

**A. How will you use your textbooks?**

As a potential teacher, I recognize the importance of learning with a textbook. Students must not only know how to read, but how to be able to read to learn on their own. This is important not only so the student can survive in the educational system, but to foster in the students a desire to become lifelong learners.

Many teachers simply assign a text book reading, and then explain it to their class on the following day. This is known as “Assign and tell”. This strategy has many flaws in it. Many of the most dynamic teachers create environments where the students soon realize that they do not have to read the text at all to get by in the class, because the teacher will explain everything. As a consequence, student’s reading abilities in these schools often plummet. Therefore, even though I was taught with these strategies, I would not use them myself.

I would try and use the textbook so that students would have to read it to get by in the class. During class time, whether I lectured, had discussion or group work, the students would be learning things supplementary to the text. Therefore students would have to use the text to learn much of the material.

I would try and help students learn with the text though. I would entertain questions from students about the text during class time, and try to make myself available to students outside of class time if they have trouble reading.

In a given classroom, the reading abilities of students will cover a wide range. For many students the text will be at the instructional level. This means that it is at just the right level so that students are challenged enough by the text so that it improves their

reading, but they are not challenged enough to be frustrated. However, if the text is at the instructional level for most, that means it will be at the frustrational level for some.

Accommodations must be made for these students.

For students who find the text at their frustrational level, I would try and find the text on tape, or if I had to I would record it myself. However, ideally I would like to get these students help as well. Ideally I would like to help them myself, but I suspect I would not have enough time as a teacher. I would then try and arrange reading tutors for these students, if this is an option.

**B. How will you go about helping your students understand the organizational structure of that textbook and subject area?**

Since I believe many students, if left to their own devices would do little to independently learn the organizational structure of their textbook, I would prepare an activity that would require them to learn about their textbooks. I believe an activity would be more effective than simply pointing out the organizational structure of the text by a lecture, textual organization is a rather boring theme, and I think many students may not pay attention to it. Since the students would not be required to learn the material for a test, they would not be motivated to pay attention. Also, in a lecture there is a possibility many students would not remember the material.

I would hand out a worksheet to the students, which they could complete individually or in groups. The worksheet would require them to make observations about the organizational structure of the text. When they had completed these questions, a second group of questions would require the student to answer questions that would force

them to make use of the organizational structure of the text. For instance, students might be forced to look up information in the text that would require them to use the index, chapter headings, sub-headings, or other parts of the text's organizational structure.

To help the students understand the organizational structure of the subject area, I would hand out a syllabus on the first day of class. The syllabus would not be day by day like many college syllabi, but would give the students an idea of what to expect in the course. I would go over it only briefly with the students.

Since the nature of a history course is chronological, I would urge students to repeatedly make cause and effect connections that would help them to tie the course together. I could do this by bringing it up in a lecture, or I could be subtler by having my students make the connections themselves. This would be done through class discussion or assignments that required the students to think back on what they have learned.

To give the students I greater understanding of the organization of the subject matter, on the first day I would tell students at what point the course begins, and at what time it ended, and list some of the differences. I would have the students write journal articles about what they think caused these changes. This would get them thinking about what the nature of history is like, and help them to create a mental scaffold into which the rest of the information they learned in that course can more easily fit into.

### **C. Which instructional Strategies will you use? How will you use them?**

One instructional strategy I would use would be to teach history by using poetry. This was the strategy I presented on, and I have grown fond of it. It has the advantage of teaching students how to be critical poetry readers, while at the same time teaching

students history. The group work included in it helps students learn from each other, and the strategy also integrates content areas.

The strategy does have its weaknesses, however, and one of the biggest ones I can think of would be the amount of time it takes up. I would use this strategy more as an introduction to a unit, or as a pre-reading strategy, to get the students into the literature. After struggling with the poem for a whole class period, students will be eager to find out what it means. They will read the text with more enthusiasm (hopefully) looking for clues to understand the poem better.

Another instructional strategy I like is the Response Journal, which includes Parents (which Lane DenBoer presented one). Accommodations will likely have to be made for many students whose parents are unable or unwilling to participate. However, this is a great way to combine both the response journal and parent involvement. Furthermore, it will provide the student with two responses to the reading-one of their own and one by their parents).

Because of the wide range of time given for this strategy (two to four weeks), I would use it as a supplement to what is going on in class. The reading assigned for this strategy would be general in nature, so that it will fit well into the course given that the individual topics discussed in class might change many times over the two to four week period.

Another strategy I like is the unsent letters strategy. This would force students to think about what they are learning, instead of just memorizing facts. It can also be particularly useful in a history course as students can write letters to historical figures. Of

course, it is also a wonderful opportunity for creativity. I would use this strategy at the end of a unit so students can tie together what they have learned.

