

Understanding the Discipline of History



A guide to Disciplinary Literacy
in the History classroom



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Historical literacy: an introduction



Why Disciplinary Literacy for History?

History is a subject in which there is a potentially limitless body of text and knowledge. This, coupled with the incredibly diverse nature of historical texts, makes the reading of history a very difficult endeavour.

As will be discussed in our resource, there is a further complication: many historical texts are not read to simply glean understanding or knowledge, and instead provide insight to various perspectives and contextual phenomena.

When reading a Norse saga or a letter from the trenches, the historian knows subconsciously to read these with close consideration of their provenance. To put in the words of Shanahan and Shanahan:

'Students must always read history with an eye to the author.'

This is not necessarily the case within other disciplines, highlighting one aspect of history's uniqueness, and leading to the necessity of teaching disciplinary literacy.






While pupils are taught to read sources and historical interpretations, this is often with an eye to the somewhat restricted GCSE and A-Level criteria rather than looking to historical mastery.

In a congested curriculum this is entirely appropriate, but perhaps not the most beneficial to our pupils. By approaching reading in a more disciplinary fashion we can help pupils meet these requirements and move a step closer to the mastery of the subject.




What is the aim of the resource?

This resource aims to synthesise the theory behind disciplinary literacy in History in an accessible manner before providing some guidance on applying this theory in our classrooms.

This will take two main approaches. Firstly, there is a nod to the EEF guidance that disciplinary literacy is both 'general and subject specific'. As a result, we have structured some strategies around the 'Big Five' reading strategies recommended in the EEF's *Secondary Reading Guidance Report (2019)*:

-  **Activate prior knowledge**
-  **Make predictions**
-  **Generate questions**
-  **Clarify understanding**
-  **Summarise**

This has helped to identify cross curricular links and appropriately structure the advice around history. Similarly the document has also followed a further model suggested by Shanahan, Shanahan and Misischia:

-  **Sourcing** – *understanding the nature of the authorship/creator of a source*
-  **Contextualisation** – *addressing the specific historical context of the text*
-  **Corroboration** – *using further knowledge to analyse and evaluate the text.*

This has provided a secondary, more subject-specific model, for addressing historical literacy within our classroom and curricula. The resource will provide explicit examples of how both of these models work across two different forms of historical texts:

- contemporary and near contemporary sources
- historical interpretations.

How to use our resource on Understanding the Discipline of History



How might you use our resource?

We have structured the guide into two main parts:

1. *Exploring Disciplinary Literacy in the subject of History*
2. *How-to guides for effective use of Disciplinary Literacy in History*

2 How-to guides for effective use of Disciplinary Literacy in History

Since disciplinary literacy is both generic and specific (*EEF Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools*), we use the 'Big Five' strategies in our approach to designing questions. This format helps consider disciplinary approaches to reading across subjects and how disciplinary literacy might work in the classroom, through a familiar framework.

We have devised two sets of questions to help guide pupils through reading the two main historical forms. These have been edited, and re-edited, based on our research, reading, and classroom practice, where we have begun trialling these approaches.

The document also uses the more subject specific framework of sourcing, contextualisation and corroboration and provides a modelled exemplar of this process for both forms of historical writing.

These exemplars model the way that this process can be applied to any historical text and should help provide pupils with a metacognitive approach to any text that they encounter within the discipline of history.



1 An introduction to Disciplinary Literacy in the subject of History

This part of the document involves a brief explanation of what the discipline of History actually is as a reminder of the purpose of the subject. We also consider what it is that historians actually read.

This has led to the second half of the document being broken into two separate sections on *sources* and *interpretation*. These two separate styles of historical text require slightly different approaches and as such are addressed separately.

We've explored some of the research as to how expert historians read, leaning heavily on the works of Shanahan and Shanahan. These 'Think Aloud' studies give a clear insight into our end goal. If the goal is historical mastery then the analysis of expert historians is helpful for understanding the processes our pupils should be undergoing.

It also considers some of the challenges around reading history and how these might be effectively navigated.

Part 1

Exploring the language of History and the role of Disciplinary Literacy



What is the discipline of history?

