ClassNotes

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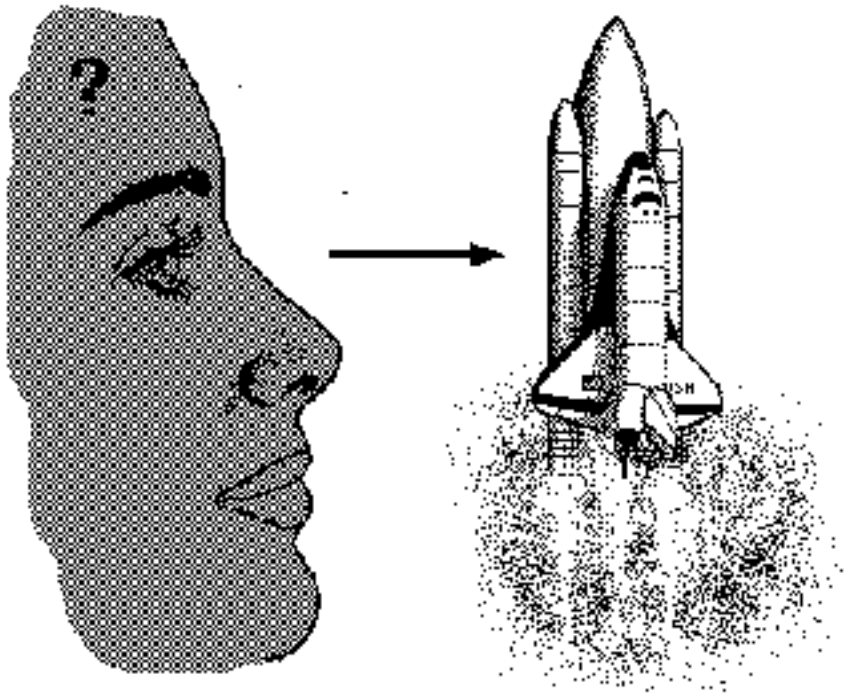
In previous issues of *ClassNotes* we have explored ideas in teaching and learning with contributions from teacher candidates, veteran teachers, and yours truly, including

- tips for class management
- differentiated instruction
- students working in groups, especially pairs
- why having students talk more helps them learn more
- assessment and evaluation, from tips on marking to the power of feedback and the "12-step rubric recovery program"
- visual tools ("think links") for helping both teacher candidates and veteran teachers make sense of the jargon we face.

ClassNotes' purpose is to take important ideas and put them into action. All previous issues are available electronically should you wish them.



