

Teaching Historical Thinking Skills Through “Reading Like A Historian” Method

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Abstract The study envisioned to give a grounding in historical thinking skills using *Reading Like a Historian approach to Grade 6 pupils*. Using the descriptive-development research design, the research study developed and implemented learning exemplars to Grade 6 pupils utilizing the *Reading Like a Historian* framework as a tool in primary source analysis in teaching historical thinking skills. The process of writing the learning exemplar consisted of four stages: Design Phase, Developmental Phase, Evaluation/Validation Phase and Dissemination Phase. The result of the try-out revealed that the *Reading Like a Historian Method* from Stanford University was very appropriate since it engaged pupils in historical inquiry. This method taught pupils how to investigate historical questions by employing reading strategies such as *sourcing, contextualizing, corroborating, and close reading*. Instead of memorizing historical facts, pupils assessed the reliability of numerous viewpoints on historical issues. They learned to create historical assertions supported by documentary substantiation.

Keywords: historical thinking skill, reading like a historian, teaching history

Introduction

History subject has the richness of content so basic for effective thinking skills acquisition since it requires higher thinking skills for the historical analysis ;interpretation research; and decision making. These thinking skills are manifested when students think historically within and beyond their historical studies. This involves the construction and application of analytical thought, not merely the ability to question, but to generate ideas and apply critical thinking in a creative fashion (Navarro, 2008).

Hence, historical thinking, in conjunction with historical content, can be acquired in intangible areas of teaching and learning. To help pupils think historically means to immerse them as far as possible in the moral and cultural ethos of the past. Pupils reflect historically by getting out of their contemporary time into the manners of real choice people met in the past (Booth & Hyland, 2000). For their part, teachers are expected and required to teach not only history, but also the critical skills of thinking through history. The course of increasing critical thinking skills in the classroom is one of the things educators must also contribute (Chowen, 2005)

Although many teachers of history try to understand the value of having students read and interpret primary and secondary source documents, most history teachers still cling to the practice of using only textbooks on a daily basis (Hicks, 2004). Exhausting and covering gargantuan texts remains the most collective scheme of teaching history unrelatedly of teachers' disciplinary understanding.

At topmost, several teachers use primary sources, videos, photographs, and so forth to substantiate the story told by the textbook (VanSledright, 2002). This sustained practice of teaching history is frustrating.

The practical consequence of this condition is that history teachers today are expected to design courses and teaching strategies that engage students in historical cognition (Bain, 2000). Such epistemic approach challenges teachers to merge a substantive understanding of the discipline of history with an equally sophisticated understanding of learning (Bain, 2000), Therefore, teachers are required to process not only a sensitivity to the value and potential of teaching but also skills in careful planning-thinking through the condition which can generate such student learning, and designing teaching and assessment practices which help and expect students to demonstrate higher order abilities (Booth & Hylad, 2000).

Purpose of the Research Study

The study aimed to teach historical thinking skills using “*Reading Like a Historian*” method to Grade 6 pupils. Specifically, it pursued the following objectives:

1. Develop lesson exemplars based on “Reading Like a Historian” method;
2. Validate exemplar lessons in developing historical thinking skills through primary source and analysis using the “Reading Like a Historian” method; and
3. Try out the validated learning exemplars.

Framework of the Study

This study was designed to teach pupils to develop historical thinking skills through inquiry process. As presented in Figure 1, pupils will evaluate and infer from primary and secondary source documents in order to grasp and diagnose history written from a range of different standpoints. Pupils must see history as a collection of stories and interpretations of different people in different perspectives (Gewertz,

2012). Through repetition, pupils will progress in their higher order thinking skills, such as synthesis, analysis, and evaluation while studying the contents of history. Pupils will practice these higher-order thinking skills to construct discrete versions of historical narratives grounded in the investigation of evidences. By focusing on the development of historical thinking skills while utilizing primary and secondary source documents, educators are able to break the stranglehold of the textbook which often reduces primary source documents to decorations (Reisman, 2012). Unlike primary and secondary source documents that provide multiple views of the past, a textbook-only approach shuts down inquiry (Monte-Sano, 2012).

