 Suggested activities for history extension

Explicit teaching tasks

Student teachers

Students can be given responsibility for running sessions, or parts of sessions. At the start of the course, students nominate to take responsibility for an historian/school of history. Teacher presents them with a selection of readings and focus questions early in the unit. The student sets assigned readings for their peers and facilitates class discussion around the focus questions in negotiation with the teacher. Teacher plays the role of another student in the session. The focus here needs to be on pre-negotiation of plans – the teacher must ensure that the student’s materials and plans address all the key information before the session begins.

Spaced learning

Spaced learning involves teaching key concepts quickly using methods that maximise student recall. The technique is based upon neurological research suggesting that forgetting of new information can be minimised by learning that is spaced and divided by unrelated activities, preferably physical. Stages 1-4 should be the same length of time, 10-15 minutes each.

Stage 1

Teacher directed presentation of key information to students. This could be verbal, using worksheets or visual presentations. 10-15 minutes maximum.

Stage 2

Students break to do a completely different activity for the same period of time as Stage 1. This is better if it utilises completely different skills and processes to the learning, and even better if it is physical – making things with play doh is a great example.

Stage 3

Students engage in activities requiring them to recall the information presented in Stage 1. Filling in a cloze passage with key words missing works here, or completing comprehension questions.

Stage 4

Repeat Stage 2.

Stage 5

Students apply the knowledge learned in Stage 1. In History Extension, this could be a writing task, a discussion or structured note-making. It could also draw on creative elements of the other activities in this list.

Monkseaton High School’s toolkit Spaced Learning: Making Memories Stick is a useful tool for first-time users of Spaced Learning.

Discussion tasks

Silent lessons

To ensure a discussion is student-centred, teachers can run a discussion-based lesson silently. Prompts, discussion questions or targeted aspects of the text can be given to students in writing or using an electronic presentation. Teachers can use nonverbal cues to monitor the discussion but cannot verbally contribute. The impetus is on students to initiate, structure and limit discussion and work together to decide how the results of discussion should be recorded.

Socratic seminars

Teacher comes prepared to the class with open-ended questions to prompt discussion. Classroom should be set up with chairs in a circle. Students must come to class prepared with pre-readings complete and annotated. The session starts with the teacher setting up rules for discussion:

* Students talk to each other, not to the discussion leader
* All claims must be supported with evidence
* If students don’t understand something a classmate has said, students can paraphrase one another’s claims to check for understanding – “I think you have said ……. Is that correct?”
* Students do not need to raise their hands to speak but should respect one another’s right to be heard
* No interruptions
* No negative comments about the ideas of another student. Disagreements should be posed by stating an alternative argument
* The teacher is the discussion facilitator. This role means that they pose the focus questions and can gently redirect the discussion if required, but they do not take part in the discussion

Once students have discussed the focus questions they should stop and reflect on what has been learned during the seminar. This part of the discussion could be recorded electronically or in writing. This process of recording only the reflections will help clarify the understandings reached in the discussion.

Nearpod discussion

Teacher uses Nearpod’s Collaborate tool to create an interactive online pinboard, which is shared with students using the Nearpod code. As students complete their pre-session reading, they develop one question about the text and post it on the Nearpod board. In class, each student is required to select one question from the Nearpod board that they can answer. They pair up with that student and discuss their answer, then re-form pairs to discuss answers to their own question.

Interview a historian

Students are assigned an historian in a prior session and instructed to research their life, works and philosophy of History thoroughly. During the session, the student is interviewed by their classmates in the persona of their assigned historian. The interview could be recorded facilitate note-taking. If the interview responses are thorough enough, this activity could introduce the class to a new historian.

Sparring

This technique works best when addressing historical debates in class. Students are placed into small groups and assigned one side of a debate. They are given time to discuss and research their perspective and put together a number of arguments supporting their side. They are then paired with a student representing the opposing perspective, and the pairs are given ten minutes to debate. Students then return to their original groups and spend time revising and discussing their positions, based on the outcomes of the debate. Students are once again broken down into new pairs and repeat the debate. Finally, students are all brought together to discuss their understanding of the debate and their own personal positions after two rounds of sparring.