The History Sampler Issue

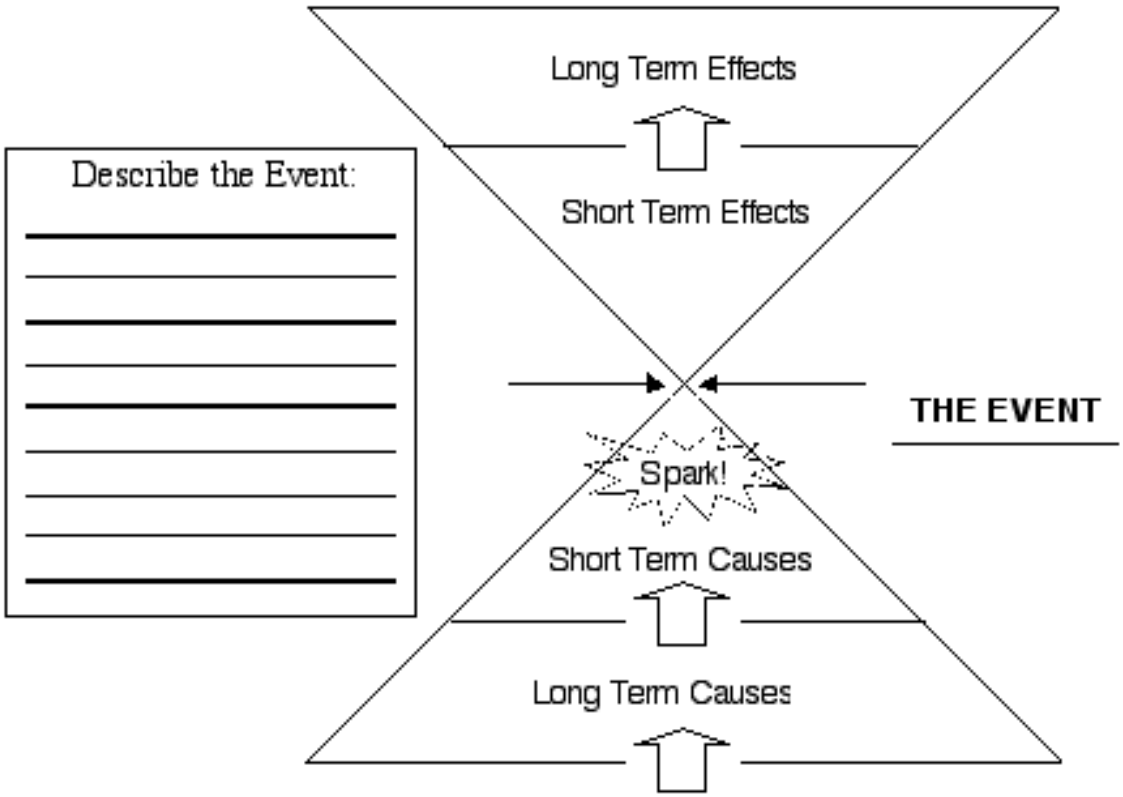
The Premise

There have been many recent efforts in both Canada and the United States to revitalize the discipline: to remind us that history is a "verb" not a "noun"— a process of investigation and deep thinking rather than a form of Trivial Pursuits (Sandwell, 2011). A number of books have been written on this theme. I have been fortunate to have met all of the authors of these works and have been lucky enough to work with some. All of these books have merit. But how can busy teachers choose what to follow and what to buy for their professional libraries?

So this issue offers a sampler consisting of basic information and some key features for each book and sample learning tasks you can use before you buy the book and explore further.

These are not full reviews and all of these books offer so much more. Many have web links that offer amazing entry points for going into depth.

A Lifetime of Habits for Teaching and Learning History



Ian Hundey (2007). *9 Habits for Success in Teaching History.* Toronto: Emond Montgomery is based on decades of teaching. Ian suggests that our students and we should strive to develop "habits of mind" when investigating the past. His list of habits include

- *Seeing both the science and art in history:* evidence is necessary but may not be sufficient
- *Thinking big and thinking small:* depth vs. breadth dilemmas
- *Seeing history as both integrative and integrating:* contributing to and learning from other disciplines
- *Building on your strengths:* some of these do come from your expertise and interests from other disciplines and your life experiences
- *Acting as an historian:* thinking, researching, and producing like historians do
- *Seeing history in perspective:* keeping balance since history does change
- *Seeing history as alive:* it is all around us, including students—a path to engagement and effort?
- *Making history personal:* developing a reflective and a critical stance on teaching
- *Finding value in history:* both personal and social

The graphic above (pp.63-5) based on Stephen Hawking's cone representation of the relationship between time and space (1988) can be used to examine cause-event-effect relationships. This adaptation is courtesy of Flora Fung, Oshawa Central Collegiate (2008). There are many gems that can be adapted to classrooms in all history courses.

In addition to the explanations and examples used to illustrate these habits I am a huge fan of the Starting Points for Teachers and Students that conclude each section. There are hundreds of neat ideas. Many of these are linked to the website http://emp.ca/links/ninehabits that is well worth exploring on your own based on your interests and questions you and your students might ask about the past. In an earlier issue of ClassNotes I suggest some criteria for you to use to explore ideas that interest you so you do not get swamped by the abundance of great stuff in

cyberspace (2012b). Ian has put a lifetime of work into *9 Habits* so there will be a lifetime of ideas for you to apply to your own teaching. One Starting Point for Students from Making History Personal does not need to go to a web link (p.179) asks them to

- list five things that have disappeared since they were a child
- list inventions or IT devices that have influenced their lives in the last five years
- list the three most important things invented during their lifetime and justify this list

This kind of list making with justification tells them and you what is personal and therefore significant (at least to them). Their data may be useful starting pints for a study or reference points to remember for any unit in any course you teach.

