, and the ways in which politicians shape their narratives.

Note: There are many more reasons than those listed above but those are the ones that I decided to highlight.
- Writing a research paper takes long periods of time in which you must collaborate with others, conduct extensive research through many modes, and continuously revise. There is a level of perseverance one must have in order to complete such a project and research papers are completed by academics in every discipline.

The academic environment they are in as all their professors have advanced degrees, and most of them have their doctorate. They will become aware of all of the work their professors have done in their field and will hopefully seek guidance from them in the future in regard to research.

SIGNATURE PEDAGOGIES EMPLOYED

1. Three-column response journals
2. Faculty interviews
3. Focused free-writing
4. Loop writing
5. Text explosions
6. Small-group discussions
7. Full-class discussions

TIMELINE (9TH-GRADE, YI AND YII)

- **Day 1:** Lynn Hunt's *History: Why It Matters* Chapter 1
- **Day 2:** Lynn Hunt's *History: Why It Matters* Chapter 1⁴
- **Day 3:** Lynn Hunt's *History: Why It Matters* Chapter 2
- **Day 4:** Lynn Hunt's *History: Why It Matters* Chapter 2⁵
- **Day 5:** W.E.B. DuBois's *Black Reconstruction in America* Part I
- **Day 6:** W.E.B. DuBois's *Black Reconstruction in America* Part II
- **Day 7:** Teacher interviews Part I: Introduction and assignment⁶
- **Day 8:** Teacher interviews Part II: Discussion
- **Day 9:** Debrief/Putting it all together

LESSON I: HUNT CHAPTER 1 | HISTORY MATTERS

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

This lesson will help students to understand:

1. History is important to study because:
 - a. historical truths are continuously changing as new evidence is always being gathered,
 - b. history will always be contested and that contestation is displayed in textbooks, museums, and the ways in which politicians shape their narratives, and
 - c. monuments are important to maintaining a sense of connection to the past and continuity over time.
2. There must be a balance between accurately portraying historical events and people and the ways in which we artistically portray those historical events and people.

3. Politicians' motivations sometimes hinder their ability to uphold historical truths, regardless of documentation.
4. Nations want to forget historical truths that portray them in a negative light in order to foster a sense of nationalism.

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

As a result of this lesson, students will know:

1. Historical memory is the way in which groups of people create and identify with particular narratives about historical time periods, events, and people.
2. Monuments and memorials are structures created in order to remember people, places, and events

SKILLS

Students will be able to:

- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Determine the theme, central ideas, key information, and/or perspective(s) presented in a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Students should come into this lesson already knowing:

- Before this lesson students should have read chapter 1 of Lynn Hunt's *History: Why it Matters*. And they should have completed a three-column response journal using three passages from the text.
- Note: You may wish to explicitly ask 9th-grade students to highlight and annotate (with specific attention to defining difficult terms) the documents. If you do this, you may want to look at their annotations and provide feedback before entering the discussion. This will ensure that you have given students tools to engage with difficult texts on their own. This step should not be necessary for Y1s and Y2s as they should have already learned that skill.

RESOURCES NEEDED

Teacher will need:

- Lynn Hunt's *History: Why it Matters* Chapter 1

Students will need:

- Lynn Hunt's *History: Why it Matters* Chapter 1
- Their notebooks with their response journals in it

ACTIVITIES

1. *Prompt: Take out chapter 1 of Lynn Hunt's History: Why it Matters and your response journals, then trade with a partner. Read your partner's chosen prompts and responses, then respond to their response in the third column. Take seven minutes to respond to the prompts. You should write at least six sentences in response to each passage/response. (7 minutes)*

At the end of seven minutes ask students to give the response journal back to the owner and give students time to read the responses. You may give students 5-7 minutes to openly engage with others about the passages they chose and their responses. (7 minutes)

While students are doing this walk around the room and listen to their conversations. Take note of commonalities and the passages they chose. Try to record the passages if you can.