The Reading Like a Historian method takes primary-source documents as its centerpiece and shifts textbooks into a supporting role. Students are encouraged to obtain four key skills in their primary and secondary source analysis: (1) *sourcing*; (2) *contextualization*; (3) *corroboration*; and (4) *close reading*.

Table 1. Skills Focus

Sourcing	Contextualization	Corroboration	Close Reading
<p>Emboldens pupils to measure how the author's perspectives and motives for writing affect their interpretations of events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identify author's position on a historical event. ▶ Identify and evaluate the author's purpose in producing the document. ▶ Predict what the author will say before reading the document. ▶ Evaluate the source's believability / 	<p>Encourages pupils to comprehend the complete picture of what is happening on the phase of the historical event.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use context/ background information to draw more meaning from documents. ▶ Infer historical context from document(s) ▶ Recognize what the document reflects one moment in changing the past. ▶ Understand that words must be understood in a larger context. 	<p>Encourages pupils to classify opposing views and testimonies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identify author's claims about the event. ▶ Evaluate evidence/ reasoning author uses to support claims. ▶ Evaluate the author's word choice: understand that language is used deliberately. 	<p>Encourages pupils to absorb the text deliberately and profoundly by constructing words and sentences for meaning. Pupils give emphasis on these skills as they use primary sources to develop their own elucidations to historical content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Establishing what is true by comparing documents to each other. ▶ Recognize disparities

trustworthiness by considering genre, audience, and author's purpose.

between two accounts.

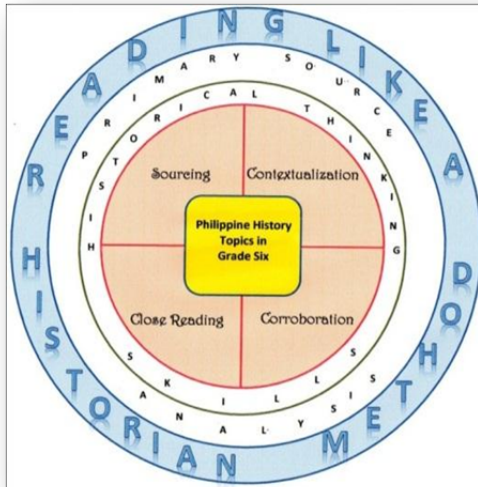


Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm

Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive-development research design. Descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the existing framework and the instructional process in teaching primary source analysis using the “Reading Like a Historian” method. It is developmental, in a sense, because it is concerned with the development and implementation of learning exemplars based on the determined framework of the “Reading Like a Historian”.

Participants of the Study

The designed research was intended for a target population currently in the sixth grade of an elementary

school in Quezon City. A heterogeneous group/class consisted of 50 pupils in the target population was assumed to have basic skills for the sixth grade regarding the ability to read and write.

One expert professor in Philippine History from the National Center for Teacher Education and two Araling Panlipunan teachers from the school participant were asked to validate the learning exemplars. They personally conferred and explained the points which they deemed were of utmost importance. Their recommendations and suggestion served as bases for the improvement and revisions of the lesson exemplars.

Research Instrument

To validate the learning exemplars, the *Reading Like a Historian Method Learning Exemplar Rubric* was utilized. This instrument was intended for use by experts to validate the Reading Like a Historian Method learning exemplars. It contains the different criteria in evaluating the four elements of the learning exemplar. The elements are: (1) historical content; (2) historical thinking (*sourcing, corroboration, contextualization and close reading*); (3) scaffolding; and (4) lesson structure.

The *Process Observer Checklist (POC)* instrument was used as a triangulation tool. Designed to counter validate the try-out of the Reading Like a Historian Learning Exemplars, the POC helped to assess the actual conduct and observation of the lessons based on the comments and suggestions of the two process observers.

ARCH Historical Thinking Skills Rubric for Elementary was used to assess student's performance during the try-out.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study observed the following processes: Phase 1 – Decision Phase, Phase 2 – Development Phase, Phase 3 – Validation Phase and Phase 4 – Discrimination Phase. The design phase started with the review of the k-12 curriculum for Grade 6

Phase 1 include revision of K-12 curriculum for grade 6 where the identified topics to be employed in the learning exemplar were extracted. In this phase, the researchers surveyed 10 district historians in Philippine history regarding primary sources to be used in teaching specific topics in grade 6.