A similar Starting Point for you to "make history personal" (p.177) would be to reflect on critical incidents and pattern in your own teaching career. When you have identified these decide how they have influenced you current teaching or will influence your future teaching. Some of mine relate to assessment which I can share in future.

For a deeper understanding of habits of mind that go cross curricular http://www.habitsofmind.org/ is a rich site from work that I first saw nearly there decades ago.

Basics and Much More:
Acronyms for Concept Formation and Historical Analysis and Remembering Key Ideas

"You got a 'C' in History? How hard could it be?"

James A.Duthie (2012). ***A Handbook for History Teachers.*** **Lanham Maryland: University Press of America** takes the stance that history is primary about argument. I first came across his thinking in the mid 1980s when he talked about the "narrative trap" whereby too many students, after writing a thesis statement, would pile on as many facts and ideas to support it as they could. They misinterpret an argument backed by evidence with "tell me all you know about . . . ". Duthie, who taught in Nanaimo, British Columbia, but educated in Scotland, combines superb detailed historical knowledge and comprehensive up-to-date views on all aspects of teaching history. From exploring the logic of history to collecting and processing data, critical reading and writing, oral discussion, the nature of history, test design with document-based questions and classroom management he cites both research and classroom practice. This is not a quick read as each of these and other issues in teaching and learning are explored in depth. But teachers working through the chapters related to their specific professional goals can learn a great deal. For example, I was very impressed by Duthie's concrete examination of the Munich Crisis of 1938 as an example of how we use hindsight to distort an interpretation of the past unconnected to the historical period, what some call historical perspective (see below) Of the many gems let me share his ideas on the use of mnemonics to help students categorize ideas (pp116-118; 180).

Mnemonics refers to any learning technique that aids information retention. One form is the acronym: an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of a name or phrase. Medical school

students have used these for decades in order to remember the many bones in hands, feet, or other parts of the body. Many of us have seen or used these in our teaching (Remember USSR or DEAR or even KICA from the earlier version of the provincial achievement charts?). My colleague Flora Fung and her Canadian and World Studies department teachers use MAI N—Militarism, Alliances, Imperialism, and Nationalism and DART—Depression, Appeasement, Russia, and Treaty of Versailles to help students remember the main causes of World War One and Two respectively. Among Duthie's examples is one to help students remember details of the Treaty of Versailles itself DRAG CARS—Disarmament, Reparations, Alsace Lorraine (given to France), Guilt, Corridor (to Poland), Anschluss (forbidden), Rhineland (demilitarized), Saar (under League of Nations control).

But like most of the topics in this book, Duthie goes much deeper in his analyses of what on the surface seems to be a simple teaching strategy by tracing the evolution of a particular common mnemonic we use to help student analyze the features of an era, decade, or civilization. One common acronym to help students remember how to analyze a society or civilization has been SPERM—Social, Political, Economic, Religious, and Military. After noting that "social" can be interpreted so broadly as to be confusing he takes us to the more popular PERSIAT—Intellectual, Artistic, and Technological are added and Military is deleted. Then he recounts how one class dissatisfied with this classification came up with SPITAGERM—Social, Political, Intellectual, Technological, Artistic, Geographical. Economic, Religious, and Military.
Let me offer two implications from this for your teaching: one amusing and one powerful. First he notes that when students come up with an acronym they may get a little vulgar. This is not to be encouraged. But the act of coming up with a classification system and then trying to fit ideas and events into it encourages and reveals thinking—a key component of any argument.

One example he offers comes from categorizing events from World War One (p. 118). For example, under what categories would you place

- "conscientious objectors"- Military? Religious? Moral?
- "conscription"- Military or Political?
- "poison gas"- Military, Technological, Moral?

As student gain experience in collecting and classifying data, justifying their choices, and applying their understanding to historical or contemporary analyses of ideas, people and events (concept formation) they are more capable of avoiding the narrative trap and linking information to evidence and linking evidence to present arguments.