2. At the end of 5-7 minutes ask each pair to share the passages they responded to and the conversations they engaged in with each other. (15 minutes)
3. If the following points have not come up naturally in the discussion review them by saying them to students at the end of the day. Skip over the points that were already discussed with the class (2-8 minutes depending on what points came up in discussion)
 - a. History is important because people (politicians, textbooks, and museums sometimes lie, skew, or manipulate facts for their own gain.
 - b. We have to look at everything with a critical eye to make sure that we aren't manipulated by people who may skew or lie about facts.
 - c. It is important that we make our own decisions independent of other people by analyzing the evidence ourselves
 - d. Historical truths are continuously changing as new evidence is always being gathered
 - e. There must be a balance between accurately portraying historical events and people and the ways in which we artistically portray those historical events and people
 - f. History will always be contested and that contestation is displayed in textbooks, museums, and the ways in which politicians shape their narratives
 - g. Politicians' motivations sometimes hinder their ability to uphold historical truths, regardless of documentation
 - h. Monuments are important to maintaining a sense of connection to the past and continuity over time.
 - i. Nations want to forget historical truths that portray them in a negative light in order to foster a sense of nationalism
 - j. Everything has a bias

4. Assign homework: Students should read Chapter 2 of Lynn Hunt's *History: Why it Matters* and complete with a two passage, three-column response journal.
5. Exit Ticket: Why does history matter? List at least two reasons (3 minutes)

LESSON II: HUNT CHAPTER 2 | DETERMINING HISTORICAL TRUTHS

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

This lesson will help students to understand:

1. Our job, not necessarily as academics, but as critical thinkers and participants in a democratic society, is to determine historical truths.
 - a. That way we can counter those who deny and/or skew traumatic historical events (i.e. the holocaust and American slavery) and non-factual events and portrayals of people displayed in monuments, memorials, and textbooks.

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

As a result of this lesson, students will know:

1. Historical truths are based on factual evidence and interpretation of that evidence.
2. Facts are pieces of information known to be true based on documentation.
3. Interpretation is the ways in which our point of view shapes facts.
4. History is (as defined by Hunt): a literary art that uses scientific techniques where relevant but whose fundamental aim is to tell a true story.

SKILLS

Students will be able to:

- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Determine the theme, central ideas, key information, and/or perspective(s) presented in a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Students should come into this lesson already knowing:

- Chapter 1 of Lynn Hunt's *History: Why it Matters*

RESOURCES NEEDED

- Chapter 2 of Lynn Hunt's *History: Why it Matters*

ACTIVITIES

Loop writing is a series of interrelated focused free writes (FFWs) (usually three, but could be more). This loop uncharacteristically has two FFWs but you may add the optional third if you wish. Students should respond to the first prompt for five minutes and then students should respond to the second prompt. Then give students five minutes to respond to the third loop if you choose that option.

1. Loop writing
 - a. FFW 1: Facts are... (3 minutes)
 - b. FFW 2: Interpretation is... (3 minutes)
 - c. Optional FFW3: How do we distinguish between facts and interpretation? (3 minutes) Note: you will need to adjust the timings of the rest of the lesson if you choose to do this.
2. Have three volunteers share out their responses(3 minutes)
3. Segue to next activity: Say something along the lines of fact and interpretation are at the heart of historical truths and at the heart of this chapter. Before we discuss the two let's see which passages were the most thought-provoking or questionable for you. Please take out your response journals. We will first share out loud all of the passages you chose for your response journal. You will not share your responses yet. Let's go around the room. (1 minute)
4. Students share their responses. Be sure to keep track of "heated" areas (passages that have been repeated) of the text to review later. (10 minutes)
5. Tell students to share both passages and responses with a partner (and yes, they have to re-share the passage they shared with the class). Then students respond in the third column of their partner's notebook. (7 minutes)
6. Give students 5-7 minutes to engage in an open conversation with each other about the passages and responses. (7 minutes)
7. Ask two or three pairs to share what they talked about in their discussions. (3 minutes)
8. Then review "heated" areas of the text and review the meanings of those passages and clarify any questions students may have. (7 minutes)

9. If the following points did not naturally occur in discussion and if time permits review the following with students:
 - a. Historical truths are based on factual evidence and interpretation of that evidence.
 - b. Facts are pieces of information known to be true based on documentation.
 - c. Interpretation is the ways in which our point of view shapes facts.
 - d. History is (as defined by Hunt): a literary art that uses scientific techniques where relevant but whose fundamental aim is to tell a true story.

10. Exit Ticket: Ask students to answer the following question: What are historical truths? (3 minutes)

LESSON III AND LESSON IV: DU BOIS'S *RADICAL RECONSTRUCTION* | HISTORICAL STANDARDS

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

This lesson will help students to understand:

1. There are standards historians use to study and write history.
2. Nations/politicians will try to use history in order to progress a sometimes fictional narrative.