For **phase 2**, the researcher prepared the experts' and peer validation instrument as well as the seven 40-minute Reading Like a Historian Learning Exemplar.

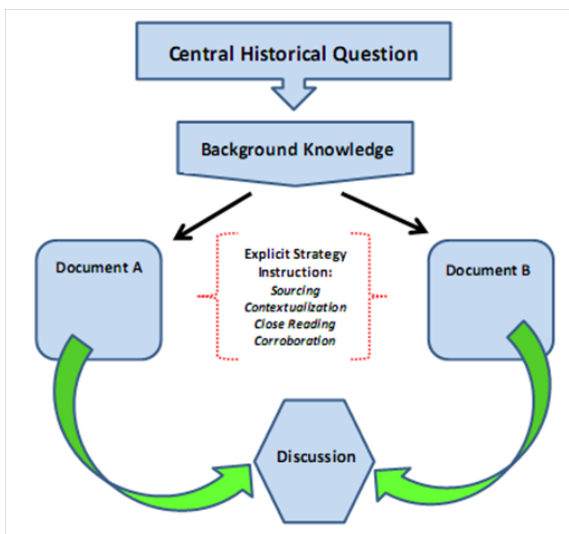


Figure 2. Reading Like a Historian Lesson Plan Outline

Phase 3 formed on experts and prevalidation of the lesson exemplar. **Phase 4**, on the other hand dealt with the try out and finalization of the plan.

Results and Discussion

On the development of the lesson exemplars based on “Reading Like a Historian” method

The main consideration in determining the content and competencies used in the study is the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum. Through the survey among the distinct historians, 54 primary sources on *Rebolusyong Pilipino ng 1896* and 32 primary sources on *Panghihimasok ng mga Amerikano* were identified. Two topics with the most listed primary sources were drawn and chosen to be the topics in preparing the learning exemplars. These are the *Death of Andres Bonifacio and the Filipino-American War*.

The following are the competencies and content of the two lesson exemplars that were used in teaching history through the Reading Like a Historian method:

1. *Death of Andres Bonifacio*
 - *Analysis and interpretation of information*
 - *Perceived implication on the lack of unity in the revolutionary movement and Philippines as a nation*
2. *Philippine-American War*
 - *Analysis and interpretation of information*
 - *Evaluation of the important events that contributed to the struggles of Filipinos during the Philippine-American War*

Table 2. Survey from Historians on Primary Sources

K-12(Grade6) Topics	No. of Primary Sources
1896 Philippine Revolution	54
American Occupation	32
Japanese Occupation	18
Third Republic of the Philippines	19
Problems and Challenges on Human Rights during Martial Law	12
Challenges on Independence in Present Times	20

On the validation of exemplar lessons in developing historical thinking skills through primary source analysis using the “Reading Like a Historian” method.

Content

The three experts gave this component a rating of 100% which means that,they strongly agreed that the content of the exemplars is historically accurate that includes historical background and requires students to read and write.

Historical Thinking

The historical thinking component of the exemplar received a rating of 100% from the evaluators. The experts saw that the activities in the lessons indeed require students to analyze or construct interpretations using evidence and also require close reading and attention to source information. The four instructional processes/skills such as *sourcing*, *corroboration*, *contextualization* and *close reading* were evident in all the activities for the learners.

Scaffolding

The scaffolding component covers the materials used in the classroom activities which help the pupils develop

their historical thinking skills. The 100% rating signifies the general perception of the experts about the appropriateness of the materials to the learners and its perfect utilization for scaffolding and supporting student thinking.

Lesson Structure

The lesson structure received a 100% rating. The experts viewed that the evaluation part of the exemplars includes: assessment criteria and strategies focused on historical understanding; clear learning goals and logical progression; and clear directions. It was also considered realistic in normal classroom settings.

The overall characteristics and degree of structure of the lesson exemplars were rated 100%. This means that the lesson exemplars provide teachers with directions on how to implement them. Table 3 shows an excellent learning exemplar with no revisions done and was approved for an immediate try-out.