The discipline of History involves the study of the past. The past is communicated to historians through a wide range of both literary and material evidence. This evidence is then interpreted by historians who seek to understand the interplay of a range of second order concepts:

- ➔ causation
- = consequence
- ↻ change and continuity
- ≈ similarity and difference
- α significance

History at its heart involves interpretation based on evidence and therefore argument lies at its heart.

'It is only the framework of fact on which history can rest, it is not history. History to mean anything must be more than a rehearsal of facts, it must include an interpretation of facts' (Clark, 1967)¹

The origins of History are to be found in ancient Greece. Herodotus' great social account of the Persian Wars and the wider Greek world, called the Histories, is often considered to be the first work of History. The word history itself comes from the ancient Greek ἱστορία 'historia' which means to inquire or a written account of these inquiries, typically in a narrative form.

While these early initial histories tended to be narrative accounts of large scale wars or interesting tidbits about different societies, the idea of history has developed to incorporate social, economic, military and political histories. Herodotus' main evidential base was his own travels or hearsay. In modern history the concern is more on the use of literary and material evidence.

History was first decoupled from the discipline of literature in Enlightenment Germany. These individuals, having been impressed by the progress of natural science, believed that History could achieve the same gains if separated from literature.

The ability to read historical documents including contemporary explications about societal, economic and political issues provides perhaps the most direct link to literacy as preparation for citizenship, which presupposes an ability to conduct informed debate.

Lee & Spratley²



What do historians read?

Historians read texts from a huge expanse of time and cultures. These heterogeneous texts can be broadly split into two different forms:



Historical argument:

scholarly interpretation usually based around second order concepts having taken into account the evidence of the period.



Literary and material evidence:

a range of forms of writing including but not limited to diary entries, newspaper articles, letters, and speeches which provide written evidence about a historical event. These can be supplemented by material evidence, which again historians have to 'read' in a certain way.

Reading for understanding is most helped by more general reading strategies while the ability to make integrated or read interpretive content is better suited to the disciplinary procedures outlined below. If these two different types of reading are not differentiated, this can be a root cause of pupils wanting to use all pieces of historical text as a fact-finding mission.

Within the history curriculum, the use of sources and interpretations tend to come more into focus with the requirements of both the GCSE and A-Level specifications. At this point, however, the disciplinary processes of historians may be truncated to simply enable access to the highest level of marks rather than to act like a historian.

The growing use of sources as pupils progress through their schooling usually requires some form of 'progression model':

Selecting details

Making inferences

Supporting knowledge

Assessing utility/value

How do history pupils read history?

The way in which pupils read historical texts tends to develop over the course of their historical studies. The majority of historical reading that is encountered in the classroom, especially early in a pupils' schooling, is completed with the goal of learning historical content. For example, often the aim of reading a double page spread of a textbook about the causes of the First World War is so pupils can understand what these causes are.

When reading historically there may perhaps be a different goal in mind, namely to view the interpretation or historical perspective provided by the author. These two different forms of reading would require different strategies.

In recent years there's been a growing emphasis on placing historical scholarship into the history curriculum in all key stages. This has been a positive shift for disciplinary literacy as pupils are engaging more with authentic historical texts, usually through the scope of finding evidence to support or contradict the work of these scholars.






What are the disciplinary reading habits of history?

When reading literature from one of the 'primary' sources or pieces of evidence, historians go through a range of unconscious cognitive processes.

Firstly, perhaps unlike pupils, historians view primary source documents as incomplete. To a historian these pieces of evidence require corroboration with existing knowledge, concepts and further evidence.

Moreover, rather than *reading* primary evidence, historians *interrogate* the evidence asking questions of the text such as:

-  **who the evidence may have been written for;**
-  **the contemporary meaning of certain phrases; or**
-  **how we can analyse the evidence in light of prior knowledge or other sources.**

These are processes the historian goes through subconsciously and it is the job of the history teacher to make these processes conscious in the mind of the pupil.

Reading historical interpretation also involves further steps for the historian. Pupils are typically used to reading to find knowledge, whereas the purpose of reading historical interpretation requires a historian to decipher the argument of the text.