Reading tasks

Guided notetaking

Students can be offered a scaffold to guide their note-taking while reading extracts from historians or writing about schools of history. This could be drawn from the key questions.

| Key questions | Answers |
| --- | --- |
| Who is the historian? |       |
| Purpose of their histories |       |
| Type of produced |       |
| Methodologies (research) |       |
| Methodologies (presentation, communication) |       |
| Historical context |       |
| Historiographical context |       |
| Contributions to the discipline |       |

Alternatively, note-taking could be more general to lead into richer discussion.

| Key questions | Answers |
| --- | --- |
| Information on the historian |       |
| Information on the text |       |
| Summary |       |
| Personal insights |       |
| Personal challenges or problems |       |
| Takeaways |       |
| Important quotes |       |

Collaborative reading

Key texts (from or about targeted historians) are shared with the class in a Google doc, which all students can edit. As students read the doc they add commentary, highlight key passages or words and add questions. The annotated document is brought to class and the comments and questions added are used to guide discussion. This could also be used in class, with students reading together and creating a collective set of notes using the same process.

Skimming and scanning

Explicitly teach strategies of skimming and scanning early in the course to equip students to read efficiently as the course progresses. Model strategies of skimming while reading text together – read the abstract, look at the first and last paragraphs first, note subheadings. Set questions to scaffold scanning by connecting key words to important ideas in the text and timing students while they find them. E.g. discuss with students a key word to search for when looking for the historians’ ideas on oral histories then have students scan for the word, rewarding the student who first finds and can articulate the correct idea.

Words are everything

This activity helps students build a clear idea of the kind of writing that dominates each school of history they study. After reading texts drawn from one or more schools of history they identify and an essential vocabulary list for the school, taken from the texts read. If the class is addressing multiple schools of history (for example during the case study) these can be shared and compared. Students then write an essay paragraph summarising the targeted school of history incorporating as many of the key terms as possible.

Reflective note-taking

This activity can help students structure their note-taking on pre-reading texts to best prepare them for in-class discussion. They should divide their page into two columns labelled Key Ideas and Responses. As they read they record important points in the left column. After reflecting on the text, they record their thoughts on the Key Ideas in the right column – opinions, agreements or disagreements, links to other texts or schools of history. The Responses column can inspire class discussion.

Writing tasks

Rapid-fire writing

This is useful where deep reading of a text in class is not necessary, rather, the text needs to be comprehended quickly and student responses developed more carefully. Students read the text in class, then:

1. Think about the text for one minute, no writing
2. Write about their responses to the text for three minutes without stopping
3. Re-read the text for two minutes and three main ideas
4. Write about the text again for two minutes without stopping
5. Re-read the text for 30 seconds and circle one key word or phrase
6. Write about the text again for one minute without stopping

At the conclusion, students are invited to share their thoughts on the text, which should prompt deep discussion

Journaling

Students keep separate journals for Constructing History and the Case Study. At the end of each session, students take five minutes to reflect in their journals on what they have learned in the session. This should focus on their own changing attitudes to history, not simply summarise the content learned. Prompts could be used, such as how have your thoughts the determinism of history changed as a result of this session? Alternatively, students could be left to write freely. This should be brought to every session to be used as a tool for writing.

Example - if students are writing a piece that focuses on the role of the historian it would be useful to have a record of their own thoughts on different schools of history’s positions on this.

Social historians

Students take on the persona of an historian they have studied and design a social media account on their behalf. They should select relevant contemporary events to comment on using the philosophy, model of history and writing style of their assigned historian.

Historical personas

This activity helps students to deeply understand the style. Present students with a recent world event. Challenge them to take on the persona of an historian studied and write about the event from the historian’s perspective and using the historian’s style. Students can decide whether to focus on the describing the event itself, a critique of the way the event has been communicated or commemorated or explaining the causes of the event.

Interrelationships

After reading a text, students explore the web of interconnections between texts, audiences and contexts by considering version of the following questions.

Between texts

1. The text reminds me of …. because ….
2. The ideas in the text are similar to …. because ……
3. The ideas in the text are different to …… because …….

Text to audience

1. The text makes me think about/question the following things in my own life
2. I agree with ……… in the text because ……..
3. I don’t agree with ……. in the text because …….