Table 3. Experts Validation Results

Element	Criteria	Score	P	Comments
Historical Content	Is historically accurate	3/3	100%	None
	Requires students to read and write	3/3	100%	None
Historical Thinking	Requires students to analyze or construct interpretations using primary source evidence	3/3	100%	None
Sourcing/Close Reading	Requires close reading and attention to source information	3/3	100%	None

Contextualization	Requires students to do one or more of the following:	3/3	100%	
Contextualization	Establish historical significance	3/3	100%	
Contextualization	Identify continuity and change	3/3	100%	None
Corroboration	Analyze cause and consequence	3/3	100%	
	Take historical perspective			
	Understand the moral dimension of historical interpretation			
Scaffolding	Is appropriate and/or appropriately modified for stating audience	3/3	100%	None
	Includes materials and strategies for scaffolding and supporting student thinking	3/3	100%	None
Lesson Structure	Defines clear learning goals (aligned with state standards) and processes logically	3/3	100%	None
	Includes assessment criteria and strategies that focus on historical thinking	3/3	100%	None
	Includes background information and directions for implementing the lesson:	3/3	100%	
	Time frame	3/3	100%	None
	Procedure	3/3	100%	
	Technology/materials	3/3	100%	
	Handouts	3/3	100%	
	Bibliography			

Lesson Plan Characteristics	Total	Percentage
▶ Multiple Sources (Sourcing/Corroboration)	3/3	100%
▶ Focus on historical thinking (4 skills)	3/3	100%
▶ Opportunity to analyze causation (Contextualization)	3/3	100%
▶ Scaffolding for close analysis of text (Close Reading)	3/3	100%
▶ Useful for differentiating instruction	3/3	100%
▶ Useful for English language learners	3/3	100%
▶ Further resources for teaching this content	3/3	100%
▶ Inclusion of multiple perspectives (Corroboration)	3/3	100%

On the try-out of the validated exemplar lesson teaching – *Ang Pagkamatay ni Andres Bonifacio and Ang Digmaang Filipino Amerikano.*

Try-out was employed after experts’ validation of the prototype learning exemplars using the “Reading Like a Historian” method. Two peer observers were invited to counter validate the try-out The Process Observer Checklist (POC) was used to assess the actual conduct and observation of the lesson.

Table 4. Process Observers’ Evaluation of Teaching Using the RLH Learning Exemplar

A. On teaching using the RLH Learning Exemplars:	Mean
The indicators	
1. Measure the quality of delivering the procedures of the lesson.	3
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of using primary documents in instructional tool in teaching history.	3
3. Validate the introduction of “doing history” as an instructional methodology in teaching history.	3
4. Assess the usefulness of documents in developing student’s historical thinking skills.	2.5
5. Check the accomplishments of the learning standard.	3
Average	2.9

Based on the actual observation of HEKASI teachers the average rating of 2.9 demonstrates the reliability of the design of the “Reading Like a Historian” Learning Exemplars.

Table 5 presents the process observers’ evaluation of the pupil’s learning component.

Table 5. Process Observer Evaluation on Students’ Learning

A. On student’s learning: The indicators	Mean
1. Measure the extent of participation of students in the activity.	3
2. Confirm the value of social construction of learning students.	3
3. Validate the student’s response in using primary documents.	3
4. Evaluate the student’s performance	3
5. Assess the development of students’ historical thinking using primary documents.	3
Average	3

The results show how the process observers viewed pupils response to the use of primary sources. Based on the average rating of **3** and on their actual observation, it shows that both observers agreed that the pupils enjoyed the activity of “doing” history. The very satisfactory rating also reflects the process observers’ view about how the lesson developed the pupils’ cognitive skills of thinking like a historian. After the try-out, triangulation was conducted. According to Cohen et al. (2000), triangulation denotes the use of more than one approach to the analysis of a research in order to augment sureness in the ensuing conclusions.

Below is the brief narrative report on triangulation including the comments and suggestions of the process observers.