Historical writing is often written to give the opinion of the individual writing, which will be supported by evidence (often gleaned from the primary evidence), not to simply describe what happened (although confusingly this too exists in many popular history texts!).

Therefore, as historians we read these more scholarly interpretations with a view to finding and testing interpretations by once more activating our wider contextual knowledge. What becomes apparent from the process of reading both of these forms of literature is the huge role that contextual knowledge plays in reading like a historian.

A helpful shorthand for this process has been outlined in the work of Shanahan, Shanahan and Misischia. Historians read in three main stages:

Sourcing:

This is the process of understanding and questioning who the creator of the interpretation or evidence is. This process involves questioning how the background of the individual may impact their considerations of the topic. This will often involve knowing a wide range of the work of the individual(s) involved, which creates its own problems.

Contextualisation:

This is the process of understanding the historical and literary context from which the interpretation or source has been created. What were the academic trends of the time? What major historical or social events of the period may have impacted the argument given?

Corroboration:

This involves using other information from other historians, contemporary sources or other historical information to test the validity of the argument provided.



Challenges of reading History

Reading historical literature is difficult for a number of reasons, not least the difficulty in getting pupils to see History as argument and debate rather than a pseudo-science of facts and 'pub-quiz' knowledge.

However, even once this obstacle has been negotiated there is the difficulty of the literature itself. Consider the extract from Pepys' diary from the day of the Great Fire:

Some of our *mayds* sitting up late last night to get things ready against our feast to-day, Jane called us up about three in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the City. So I rose and slipped on my *nightgowne*, and went to her window, and thought it to be on the backside of Marke-lane at the farthest; but, being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off; and so went to bed again and to sleep. About seven rose again to dress myself, and there looked out at the window, and saw the fire not so much as it was and further off. So to my *closett* to set things to rights after yesterday's cleaning. By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears that above 300 houses have been burned down *to-night* by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning down all Fish-street, by London Bridge. ... So down, with my heart full of trouble, to *the Lieutenant of the Tower*, who tells me that it begun this morning in the *King's baker's house* in Pudding-lane, and that it hath burned St. Magnus's Church and most part of Fish-street already.

The reader of the text must be aware of:

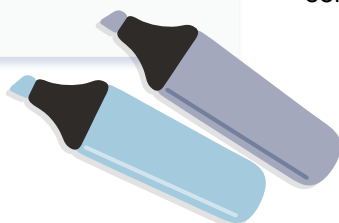
- sp the differences in spelling from the period
- Ⓜ the key terms of the period and their role
- ✍ simply the way of writing and sentence structure unique to the period

These difficulties must be addressed before one even begins to start the difficult process of inferring and analysing the source.

The same difficulties arise when dealing with historical scholarship. This example from a Year 9 curriculum on the lives of the working class in 20th century Britain from Dominic Sandbrook raises difficulties:

The *exaggerated arch-Thatcherite* vision of the 1970s as a period of *unprecedented* gloom and decline. It is certainly true that for many people living standards *stagnated*, and middle-class families in particular felt trapped between high taxes and *soaring inflation*. But we often forget that most Britons, whether young or old, were not very interested in politics and continued to lead happy, *prosperous* lives indifferent to the great public affairs of the day.

Clearly Sandbrook's intended audience is not our Year 9 mixed ability group and, as such, difficulties continue to arise.





Difficulties within reading historical sources and interpretations

Table 1

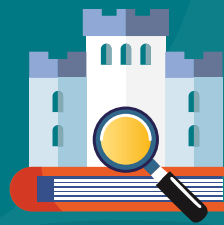
Difficulty	Examples	How to prevent
Unfamiliar language due to historical understanding	Arch-Thatcherite	Unfamiliar historical language that is key to the understanding of the passage should be addressed before reading the text
Unfamiliar language due to vocabulary	Prosperous	Can be addressed during reading of the text
Unfamiliar sentence structure	Long sentences, multiple clauses	Teacher to read aloud as easier to decode more complex sentences with correct placement of pause and tone
Unfamiliar forms of literature	Diary entries, chronicles	Needs to be addressed before reading perhaps through modern equivalents eg chronicles and newspapers
Slurs	Homophobia and racism	Need to be addressed sensitively and the context of these slurs should also be addressed through understanding of the society in which the text is situated
Lack of contextual knowledge	Middle class, inflation	Reading of difficult texts should follow some explicit teaching of historical context

These difficulties don't take into account the wide body of knowledge that is required to complete Shanahan's three stages outlined on page 6.