One useful direction would be learn to use the concept formation strategy.
http://www.usask.ca/education/coursework/mcvittiej/methods/conform.html
http://lessonplanspage.com/ssconceptformation-equality812-html
offer an overview and examples. This is one of the strategies I teach in my Models of teaching course and is ideal for lessons throughout the social sciences from K-12.

For a detailed exploration of mnemonics in the classroom go to
http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/profdev/profdev117.shtml

Linking Students to History

Michael M. Yell, Geoffrey Scheurman with Keith Reynolds (2004). *A Link to the Past; Engaging Students in the study of History.* National Council for the Social Studies: Silver Spring, Maryland present six processes for engaging students in the past.

- *Making Contact:* KWL combined with multimedia get the unit jumpstarted as

well as Discrepant Event Inquiry (to be featured below).

- *Substantive Conversation:* Interactive Lectures and Response Groups are outlined.
- *Writing is Thinking:* Video Viewing Guides and RAFT Papers are presented in this section
- *Finding Meaning through Reading:* The authors present Anticipation Guides and Double Entry Notetaking
- *Embracing Big Ideas:* Here we have Philosophical Chairs and the Conceptual Continuum— both new to me when I first read this book.
- *Producing through Projects:* This is more familiar ground with the I-Search Essay and Cooperative Group Investigation

History has many interesting "facts" that can spur inquiry. For example, if you look through the archive of *Time Magazine's* covers for Persons of the Year (http://topics.time.com/person-of-the-year/covers) you may see some winners who may astound you and make you wonder "What were they thinking? This makes no sense!" In this case you have encountered a "discrepant event". Such events —such as corn growing faster in the dark than in the light— surprise and challenge a learner's preconceptions. Because these events at first appear to be "nonacademic" and frequently differ from what we expect, even disinterested students may be engaged. The moment a student says, "That's not possible; it can't work that way!" they are hooked and begin a process of inquiry. Among the examples in history presented is the following for a unit on ancient Egypt (pp.7-8). After the teacher recognized that the tomb of King Tut had been hidden in the rubble of another tomb the following statement is made: "This person would never have been found, if this person had not been so hard to find." The teacher can next ask the following "Who was this person and how is it possible that this person was found only because he or she was so hard to find?"

There are similar events in Canadian history that can make students wonder. Here are a few examples.

- Laurier's immigration policy was little different from Sit John A. Macdonald, but much more known and successful. Why is that so?
- Why is Doctor Norman Bethune much better known in China than in Canada?
- Why might Winnipeggers who lived in 1919 have little memory of the General Strike, reported in every Canadian history high school textbook, compared to another event little reported in our curriculum±—the Spanish flu?
- If you are an aboriginal or a black student in an Ontario high school, where are you in the high school Canadian history curriculum?
- Did you know that on March 18, 1998 a northern Minnesota town discussed seceding from the U.S. and becoming a part of Canada?

The finding of discrepant events, a defining characteristic of Problem Based Learning in science and medicine, arouses curiosity. From there we strive to make sense of things: that's when learning takes place.

The authors offer a number of strategies for promoting the inquiry. For example, after reading a story about an American family that moves from a prosperous farm which they owned to a treeless barren harsh land where they had to give up farming in order to survive, the question "Why did they move?" jumps out. The class could have engaged in a general discussion about these events, but instead engaged in a Discrepant Event Inquiry. Here students in pairs design questions with a "yes" or "no" answer that they pose to the teacher. Depending on the answers they revise their thinking and hypothesizing and ask questions until they solve the puzzle: a version of "20 Questions".

Another approach using a "mystery game" co-operative strategy can be found in Morton (1996).