- The pupils were really engaged in the activities like historians, investigating about issues in Philippine history, which was, according to the process observers not ordinarily done in

a classroom setting in HEKASI subjects at present. The observers questioned how a non-History major teacher could engage in this kind of methodology, since elementary teachers are generalists.

- One of the observers expressed that based on his observation, it seems that the RHL method is more difficult and taxing for the teachers to do since it will require them to look for primary sources from distinct historians and employ modifications (translation) to the documents for the students easy understanding.
- Another observer commented that the RHL method would boost the pupil's sympathy to the people who have shaped history. According to him, this task will be the very tool to develop nationalism among the future generations because students will no longer be bored while learning the past.

After the triangulation, the *ARCH Historical Thinking Skills Rubrics for Elementary* was utilized to assess the learner's performance in all the activities of each lesson as presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Analysis of Scores on Students' Performance

Criteria	Sourcing and Close Reading	Corroboration/ Claims and Evidences	Contextualization/ Claims and Evidences (6 items)
		(10 items)	
4	69.63%	81.46%	83.64%
3	24.07%	12.41%	12.35%
2	5.74%	2.78%	2.47%
1	0.56%	0.74%	0.62%
No answer	0	2.59%	0.62%

Sourcing and Close Reading

Out of ten sourcing and close reading activities given, 69.63% of the 54 pupils were able to identify all authors and all original dates of primary and secondary sources. They also evaluated the reliability of the sources based on the authors' perspective and on when and why they were produced. Almost a quarter (24.07%) of the class identified most of the authors, 5.54% identified some and 0.56% identified a few and did not attempt to evaluate the reliability of the sources. All the pupils were able to do the skills, however.

Corroboration

A vast majority of the pupils (81.46%) were able to analyze the multiple accounts of the same event or topic and noted important similarities and differences in the numerous evidences given. This rating was 11.83% higher than their skills of sourcing and close reading. However, it was also observed that 2.59% of the pupils did not attempt to examine the sources for corroborating or conflicting evidence. Out of 54 pupils, only 12.41% could not thoroughly analyze multiple accounts and note important similarities and differences, but could do the skills through comparing information and perspectives in multiple sources. A very small percentages (3.52%) demonstrated little to no attempt to do the skill.

Contextualization

It is notable that 83.64% of the 54 pupils applied prior and new knowledge to determine the historical setting of sources. They used the setting to interpret the sources within that historical context, as opposed to present day mindset. A very little percentage (14.82%) attempted to interpret and determine the historical setting of the sources. Only one pupil was not able to do the skill, and another one did not even attempt to understand the historical setting of sources.

The ratings show that the pupils' strong point in employing historical thinking skills is *contextualization*. Only a very small percentage of pupils could not completely do the activity but nevertheless tried to implement the skill. This finding confirmed the fact that the research insured that the learning process with the use of the method was within the sixth grade scope.

From the results, it can be inferred that the pupils have difficulty in developing historical thinking skills but are still "perfectly capable" of doing so and will improve with practice. The same results were found by several researchers (Vansledright, 1999; Levstik and Barton 2001; Wineburg, 2001; and Booth, 2003). Pupils can learn to reflect historically from the commencement of their introduction to history as Chown (2005) also saw. Elementary pupils are capable of thinking historically with appropriate guidance and practice (VanSledright, 1999).

The research may affirm that real history can be taught to pupils of varied ages and abilities and that the pupils can come to terms with the "strangeness" of the past and use "historical imagination" to think effectively in history (Foster & Yeager, 1998).

It is undeniably very evident that young students can indeed develop historic sense, but they must be taught explicitly to understand cause and effect (Lee & Ashby, 2000). Beginning pupils can also be directed to read and construe historical sources through careful teacher scaffolding of the use of suitable thinking tools (Barton, 1997; Drake & Brown, 2003; Levstik & Barton, 1996; VanSledright, 2002).

During the activities, not only did the activities get students think about history and be critical thinkers, they also allowed students to hone their writing skills. The aforementioned activities were great, and the students

appreciated them, especially when they did the interview portion in the activity.

The activities also provided the pupils a venue for excellent conversations. The kids really enjoyed them, especially the “Hello Garci” incident, even though they knew nothing about any of the events.