Text to context

1. I understand that ……………… argument is made in the text because …….(refer to aspect of writer’s context here)….
2. I understand that my attitude to ……………………….. is shaped by (refer to aspect of student’s context here)

Vocab builder

It is important that students become familiar with the vocabulary of historiography. They could commence a vocab list at the start of the course that contains common terms to all historians and specific terms for each school of history. They should code each word in the following way:

1. I do not understand this word and could not explain it or use it in my own writing
2. I understand this term generally but could not explain it or use it in my own writing
3. I understand this term and have explained it and/or used it in my own writing

As their understanding of each term improves they can update the coding.

Playing with popular histories

Students explore the role of popular histories in the online community by creating a meme about one of their targeted schools of history. They can use existing history memes as inspiration, such as the Ryan Gosling Hey Girl series of memes. They share their memes and use these to spark discussion of the role of amateur online histories in shaping public perceptions of the past. An alternative to this activity would be writing tweets on behalf of a targeted historian.

Microthemes

A microtheme is a very condensed essay of 100-500 words. This is a great way to teach timed writing in class in a sustainable way. Each microtheme should consist of:

* A one sentence introduction
* 2-3 paragraphs
* Each paragraph should have a clear topic sentence
* Each paragraph should have 1-2 sentences referring to and briefly explaining one piece of evidence to support it

Research tasks

Collaborative timelines

Students work together to create an interactive timeline summarising a key biography or historical event. The targeted period of time is divided up fairly and students individually research the key features of their assigned time period. They find multimedia sources to complement their key features – YouTube clips, images, sound recordings. Each student adds their key feature summaries and accompanying multimedia sources to the collaborative timeline. The class reviews and discusses the timeline. This could be achieved using an online timeline builder such as [Sutori](http://www.sutori.com) or [Padlet](http://www.padlet.com), with each post representing a key feature and arranged in sequential order.

Starbursting

Starbursting involves structuring student-directed research by developing questions with teacher guidance. Students and teacher work with a star template to develop inquiry questions on a topic, beginning with Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. There may be multiple questions per star point. Questions are divided up amongst students who conduct research to find the answers then share these with the class.



For the purposes of History Extension:

Who = the historian

What = Subject Matter

Why = Purpose

How = Methodologies

When = historian’s

Revision tasks

Sticky notes

This works particularly well when categorising historians into schools of history. Students read one historian each on a given topic, and annotate their reading according to the Key Themes for that section of the course. In class, they find key quotes that illustrate the themes and copy them onto sticky notes. The teacher puts headings up for the schools of history associated with the topic and students stick their notes under the appropriate school of history. As a group students read the collections of quotes and piece together a story from the perspective of that school of history. They record this, along with associated quotes and historians. This can also be done electronically, using [Padlet](http://www.padlet.com).

Context is everything

This works well when looking at the influences on an historian. Students create a timeline on the board containing all historical work on a particular topic, or a series of historians’ work. For example, this timeline could contain all writing on the Cuban Missile Crisis, or the major schools of history in the 20th century. Above this, students create another timeline, on the same scale, containing major world events. They find connections between the two timelines where the world events may have influenced the histories created. Once the connections are identified, students are assigned one connection each to investigate. They write one paragraph to explain the historical event, its impact on historiography and the outcomes of this impact, then share this with their peers.

Big statements

This activity serves as revision at the end of the Constructing History unit or the Case Study, or after studying the debates. The teacher prepares a large number (>10) of pages on which a statement about the topic is printed. The statement must be opinionated and should be aligned with one of the schools of history/positions on the debate studied in class – for example The historian is a communicator of History, not a creator of History. Students circulate the room and write historians that would agree and disagree with each statement, and explain why.

The path of history

Students can use [Twine](http://twinery.org/) to create interactive, hyperlinked stories that trace the changing nature of the discipline over time. This activity is suited to the end of the constructing history area of study or the case study. Using Twine, students create passages for each school of history studied. Each Passage should outline the main features, focuses, texts and creators of the school of history, as selected by the student. At the end of each passage, students should follow Twine’s instructions to create hyperlinks that take the reader to the next school of history. This story may follow a single path or follow a ‘choose your own adventure’ path where the next step depends on the reader’s decision (see examples below).

Single path example



Multiple path example





Historian celebrity heads

Each student is given the name of an historian or historical figure, depending on the work being revised. Students pose questions to their peers about their assigned identity until they can guess who it is. This activity could be made more complex by using teacher-provided questions that could spark discussion about the assigned identities after the game. For example, the simple question Am I male? Could spark a post-game historian about gender and History.