

Unit Two Overview

Creating a National Political System and Culture

There are three types of lessons included in this unit. There are *Historical Thinking* lessons, *Writing Focus* lessons, and one independent project which focuses on *Historical Thinking* and *Source Analysis*. The Historical Thinking lessons use primary sources and images to teach and reinforce the historical thinking and document analysis skills for the unit. The Writing Skill lessons introduce persuasive argument and task analysis skills necessary to complete document based questions introduced in unit three.

The thinking, reading, and writing skills that are taught and reinforced in Unit Two build important habits that will be used throughout the course. They also review the skills that were taught in Advanced Grade Seven. The goal of Advanced Grade Eight is for students to be able to independently apply all the historical thinking skills introduced in Advanced Grades Six and Seven.

The chart below is taken from the Social Studies Skills Framework for Grade 8 (Advanced 8, Unit 1 Appendix). It shows which skills are suggested for instruction and reinforcement in Unit Two. The skills that are included in the guide are: evaluation of evidence, historical interpretation, image analysis, persuasion, and task analysis.

Advanced Skills: Unit Two			
Historical Thinking	Source Analysis	Writing Focus	Learning Skill
<p><i>Evaluation of Evidence for Relevance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evidence is selected and evaluated to support a particular point of view the value of evidence is influenced by its source <p><i>Historical Interpretation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historians reconstruct history from evidence. Historical interpretation is influenced by the author's perspective, context and selected evidence 	<p><i>Source Analysis Skills from 8.1</i></p> <p><i>Image Analysis</i> interpreting political cartoons, drawings, photographs, propaganda, and other visuals</p>	<p><i>Task Analysis</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> breaking down a complex prompt into components outlining and planning a response to a complex prompt writing a multi-paragraph essay based on task analysis <p><i>Persuasion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formulating a cohesive historical argument supported by evidence in writing and oral debate 	<p><i>Reading an Interpretation</i> questioning textbook content and other secondary sources as historical interpretations</p>

Historical Thinking Skills: Unit Two

Evaluation of Evidence and Historical Interpretation are the two thinking skills selected for development in Unit Two. Both of these skills were introduced in Grade Seven. It is important to understand how historical thinking is more than just learning to analyze sources like a historian. The thinking skills are important for effective participation in our communities, nation, and world. Students who develop these skills, and transfer them beyond the social studies classroom, are better able to make sense of the world around them by becoming critically engaged as consumers of information. They can effectively evaluate and use evidence presented through a variety of media, understanding that all argument is interpretation influenced by selected evidence.

Why Teach Evaluation of Evidence?

We read or hear arguments and opinions every day – but how do we know if they are reasonable? The ability to evaluate the evidence used by others to support a point of view, whether the source of information is a historian, media pundit, or friend, provides students with a foundation for sorting through large amounts of often conflicting information to identify sources with credibility. The ability to select relevant evidence helps students to make reasonable judgments and develop sound arguments in their own communications. The evaluation of evidence is a skill essential to learning in this age of electronic media. By evaluating and selecting evidence, students learn that:

- evidence is selected and evaluated to support a particular point of view.
- the value of evidence is influenced by its source.

Why Teach Historical Interpretation?

History is dynamic and changing, just like our world. Students often mistakenly believe history is a stagnant list of facts to be memorized, instead of a story interpreted and accepted over time. Teaching historical interpretation trains students to think critically and ask questions while they read any interpretation of history, whether it is their textbook or a primary source document. As students engage in the process of writing their own interpretations of history from evidence, they learn firsthand that interpretations vary depending on the evidence and the interpreter. Once students understand that history is an interpretation of evidence, history is much more engaging. In Advanced Grade Eight US History, students will learn that:

- historians reconstruct history from evidence.
- historical interpretation is influenced by the author’s perspective, context, and selected evidence.