Based on Parker (2012), stories/ documents are geared for educators’ use to accelerate students’ learning of history. Educators utilise similar good instructional methodologies for understanding of historical texts that are used in all good literature instruction. In the activities, pupils not only read, investigate, inquire, and equate historical narratives; they are also directed to produce historical narratives and arguments of their own. To truly engage in writing and creating essays, articles, presentations, media projects, and other types of historical accounts, students must exhibit sound historical perspectives and knowledge. Teachers lead pupils in using tools to promote an interpretation of sources and artifacts. Pupils analyze the strength of sources and the perspective of authors by what is included and what is left out of a narrative. Pupils learn to compare alternative views of an issue or conflict and to consider the views, beliefs, and practices of different groups of people in a particular historical time period. Through dynamic discussion and analysis, pupils are not imparted basically what happened; however, they are invigorated to figure out what might have happened by means of varied expertise of real historians (Parker, 2012).

The pupil-participants were very engrossed in doing the activity and made the link to studying history, particularly in the circumstance of assessing primary sources. The entire order taught them an extraordinary set of critical thinking tools that they will be able to use for the next two topics in Philippine History.

The results of the lesson was very tangibly based on Gewertz's (2012) assertions that as pupils learn to construe historical documents and make sense of the facts, they see that history is a collection of stories and interpretations. Learning the essential content literacy skills to interpret these historical documents is vital for pupils during their historical thinking skills development.

Pupils necessitate the chance to make history as historians do, which includes investigation and interpretation of pertinent evidences. But as we see with any new learning process, such a shift is not that easy. (Gewertz, 2012). Teaching evidence-based claims to support arguments will provide pupils with an impressive historical perspective and further advance their historical thinking skills. By learning history as a collection of human narratives, students are able to further improve their own self identify. Students are able to acquaint the narratives of their own lives with the stories of the historical figures and develop grander meaning as a result.

As a result of the activities, this research also proved that students find difficulty in developing historical thinking skill but are still "perfectly capable" of doing so and will improve with practice (Vansledright, 1999, Levstick & Barton, 2001, Wineburg, 2001, Booth 2003). As Chown (2005) has also claimed, students can learn to reflect historically from the commencement of their introduction to history. Elementary students are really capable of thinking historically with appropriate guidance and practice (VanSledright, 1999). Real history can be taught to students of varied ages and abilities and they can come to terms with the "strangeness" of the past and use "historical imagination" to think effectively in history (Yeager and Foster, 1998).

This research proved that based on the assertions of Hernández-Ramos and De La Paz, (2009), with a set of an enormous file of primary and secondary sources, pupils can

go further and beyond what is expected from the textbook for a significant portion of their resources. As pupils read a collection of documents, they can clearly produce manifold interpretations (Gewertz, 2012). By way of concentrating on the development of historical thinking skills while consuming primary and secondary source documents, teachers are able to halt the ‘monopoly of the textbook’ which often diminishes primary source documents to decorations (Reisman, 2012).

Pupils must understand history as a collection of stories and interpretations (Gewertz, 2012). Students need to be given a chance to investigate historical data through designing learning opportunities by reading historical sources that present manifold perspectives (Monte-Sano, 2012). When given an opportunity to select these types of sources to enrich and expand the content from their textbook, students will do so (Hernández-Ramos & De La Paz, 2009). Students work together, share thoughts and convey connotations through primary source analysis and are skilled to comprehend history as an account of human experiences.

At the end of the eight-day this research affirmed that the “HATs,” or “historical assessment of thinking” of Samuel Weinberg and his colleagues in the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) was very effective.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The RLH method is found very appropriate in the development of historical thinking skills since it engages students in historical inquiry. This method teaches students how to investigate historical questions by employing reading strategies such as sourcing, contextualizing, corroborating, and close reading. Instead of memorizing historical facts, students assess the reliability of numerous viewpoints on historical issues. They learn to create historical assertions supported by documentary evidences.

Further study of teaching historical thinking skills using Reading Like a Historian method should be done in other history subjects and with other grade levels. This will improve the teaching-learning situations and help in the academic achievement of the students in their history classes.

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