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

There is no real content being learned here. The enduring understanding is far more important, but students will know the following as a result of this lesson:

- W. E. B. Du Bois was an American scholar, historian, educator, and social critic in the late 19th and early 20th century.
- DuBois published *Black Reconstruction in America* in 1935.
- History's purpose is not to blindly support nationalism.

SKILLS

Students will be able to:

- SL.9-10.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Students should come into this lesson already knowing:

- Primary source: Materials created during the time period of an event and/or materials that involve someone who participated in the event

- Secondary Source: Materials created after a historical event
- Sourcing: When we consider who wrote a document as well as the circumstances of its creation
- Contextualization: to situate a document in time and space/place and to understand how these factors shape its content
- Corroboration: to consider details across multiple sources to determine points of agreement and disagreement

RESOURCES NEEDED

Students will need:

- Copies of W. E. B. Du Bois's [quote from *Black Reconstruction*](#)
- Copies of W. E. B. Du Bois's [quote from *Black Reconstruction with definitions*](#)
- Their notebooks

The teacher will need:

- A blank sheet of paper

ACTIVITIES

PART I

1. Hand out copies of W. E. B. Du Bois's quote from *Black Reconstruction*.
2. Ask one student to read the quote out loud. (2 minutes)
3. Ask a different student to read the quote out loud. (2 minutes)
4. You, the teacher, reads the quote out loud a third time, asking to students to underline words and phrases that stood out to them in some way. (2 minutes)
5. Then ask students to choose three of the words or phrases that they underlined and ask them to write them down in their notebook leaving space (about eight lines or so) in between each word or phrase. (3-4 minutes)
6. Tell students, "The words or phrases you chose will now become the subject of your focused free-write. You will write a focused free-write for the first word or phrase for one minute, then write a focused free-write for the second word or phrase for one minute and then write a focused free write on the third word or phrase for one minute. I will keep time. Do not move on from one phrase to the other until I tell you to." (1 minute)
7. Tell students, "I will read through the quote one more time. When I say a phrase that inspired one of your free-write interrupts me by repeating the word/phrase and then read your FFW. If more than one of you wrote

about the same word or phrase then you have to work it out amongst yourselves who will go first, second, third, etc. Be sure to repeat the word or phrase before reading your FFW, no matter how many times it has already been read.” (1 minute)

8. Complete the text explosion: Read the quote while students interrupt to share their free writes. (20 - 30 minutes)

Part II

9. Prompt: Ask students to respond to the following loops:
 - a. FFW 1 What are our responsibilities as historians? (2 minutes)
 - b. FFW 2: What do you think are the standards of ethics in research and interpretation? (2 minutes)
 - c. FFW 3: What is history? (2 minutes)
 - d. FFW 4: What is history not? (2 minutes)

Note: Let students know they may draw what they learned from Hunt’s *History: Why it Matters* in order to answer these questions well.

10. Go around the room asking students to share their responses to one of the four prompts (15 minutes) Options to responding to their responses:
 - a. Option 1: Create a two-layered T-chart [[link to T-chart example](#)] on the board. On one side of the chart write “historian responsibilities” and on the other side write “standards and ethics in research and interpretation.” Underneath the former write, “What is history?” and underneath the latter write “What is history not?” While students share their responses on the T-chart. While students are sharing, take note of their responses on the board. (15 minutes) [[Link to T-chart with possible student responses](#)]
 - b. Option 2: Quietly take notes on a sheet of paper while students are sharing out loud. Place what they have said during the read- around in a T-chart before class the next day. [[Link to T-chart with possible student responses](#)]

LESSON V AND LESSON VI: RESEARCH PROCESS—TEACHER INTERVIEWS

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

This is part of a series of lessons which is geared to helping students conduct their own research using library resources. This is, for many students, the first time they have ever this and it will take them months to complete. This lesson will help students to understand:

- Writing a research paper takes long periods of time in which you must collaborate with others, conduct extensive research through many

modes, and continuously revise. There is a level of perseverance one must have in order to complete such a project

- Research papers are completed in every academic discipline.
- The academic environment they are in as all their professors have advanced degrees and most of them have their doctorate. They will become aware of all of the work their professors have done in their field and will hopefully seek guidance from them in the future in regard to research Note: Though not necessarily related to the objectives of the unit, this is still very important.

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

There is no real content being learned here as the understanding of the steps taken to write a research paper is the ultimate goal of this lesson, but students will become familiar with the following terms:

- Dissertation: Written requirement for a doctoral candidate; usually takes the form of a long essay in which the candidate conduct extensive original research
- PhD: Abbreviation for Doctor of Philosophy; This is usually the highest degree one can earn in an academic field.
- Research: Collecting data from a variety of sources in order to answer a particular question or solve a particular problem.