History as Mystery

Jack Zevin and David Gerwin (2011), ***Teaching World History As Mystery.*** **Routledge: London** present useful ideas for turning history into inquiry. They see history as a set of mysteries in which students do detective work sorting out truths, fictions, and biases from primary and secondary sources. Two of the many areas of world history they look are the world of prehistory (What do the megaliths such as Stonehenge tell us about the societies of prehistoric Europe?) and the place of women in world history (Where are they?). They also deal with mysteries involving Rome, the Crusades, and the origins of pizza, among others. There is a companion book for U.S. history (Gerwin and Zevin, 2011). The introduction presents a strong critique of the ways we conventionally teach world history. Moreover, they challenge us to constantly check our perspectives on themes, pedagogies, and issues when we look at other parts of the world, lest we fall victim to "hardening of the categories". Those of you who love to travel might find reinforcement in the writings of Rick Steves the travel writer often featured on PBS (2009).

The authors' classifications offer pathways for turning your histories into mysteries.

- Minor Mysteries try to piece together evidence, identify missing bits, resolve inconsistencies in historical accounts, and distinguish between what we know and what we need to infer or search for further evidence. This level stresses puzzle solving. Examples include examining how the Olmec of Central America were able to move 25 metric tonne stones many kilometres from mountains through wetlands to their home cities without the use of a wheel.
- Medium Mysteries stresses issues of cause and consequence as well as the challenge of resolving differing interpretations from multiple sources. I cited two differing accounts of the Winnipeg general Strike from two different textbooks: a model easily replicated, especially with primary sources (Myers, 2012a).
- Major Mysteries art more philosophical as we examine historical perspectives and the ethical dimension. A famous inquiry from American History asks "What Lincoln a Racist?" Canadian examples jump out in the debates around the hanging of Louis Riel, the career of Pierre Trudeau, or the twists and turns in Canadian immigration history and policy such as our welcome of fugitive slaves in the 1800s and our closing of the gate to Black Americans during the "golden age" of immigration during the Laurier period.

Five techniques are suggested for promoting inquiry based on the mystery approach including:

- *Finding Missing Puzzle Pieces:* We know much about what the Greeks and Romans thought about the barbarians. Would the barbarians agree?
- *From the Known to the Unknown:* The megaliths built in prehistoric Europe show interesting patterns but there are many theories as to their meaning and significance for the peoples who built them. Why were they built?
- *The Soluble and the Insoluble:* Some cases such as the events leading to WW1 have much data but how do we figure out the chief cause or causes? Women make up half (or more) of all who have lived in history but where are they in our textbooks?. Think of all the events for which there are multiple factors/causes at many levels.
- *Prediction and the Unpredictable:* Zevin and Gerwin explore this in a fascinating chapter on secret societies from the Serbian Black Hand to Al-Qaeda century later.
- *The Philosophical and the Ideological:* We explore our own ethics and values and connect to those in the past. Examining questions around "What is good?" as Socrates, Confucius, Gandhi, or M L King Jr. might respond. We can also bring historical and moral relativism into the discussion. Can we really pass judgment on the past?

One Canadian source we can integrate with the ideas and techniques from Zevin and Gerwin is http://canadianmysteries.ca: The Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History. The book offers useful scaffolding for teaching students to conduct their own inquiries into the mysteries of our past.

Reading Like a Historian

Sam Wineburg , Daisy Martin and Chauncey Monte-Sabo (2011) ***Reading Like A Historian: Teaching Literacy in Middle and High School History Classrooms***. New York: Teachers College Press focus on discipline-based reading to promote historical inquiry. They argue that all citizens need to be able to see patterns, identify contradictions, and arrive at reasonable interpretations of evidence rather than throw up their hands in an avalanche of data: much of it now online. Among the history they analyze

- the significance of Pocahontas
- the battle of Lexington
- Lincoln and his views
- Electricity and women's work
- The stories around the actions of Rosa Parks

They note that when historians read they are concerned with

Sourcing: Reading is an active thinking process. Rather than read an account from beginning to end an historian may look at the introduction to get a sense then go to the end to ask questions Who created the source? What form is it in- diary, newspaper account, leaked email? Is it from an eyewitness or second hand and hearsay? The authors see historical reading as a "conversation" with the sources. Once answers to these questions are established the historian asks further questions with a second support for their thinking.