- In order to source a piece of literature effectively a pupil needs knowledge of the individual and their other works.
- In order to contextualise, one needs a deep knowledge of not only the historical period being interpreted but also the period from which the interpretation comes.
- Finally corroboration can only come from a wide range of other literature which comes with the same problems outlined above.

It must therefore be the job of the teacher to attempt to mitigate these difficulties.





Part 2

How-to guides for effective use of Disciplinary Literacy in History

How to read historical interpretation




When reading historical interpretation it can be difficult for novices to separate this from reading to accumulate knowledge or understand a narrative.

When reading to identify and test an interpretation it must become clear that this is the purpose of the reading being completed. We must also be sure to avoid the pitfall that comes from simple source analysis earlier in schooling ie this source is not useful because the individual was not there.

Pupils that are used to analysing the provenance of sources may come to the incorrect conclusion that the person writing the interpretation is an expert and therefore must be completely trusted and agreed with.

In order to circumvent this, it's important to separate the reading of interpretation from that of source material. From Think Aloud studies and experience, several steps, as illustrated in figure 1 below, should be addressed to effectively read historical interpretation:

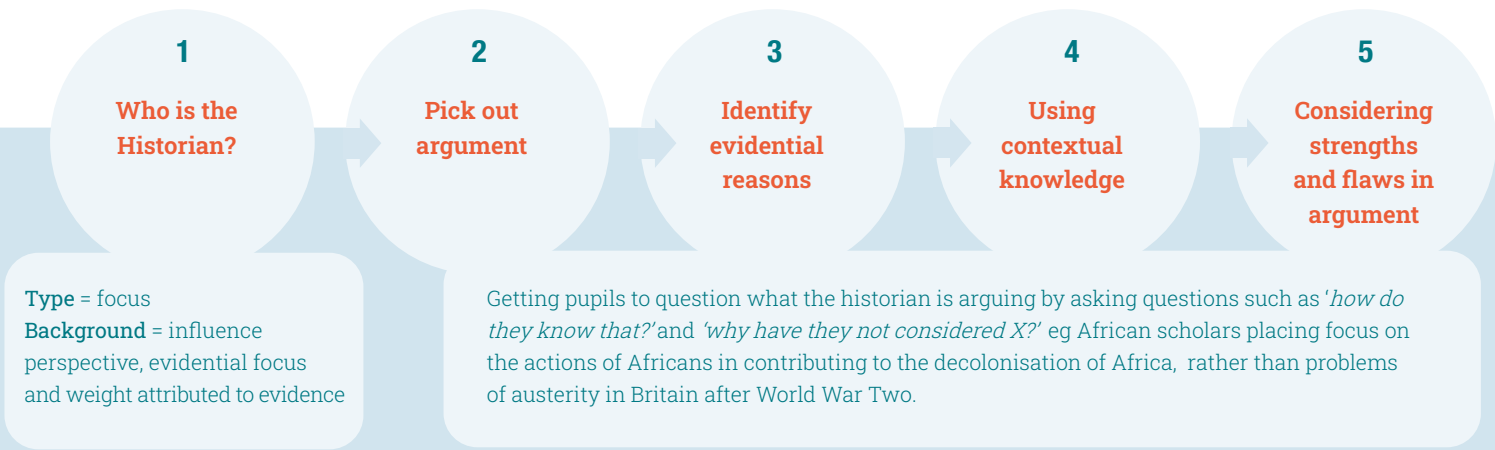
This reading can come down to the three steps outlined by Shanahan and Shanahan:

-  **Sourcing:**
Who is the author? What is their specialism?
-  **Contextualisation:**
What is the context of the text? What was happening then, and since, which might impact the writing?
-  **Corroboration:**
What does the other historical evidence suggest? Does it support or contradict the interpretation here?