SKILLS

Students will be able to:

- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects, utilizing an inquiry-based research process, based on focused questions, demonstrating an understanding of the subject under investigation. (New Jersey State Standards NJSLA.W7)
- Use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information) (NL-ENG.K-12.12 Applying Language Skills). Note: In this case, it is the exchange of information.
- Seek out their own professional interview in order to gain information
- Confidently and professionally conduct an interview in order to gather information

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

No prior knowledge is needed for this lesson.

RESOURCES NEEDED

DAY 1

- Research Process: Teacher Interviews Assignment Sheet

DAY 2

Students will need:

- Their write-ups produced from their interviews
- Their notebooks, writing utensil

The teacher will need:

- Nothing other than this lesson plan.

ACTIVITIES

Note: This lesson relies on faculty participation and you may want to ask permission from faculty members at a faculty meeting or through email. You can see which teachers would like to participate and send students to those teachers who are interested in participating so as not to overwhelm every teacher. Either way, all faculty members should be aware of the activity. Another alternative would be to ask faculty members to participate in a panel in class either after school or during the school day for faculty members who have a prep period during their classes. Then debrief afterward.

PART I

1. FFW: Have you ever written a historical research paper? If so, what steps did you take to complete it? If you have never written a historical research paper, what do you think the steps would be to write a historical research paper? (5 minutes)
2. In a read around ask students to share their responses and write the steps on the board. If after five students you hear the same answers, you may end there and ask, “Because I have noticed we are saying similar things, is there anyone else who has something to add to the list we have created on the board?” If there are additions, add them to the list on the board. If no additions, continue to the next step. (7-10 minutes)
3. Segue to the assignment by saying, “Let’s look at the professional researchers in our school (BHSEC) and talk to them about their research and research process.” (1 minute)
4. Hand out “Research Process - Teacher Interviews Assignment Sheet” (1 minute)
5. Review the assignment sheet with students by reading the instructions in a read around. (5 minutes)
6. Emphasize the following (2 minutes):
 - a. Students may interview a faculty member with a Master’s Degree about their work, in which case their questioning would be about their research area and not a dissertation, but a dissertation is a written requirement for a doctorate and not a Master’s Degree, through both degrees are valuable.

- b. Students should be courteous and professional before, during, and after the interview.
 - c. Students should be asking their professors for an interview and not telling the.
 - d. Students should thank the professor for their time if they agree or do not agree to participate.
7. Let students know they have five days to complete the assignment.
8. Ask, “What questions do you have?” at the end of reading the assignment and take questions from the group. (5 minutes)

Part II

The following steps occur approximately 5 days later or the day after if you chose to organize a panel discussion of teachers.

1. Loops
 - a. FFW 1: How did your interview go? (3 minutes)
 - b. FFW 2: What did your interviewee say that stood out to you the most? You may add verbally, what surprised you? (3 minutes)
 - c. FFW 3: What was your biggest takeaway from the interview? (3 minutes)
For students who did not complete the interview ask them to respond do the following prompts while everyone is doing the loops: Create a plan of action for your interview? Who do you plan to interview? When? What do you hope to take away from the interview?
2. Go around the room and ask students to share their responses to one of the prompts above. (15-20 minutes)
3. Segue to a general discussion, if time permits (7-10 minutes):
 - a. Possible discussion questions (in addition to the loops above):
How did it feel to conduct an interview?

NOTES

- 1 Lynn Hunt, *History: Why it Matters* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018).
- 2 W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: A History of the Part in which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America 1860-1880* (Harcourt Brace, 1935).
- 3 Stanford History Education Group's *Reading Like a Historian* curriculum, view more information at <https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons>
- 4 Day 2 and day 4 can be devoted to giving students time to read the chapters in class ensuring that you know students have completed the reading (You can choose to do a read around or watch as students read quietly.) Sometimes, students like to read in pairs or in small groups. Or you may review other things such as primary and secondary sources, sourcing, corroboration, and contextualization and trust that students read Hunt overnight. This is your choice.
- 5 Allow an extra day for 9th graders.
- 6 Students will need some time to conduct the interviews with their professors and so you may wish to do the Teacher Interviews Introduction and Assignment on Day 1, then follow with the Hunt and Du Bois sequence giving students a few days to complete the task.