Contextualizing: events must to located in place and time to be understood. They use Lincoln's comments on race during his debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858. Reading is still active. While textbooks offer conclusions, historians start with questions. When and where were the words uttered? What is the audience? How would they react?

Reading this book offers a guide for reading like a historian to other histories.
Think of

- William Shakespeare's accounts of English kings in his historical plays? We all have an image of Richard III? Is it accurate? If not, why not?
- Suetonius' accounts of the lives of the early Roman emperors or Tacitus' accounts
- http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/king/index-e.html and http://canadaonline.about.com/cs/primeminister/a/kingdiaries.htm take you to the private words of Canada's longest serving Prime Minister, W.L. Mackenzie King

http://sheg.stanford.edu/ offers sample lessons in U.S. and World history in the Reading Like a Historian section. The section on assessment will be part of a future issue of ClassNotes if you wish.

Thinking like a Historian: Three More Books

1. Nikki Mandell and Bobbie Malone (2007). ***Thinking Like A Historian: Rethinking History Instruction.*** **Whitewater, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society Press** is another gem we ought to check out. Their conception of important history concepts differs a bit from the two Canadian examples below. The authors see thinking like an historian as grappling with

- *cause and effect*
- *using the past:* does history offer lessons for us today?
- *change and continuity*
- *turning points:* are some events so powerful as to change a society, for example, Sept, 11, 2001?
- *through their eyes:* imagining the past through the eyes of those who experienced it

In addition to exploring the dilemma of coverage versus depth and when each is best used in curriculum planning, the authors offer ways to engage students in DOING history rather than teaching them ABOUT history.

The section on classroom practice (pp 66-77) is particularly insightful as Mandell and Malone show how some common practices we use can help students imagine history while avoiding some of the pitfall of such an adventure.

Here are some pairs of questions / tasks taken or adapted from this section. Which help students imagine the past in a realistic evidenced-based way and which example in the pair may stray into distortion or triviality?

Pair 1 Debate questions

- Was President Truman's decision to drop two atomic bombs consistent with or a departure from American wartime ideals, goals, and practices?
- Should the atomic bomb have been dropped?

Pair 2 Invited guests

- Afghanistan conflict veteran speaks to the class about his or her experiences
- Panels of combat and non combat veterans, including, soldiers, doctors, and media, are invited to speak about their experiences (either at the same for scheduled for different times). With the help of the teacher student design and submit a list of questions or topics prior to the visits

Pair 3 Letters or diaries

- You immigrated to Alberta in 1900 when you were 20 years old. After 2 years you are sending money to your family in Ukraine so that your brother/sister can join you. What will you tell them about how they can prepare for the trip and what they can expect to find when they join you in western Canada?
- You are a child in Ukraine in 1900. Write a letter to your best friend tell them that you and your family are moving to Canada. Tell them what you think about the move and what you are packing for the trip.

Determining the value of these and other questions and tasks from this section may be challenging for you, let alone your students. If you go to http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/ThinkingLikeaHistorian/ you can watch an instruction video of these ideas in action. Buy the book.

Now back to Canada with . . .

2. Mike Demos and Roland Case (2006). ***Teaching about Historical Thinking.*** **Vancouver: The Critical Thinking Consortium** is one of many publications by TC^2 in the area of social studies. I assume we have all heard of TC2, have purchased one or more of its publications or been to some workshop on "critical thinking". But let's not take this useful resource for granted. Among the features I like are the opening vignettes The scene from "Christopher", episode three from season four of *The Sopranos* illustrates some of our challenges in teaching historical thinking (pp.1-2) used to introduce historical thinking concepts

- Historical significance
- Evidence
- Continuity and change
- Cause and consequence
- Historical perspective
- Moral judgment

An event many of us remember was the October Crisis of 1970. Here it is used to introduce the chapter on

moral judgments. When you read pages 53-4 while viewing the video clip of the famous interview with Trudeau justifying his use of troops, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7_a2wa2dd4, the issues surround moral judgments in history are inescapable