By taking these steps it becomes apparent that before looking at the reading of the text the author is the first thing to be considered. This takes a huge amount of time and curricular space and therefore it's important to look at interpretations in detail and perhaps reduce the breadth that we study as it will be difficult to do this effectively.

Vella (2021) refers to the problem of pupils being 'equipped with a substantial amount of background knowledge,'³ and the inherent difficulties of overcoming this when attempting to identify argument and bias.

Figure 1



3. Vella (2021) *Supporting students and teachers to meet the language challenge in content subjects*



How to read contemporary sources

When reading sources, many of the steps that apply to interpretations are also appropriate. Firstly, it's vital to make pupils aware why they are reading this text. *Are they reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle simply to find out what happened? Or are they questioning why its view of the Normans may be so negative?*

Both types of reading have considerable merit but a vast difference in the approach required. Moreover, if we are teaching pupils how to read sources, the first task is to introduce pupils to what they are reading them for; in other words, what enquiry can the sources help pupils to understand more about?

This can help pupils to internalise the idea that:

- ✘ sources are not made to answer the questions of historians
- ❓ sources can only reveal information based on the questions we ask of them

As a result, it's vital that pupils are interrogating sources rather than just reading them. Not only should we be considering the question of *'What can this source teach me about X?'* but also through sourcing and contextualisation *'Why does this source want me to think this about X?'*

A helpful model of reading sources could be:

- 1 Establish what enquiry the sources are being used for
- 2 Consider the sourcing and context of the source and question how this may have shaped its argument
- 3 Make inferences in relation to the enquiry
- 4 Use contextual knowledge and other sources, as well as the work of appropriate historians, to support or challenge what the source shows/says.

The idea of creator bias should be considered as **valuable** to this historian and should prompt pupils to ask further questions, rather than simply dismissing the source as useless.

As Lang (1993) states: *'all accounts, primary or secondary, are subject to the bias of their authors.'*⁴ Therefore bias should be embraced as a tool for unlocking a source rather than a barrier that results in pupils dismissing a source as 'not useful.' *'Rather than being a disadvantage this is an important and useful attribute, and it is precisely what makes them valuable.'* (Lang)⁴

Ultimately, historians must use the tools at their disposal to attempt to get into the minds of the creator of a source. This will always be an inexact science. We can make predictions and assumptions but will never be able to be completely certain.

It's therefore important to use language of uncertainty with phrases such as *"which may suggest"* rather than *"which proves that"*, *"which shows X is true"* to highlight the difficulty in understanding these texts totally.



How to support pupils reading interpretation – the ‘Big Five’

Table 2

Activate prior knowledge	Make predictions	Generate questions	Clarify uncertainty	Summarise reading
Using the text of the interpretation, identify what topic and subtopic of history the interpretation is focused on.	Use <i>key terminology</i> , <i>background knowledge</i> , and <i>tone</i> of the text to predict the argument being made by the author.	Question how the information is being presented to form the argument and the convincingness of the interpretation.	Use contextual knowledge and other pieces of literature to clarify understanding of the text.	Use certain points, such as the end of the paragraph, to summarise the point of view being provided.





How to support pupils reading interpretation – the ‘Big Five’

Table 3

Possible question	Examples	The ‘Big Five’ in use
<p>Who is the historian providing the interpretation?</p> <p><i>What is their school of thought?</i></p> <p><i>Describe their typical view.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is Alan Bullock who wrote just after WWII when the world was desperate to understand Hitler and individuals were seen as the drivers of history • It is Ian Kershaw who wrote much later, had access to more evidence and was more interested in the influence social factors have on history • Bullock was an Intentionalist: a historian who believes individuals set out to achieve a goal and history is shaped by their decisions • Kershaw was a Structuralist: a historian who believes that history is driven by systems, institutions and broader structures rather than individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activate prior knowledge • Make predictions
<p>What type of language does the historian use?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperbole, emphasis, repetition • Elaborate metaphors (eg. Trotsky) • Dismissive of other arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate questions
<p>Which historical period/location is the historian writing about?</p> <p><i>What might you expect of their argument?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-war period • World War One • Anglo Saxon England 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make predictions
<p>What is the historian’s argument?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elton argues Mary I was politically incompetent • Barr focuses more on Britain’s involvement in the Middle East than the historical conflict in the region • Critical of ... sympathetic to ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise
<p>How has the historian’s background/specialism affected their argument?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous vs colonial voices • Military historian vs political historian • As a British historian specialising in WWI, Barr focuses more on.... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activate prior knowledge • Generate questions • Clarify understanding
<p>How has the historian been influenced by the evidence base?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the evidence has been lost over centuries since these events happened • Some of the evidence may be inaccessible • It may be hard to find evidence of the role played by disadvantaged groups amongst conventional sources because their ‘voice’ is often not recorded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify understanding



