HTH GSE

Spring 2012

Molineaux

Action Research Proposal

**Research Question:**

“What happens when students engage in problem-based learning in a history class?”

**Introduction:**

Every interesting idea that I have had as a teacher starts with an itch. Over the course of a busy week in the midst of a busy month within a busy teaching year, who has time to plan grand sweeping changes to curriculum? And yet, as I work from moment to moment, grading papers, running lessons, talking to students, planning with colleagues, and commiserating with peers, I find myself plagued by certain perennial itches – ideas that I patently don’t have time to deal with, but that nonetheless keep nagging at me, demanding attention. Questions like, “Am I really teaching anything useful though the homework I am assigning?” catch me in mid-sentence just as I am emailing a night’s reading assignment to my students. Or concerns such as, “Have I forgotten to teach some essential habits of mind this year?” seem to bubble to the surface just as I am racing to plan out my last two weeks of the school year. Clearly, the devil on my shoulder likes to distract me when I most need to focus. And yet, these frustrating, attention-sucking, sometimes downright annoying questions can be just the trick for prodding me to rethink what needs rethinking.

This year, the itch was triangular. Three apparently unrelated questions kept buzzing around the edges of my conscious daily work, demanding to be considered. And it was not until I finally consented to sit down and address them properly that I realized how connected they really are. For the purposes of this action research project, I will call them, the “homework itch,” the “survey course itch,” and the “History Channel itch”:

Homework Itch

History Channel Itch

Survey Course Itch

The Homework Itch

The homework itch was perhaps the simplest: as a history teacher of 9th and 10th grade history classes, on a typical night I assign about 45 minutes of homework that primarily consists of reading something about historical events so that we have a foundation of knowledge to start out with as we begin the next day’s lesson. I came into the year determined to get my students working harder and more efficiently on this task: the better and more carefully they read the textbook, the stronger their understanding of history would be and the less they would need detailed information-driven lectures to fill in the gaps in their knowledge.

I had a satisfying and positive experience working on this skill with my 9th graders. It turned out that spending time on building reading comprehension skills was just what they needed as they entered high school, and the clarity that came with focusing on such a concrete project was calming and appreciated for overwhelmed freshmen.

Where the itch started for me was with my 10th graders: they had already developed decent-to-strong reading comprehension the year before, and now were skimming or snoozing their way through pages and pages of textbook reading. Instead of being energized by the homework and ready to bring thoughtful questions and curiosity to class discussions, they increasingly treated homework – and by extension History class – as a task to be “gotten through” with the least effort necessary.

And after all, weren’t they right to think so? I was drilling them on a skill – the ability to glean detailed information from a textbook – that both has no real-world application and is frankly hopelessly old-fashioned. Yes, it is possible that introductory college lecture classes will actually assign a textbook to read from beginning to end, but beyond that (and into professional life) the only reason anyone would crack a textbook would be to hunt down a specific piece of information in the context of a larger problem. Or, more simply, professionals use textbooks as tools rather than simply letting the contents of a textbooks wash over them en masse. And, furthermore, the very existence of a textbook, as a compendium of information that is otherwise inaccessible to a student, is rapidly becoming obsolete. The overwhelming availability of information on almost every subject imaginable is a gift that we should not turn away, and has the potential to be a curse for those who do not know how to navigate it.

Thus, the “homework itch” that plagued me this year brought me to this paradox: in order to teach without endless lecturing, I need students to use homework as a time to take in a lot of information; but assigning textbook readings and training students to glean useful information from them is both boring and obsolete.

The Survey Course Itch

The obvious and simple answer to the homework paradox (see above) is to simply “teach less”: cover less material, focus on deepening student understanding of a few specific moments in history, and thereby avoid the need to train students to take in lots of information in a short period of time. There is a strong argument to be made for teaching history in this way, and many high schools have tried various methods of focusing courses on specific events (for example, the Civil War) or important themes (“Race and Identity in America”) as a substitute for survey classes on subjects like American History. However, there is a place for survey courses as well, since these allow students to grasp a broad sense of change over time, teasing out patterns and meaning for themselves in a well-guided class. So if we take it as a given that my task is to teach “Modern World History” (the history of the world from 1500 CE to the present, without American History, which is the focus of the 11th grade year), there is an obvious itch that still remains. How on earth is it possible to cover such a broad swath of human history in just 78 ninety-minute lessons?