Each of the six concepts considered key to understanding history as a discipline for thinking has examples and assessment possibilities along with supporting blackline masters. In addition to extensive support for a sample unit pulling all of the concepts together (Simon Fraser) there are many samples you can apply to almost any class. For example page 86 has a "Then and Now" exercise in which students are asked whether the items listed from "apartments" to " beer" to "candy bars" to "ties" to taxis" to "toilets" to "wallets" "zippers" and nearly 100 more were present or absent 200 years ago. This is easily adaptable to even a then now list since the year 2000- scary as that may be. Such a list offers diagnostic assessment for student thinking about the past. It can also stimulate interest in continuity and change when a particular idea or invention is followed throughout history such as food (http://www.foodtimeline.org).

http://www.urbanghostsmedia.com/2011/03/1910-vintage-postcards-depict-year-2000/ have triggered debate about how the 20th century has or has not changed (thanks to a current student teacher Joshelin Horn for this gem).

www.tc2.ca is rich with lots of tips and video clips you can use to illustr

3. Peter Seixas and Tom Morton's (2012) *the Big Six: Historical thinking Concepts.* Toronto: Nelson. The layout is very teacher friendly. The concepts they stress are almost identical to those of Demos and Case. You might ask why "Moral judgment" is changed to the "ethical dimension"?

I have a very extensive review of this book in press elsewhere but here are a few highlights. This artful blend of theory and practice combines ideas of how historians actually think about the historical concept in question (and reflect it through their work) with how classroom teachers actually work with the concept. I can attest to the value of the classroom examples since I have worked with classrooms since the early 1970s with some of these ideas imported from the UK and later in co-author Tom Morton's classes.

Each concept has a set of "guideposts" that I consider to be standards for assessing understanding. Once again, more on this in a future issue of *ClassNotes.*

The CD that comes with the book has BLMs of parts and activities in each section plus additional questions and prompts to encourage the historical thinker in all students as well as outline rubrics for assessing the understanding of each of the concepts. The following is a sample of the "mystery game" structure in Morton (*op.cit.)* and adapted in pages 152, 164-5 of *The Big Six.*

Instructions
Give pairs of students the following introduction and the 12 statements cut into separate strips.

Have them read this to each other with one partner reading the odd numbered statements and the other partner reading the even numbered ones. Their goal is to answer the questions in the intro to demonstrate a level of understanding of the nature of cause and consequence with a nod to evidence.

One of the great wonders of the world are the statues of Rapa Nui (Easter Island). Who built them? What happened to the people and what does science tell us as a result of studying this mystery of history?

1. *When settlers, possibly from South America, arrived on Rapa Nui about 1500 years ago the island was covered in trees.*
2. *By 1000 years ago the people of Easter Island were erecting hundreds of stone statues and had also developed a form of picture writing.*
3. *The ancient Greeks and Romans poured massive amounts of lead into the atmosphere of the northern hemisphere two to three thousand years ago.*
4. *We know that the diet of the people of Rapa Nui changed in the centuries before European contact.*
5. *Paleolimology is a relatively new branch of science which analyzes lake sediment to get a picture of life in other times through examining layers of silt filled with pollen, ashes and eroded soil.*
6. *The disappearance of tree pollen can indicate deforestation.*
7. *In the years before European contact, many of the inhabitants built stone garden enclosures to protect fragile plants from the wind.*
8. *The study of ancient pollens can show when and how farming developed in a region.*
9. *After hundreds of years of settlement the population of Rapa Nui may have grown to 10,000 and enjoying prosperity through farming, fishing and trading.*
10. *Easter Island was named on Easter Day, 1722, by the Dutch navigator Jakob Roggeven. At that time the population was about 4,000. The people seemed quite poor and there was not a single tree on the island.*
11. *The statues, carved from tufa, a soft volcanic stone, range in height from 10 to 40 ft (3—12 m), some weighing more than 50 tons.*
12. *Around 1600 the islanders engaged in a "birdman cult" in which the eggs of the migratory sooty tern became extremely valuable.*

Don't forget to check www.historicalthinking.ca for its many resources and sample lessons

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Next Issue:
Back to assessment, or finish the two-year project on the use of tech tools (or toys?) in the history classroom
unless you, dear readers, have other ideas.