How to support pupils reading sources

Table 4

Possible question	Examples	The 'Big Five' in use
Who/what can you see in the source?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edward the Confessor clutching a cross A protest as a large group are holding signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate prior knowledge Make predictions Generate questions
<p>What does the source tell us about X?</p> <p><i>How do we know this from the source?</i></p> <p><i>What do we know from our own knowledge which supports/challenges this?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edward the Confessor is deeply religious - <i>he is clutching a cross</i> Populations grew rapidly during the Industrial Revolution - <i>Census figures triple in 30 years</i> <i>Edward had no children and refused to have sexual relations with his wife.</i> <i>Many people moved from rural areas to cities to take up new roles in factories and other industries.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate questions Clarify understanding Summarise
What type of source is this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photo - of men in the trenches Document - autopsy of Mary Kelly Oral testimony - of a concentration camp survivor Object - coin from reign of William I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate prior knowledge
<p>When was the source made?</p> <p><i>How might this influence what it says/shows?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the time/a short time after/many years after... During Nazi rule 1088, after William I rule The source might be more critical / positive / objective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate prior knowledge Make predictions
<p>Who made the source?</p> <p><i>What experiences or knowledge does this person have?</i></p> <p><i>How might this have influenced the source?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A political cartoonist - living in Britain during the Russian Revolution A German citizen - who lived during Hitler's rule Makes it more objective / accurate / negative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate prior knowledge Generate questions
Why might the source have been made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To capture a moment - Berlin Wall coming down in 1989 To influence others opinions - to recruit soldiers to WWI To document events - Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make predictions Generate questions Activate prior knowledge
Who might have seen /had access to this source at the time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private letter - Napoleon's letters to Josephine Diary entry - Samuel Pepys' diary Piece of propaganda to the entire population - World War Two rationing posters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make predictions Generate questions Activate prior knowledge
What is the message of this source?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It may be to promote Hitler's economic reforms It may be critical of William I's reign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarise



Worked Example: How to read the work of interpretation of Peter Frankopan

'For millennia, it was the region lying between east and west, linking Europe with the Pacific, that was the axis on which the globe spun. Far from being on the fringe of global affairs, these countries lie at its very centre... This is where great empires rose and fell, where the after-effects of clashes between cultures and rivals were felt thousands of miles away ... These tremors were carried along a network that fans out in every direction, routes along which nomads and merchants have travelled, goods and produce have been bought and sold. In the late 19th century, this sprawling web of connections was given a name by Ferdinand von Richthofen that has stuck ever since - the 'Silk Roads'. These pathways serve as the world's central nervous system, connecting peoples and places together ... Place whose names are all but forgotten once dominated, dotted across the spine of Asia; enormous cities were strung like pearls, linking the Pacific to the Mediterranean. Urban centres spurred each other

on, with rivalry between rulers and elites prompting ever more ambitious architecture and spectacular monuments to show their power ... Cities such as these became home to brilliant scholars who advanced their subjects. For centuries before the early modern era, the intellectual centres of excellence of the world were not located in Europe or the west, but in Baghdad and Balkh, Bukhara and Samarkand [places in the Middle East]. There was good reason why the cultures, cities and peoples who lived along the Silk Roads developed and advanced; as they traded and exchanged ideas, they learnt and borrowed from each other, stimulating further advances in philosophy, sciences, language and religion ... The real crucible, the 'Mediterranean' in its literal meaning - the centre of the world - was not a sea separating Europe and North Africa, but right in the heart of Asia.'