Biopoems are another strategy I like because of the amount of creativity involved in them. Students practice their writing skills, but it is something they are allowed to enjoy, not simply write. As with the unsent letter, it would also be a good opportunity for me as a teacher to see how well the students understand the biopoem. I would assign biopoems frequently so I can monitor student comprehension as the unit progresses.

Finally, I would use Admit and Exit slips. I like these because they are nice and short, and can be assigned daily without overburdening the students. They force the students to reflect on the material, and keep it in the forefront of the students' mind.

**C. What will you teach them concerning note-taking for the course? How will you supervise their note-taking?**

The answer to this question varies of course depending on what grade level I am teaching. If I am teaching a twelfth grade class, I would assume they are already fairly proficient at note taking. However if I am teaching a middle school class, I would need to teach them how to take notes starting at the basics.

Assuming I am teaching a class that has little or no experience taking notes before, I think I would teach them how to take notes in rigid outline fashion. I would have them outline chapters they read, and hand in the outlines. As they get older, they will be left to themselves to take outlines, and will bend the rules, and this is good (students should be flexible in their note taking), but I think it is important to start them out from a solid base.

In doing the outlines, I would emphasize to the students the importance of not copying down the text verbatim, but paraphrasing, thinking critically, and asking questions. I would also have the students do activities such as the summary note, the question note, the theorizing note, et cetera.

I would also have them outline my lectures, and hand those in. I would construct my lectures in a way that makes it easy for them to outline them. The first few lectures an outline would already be provided on the chalkboard or overhead that they can just copy down, then gradually the supports would be removed until the students are doing the outlining completely on their own. (This would be good because it would also force me to keep my lectures organized).

Another activity I could have my students do would be to copy down notes from the lecture on the right hand part of a piece of paper, and put in labels on the left. This will help them organize their notes into topics.

At first, I would only be concerned that my students learn the format for taking notes. Once they have that, I would work on having them discern what is important information to write down, and what is not. I remember from my own experience in middle school that this is not an easy thing to learn, but again I would try and give lots of support initially, and wean it away gradually.

**D. How will you make certain that students are taking responsibility for their own learning in the course? How will you make certain that they are taking responsibility for each other's learning?**

As mentioned in section A, material covered in the readings will be different from

material covered during class time. In this way the student can not rely on the teacher to tell him or her everything, but must read it him or her self. The reading strategies mentioned in section C will also serve to help ensure the student is doing the reading and learning throughout the course.

To make students responsible for each-other's learning, I would have an atmosphere where cooperation among students, instead of competition, was encouraged. For instance, I would never grade on a curve.

Another thing I would do was have lots of group work, with rules to try and ensure that every student participates. I would try and group students together of similar abilities, and give each student an individual grade as well as a group grade.

**F. How will you make certain that writing is an integral part of that course? What kinds of writing will be part of the course?**

One of the things I would do to ensure writing was emphasized was assign many writing assignments, such as ones mentioned in section C, biopoems, unsent letters, and journaling. I would try and assign things that would force the students to be creative, instead of simply chronicling what they learned. Biopoems and unsent letters would invite the students to interact playfully with the material. Another good activity would be for students to write short stories, placing themselves in historical times or events, or even from the perspective of a historical figure. I could invite students to read these stories in class, thus increasing the motivation for them to do well on it, as well as the urge to be playful with the information.

I would hope to help my students grow as writers, and will continually evaluate

their work, increasing my standards as the year goes on and as their writing (hopefully) improves.

**G. How will you teach vocabulary which is important for that subject area?**

One way in which I would teach vocabulary would be to have the students create semantic word maps. This would enable the students to learn the relationships between words, as well as create examples for each word. Since many historical terms are inter-related, and students will need to know how to apply these terms to historical events or figures, semantic Word maps are a good strategy.

Another strategy I would use to help my students learn vocabulary would be the vocabulary self-collection strategy. This would help my students to put the words into their long term memories, which will be important for any future history class they take. It will also promote group work among students, thus encouraging them to take responsibility for each other's learning

A third way in which I would help students learn vocabulary would be to use concept circles. This would be like a game for the students, and they would enjoy it hopefully. It would also be useful to help them learn historical names and events besides learning vocabulary. As another way for students to interact playfully with the information, they can also create their own concept circles, which the rest of the class must solve.

**H. How will you test in ways that are in keeping with the way you instruct?**

I would emphasize the vocabulary that I had the students learn. Part of the test would just be vocabulary, which hopefully the students would do well on, since a fair amount of both in class time and out of class time has been spent on vocabulary.

To keep students responsible for their own learning, I would have the test based half on what is covered during class time, and half of what is covered outside of class (assignments, readings). I would hope that any students who experienced trouble with the text were able to find help, so that the text assignment would not be too difficult for any student.

I would have an essay on the test that would require the students to focus on their writing skills. I would also have sections on the test that would require students to make broad connections over the scope of the course, thus emphasizing the organizational structure of the course. I would require students to do some reflecting on the group work they did in class on the test, so keeping students accountable for this work.