Peter Frankopan, the Silk Roads

Here we have an interpretation used in an enquiry into the Silk Roads. The first thing to note is that it is not a short extract but instead gives a sizeable chunk of academic text. This is important; to diminish the work of historians to soundbites diminishes the need for disciplinary literacy.

As explored previously, the work of historians can be difficult for Secondary pupils to comprehend fully. However, the teacher can use questions in order to guide the pupil in reading the text disciplinarily.

In the worked example that follows on page 15, the questions on pages 12 and 13 have been reframed to make them more accessible in the Secondary classroom.

The aim is to model these questions and make them explicit with pupils so that they learn to ask these questions that encourage noticing for themselves. Of course, some example answers may also need modelling or scaffolding. Using paired talk for some questions may help pupils articulate their answers.



Sourcing

To follow the strategies of expert readers it's important that our first step is to source this interpretation. In this instance this would be teacher-led with the teacher introducing the class to the historian's background and other works.

For example, Peter Frankopan is a professor of global history at Worcester College and a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. He has previously written books about the importance of the Middle East in the First Crusade.





Contextualisation

What context was Frankopan writing in?

The second step of expert reading is to contextualize the text. This is a text written in 2015 within the context of broadening historical horizons and revisiting the role of the Middle East, again this points to the fact that Frankopan's argument may situate the Silk Roads as hugely significant.

It's worth spending the time early on in our Schemes of Work to complete these two steps. This allows pupils to make predictions and understand the role of a historian, and therefore interpretation, more effectively.





Corroboration

Can Frankopan's argument be corroborated?

Finally it's time to corroborate the argument. At this stage of the process we can read and explore the text itself rather than just focusing on authorship.

Through the historical knowledge held by the pupils, other primary sources and potentially other interpretations, can Frankopan's argument and his premises within that interpretation be supported? This leads to the ultimate question of dealing with interpretation of how convincing this interpretation is?





Worked Example: How to read the evidence of Albert Speer

Let's take an extract from *Inside the Third Reich* by Albert Speer from a GCSE exam paper. This source is presented to pupils to study how useful it is for an enquiry into the reasons for increased support for the Nazis in 1929-32.

Rather than jumping straight into the amorphous question of 'how useful is Source A?' – thinking in disciplinary stages can support understanding further.

Sourcing

The demands of the GCSE paper means the sources seen within the exam setting are often unseen. The analysis of sourcing in a disciplinary fashion is not always possible as in the above example.

However, if we treat this source as a historian would, we can prepare pupils for the processes required within the GCSE.

Source A – From *Inside the Third Reich* by Albert Speer, published in 1970. Here Speer is remembering hearing a speech made by Hitler in 1931.

I was carried away on a wave of enthusiasm by the speech. Here, it seemed to me, was new hope. Here were new ideals, a new understanding and new tasks for Germany. The dangers of Communism, which seemed to be growing, could be stopped. Hitler persuaded us that Germany could recover from all of its problems.

It must have been during this time that my mother saw an SA parade. The sight of discipline in a time of chaos, the impression of energy in an atmosphere of hopelessness, seems to have won her over to the Nazis as well.

1



Teacher:

Albert Speer was a leading member of the Nazi Party. How might this impact his account?

2



Pupil:

He is likely to want to make the Nazis and Hitler seem better than they were. I would predict that he would present Hitler positively.



Contextualisation

Often when dealing with sourcing and contextualisation in terms of primary sources they are categorised under the umbrella of ‘provenance’ – here we have separated the two.

Understanding context can be a difficult process for pupils as it often requires an encyclopedic understanding of history. In this one example

the candidate would need to be able to fill in the blanks between 1931 and 1970 in order to fully analyse context. In this regard, the teacher can support to try to avoid the classic ‘he may have forgotten what happened 39 years ago.’





Corroboration

As with the interpretation on p19, this section of question will require closer reading of the text itself rather than focusing on the authorship.