Any attempt at teaching a “Modern World” survey course is inevitably plagued by how much cannot be covered. Whether trying to plan out the year from the beginning, or frantically trying to pack in a last unit or two in the spring, I am constantly faced with the impossibility of the task given to me. Even on an average day I am regularly forced to choose between studying the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or between discussing the writings of John Stuart Mill or Karl Marx. I try to do a little of everything of course, but the more I pack in the more diluted each experience becomes, placing the burden squarely back on the homework experience to enrich student understanding of each incredible, indispensible new concept.

The History Channel Itch

I hate the History Channel. There, I said it. I am a history teacher who hates the History Channel. Sometimes it seems that every new person I meet who finds out what I do for a living can’t wait to tell me about their favorite show on this network, or demand that I watch some newly-released documentary on World War II or how aliens built the pyramids – one that my life simply won’t be complete without. Believe me, there are many, many reasons to hate the History Channel, but I only need one for the purposes of this research project. The problem is that it places the viewer squarely in the position of acting as a passive vessel into which knowledge about the past is poured. Stuff happened in the past, it seems to say, and if you do not watch this show then you will never know what it was. (“By the way, don’t touch that remote!”)

I have found myself particularly irked this year by the way in which this passive mindset seems to pervade the way that my students experience the study of history. Not that this is the History Channel’s fault (much as I would love to blame it): by assigning textbook readings, giving lectures, or even simply leaping in to answer a student’s question, I am sending the same message. In effect, I am telling students, “stuff happened in the past, and if you do not read (or listen) closely, you’ll never know what it was.”

Scratching The Itch

Just as Alice discovers in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*, sometimes the best way to reach your destination is to walk in just the opposite direction. That is to say, sometimes the most useful solutions come from the most unexpected places, and that was just the case with the beginnings of this action research project, which I found in a mathematics classroom.

I had the wonderful experience early this spring of sitting in on my colleague Chris Wright’s Honors Geometry class. He has been experimenting this year with the Phillips-Exeter problem-based approach to teaching math: instead of giving students a set of theorems, explaining them in detail in class, and then having them “practice” at home with a series of essentially identical problems, it takes a different tact. Students are given a series of problems that they have not been explicitly taught to solve: they work through these in any way they can, trying different strategies and attempting to arrive at solutions in their own ways. Then, when they arrive in class they are simply asked to present their findings. That is, not their “answers,” but rather their process for trying (and in many cases failing) to get to a solution. For each problem, a student presents their findings and the class discusses the progress they made on the problem: either how they reached their solution or how they might try to do so if they have not yet been successful. Along the way, they discover the important theorems themselves and they focus entirely on building problem-solving skills rather than memorizing the shortcuts to solutions.

When Chris invited me to visit his classroom, it was in the context of our discussion of the Phillips-Exeter approach, so we agreed that the key would be to try out the homework and then experience the class itself. After attempting to complete a problem set, which was deliciously thought-provoking and frustrating (I think I only got to the answer on one or two questions, but I thoroughly enjoyed banging away at the others), I sat down at the table with the rest of the class and proceeded to enjoy an incredibly enlightening and unexpected professional development experience. The students spent the entire class leading discussions about problem-solving and not once did they turn to the teacher to ask him for “the answer.”

All at once, I saw that this approach was the perfect solution to my three-way itch. Here I was looking at a homework and classroom strategy that encouraged meaningful student skill-building, still covered a wide range of material, and put students in charge of their own learning in such a way that they felt no need to defer to an authority as a source of knowledge. Meaningful homework, a successful survey course, and the death of a History-Channel mindset: it was the trifecta!

But how to use this problem-based approach in a History classroom? In the last three months, I have worked on researching the current educational thinking on problem-based learning and strategizing about ways to apply it to the study of history. In this action research project, I will study the effect of implementing a problem-based approach in my 10th grade Modern World History class.

**Understandings: What is Problem-Based Learning?**

Defining Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

In his excellent “Overview of Problem-based Learning: Definitions and Distinctions,” John Savery lays out a useful set of principles that define what “Problem-Based Learning” (PBL) means in the context of a classroom (Savery, 2006, pp. 12-15). This term, PBL, gets used in several different kinds of contexts, but for the purpose of this research I will define it as he does.

Savery and other researchers on problem-based learning emphasize the importance of creating a classroom culture where a student is responsible for his or her own learning through problems that are:

1. “Ill-structured” and based on real-world dilemmas: Problems should be incomplete and poorly structured, rather than tied up in a “neat” bow. Thus, part of a students’ job is to untangle the problem itself, figuring out what needs to be answered, assessing what information is necessary to solve it, and clarifying what assumptions they should (and should not make) in order to take it apart. And in order to make this process both worth-while and meaningful, the problem should mimic a real-world problem-solving experience. This is not to say that problems should be impossible, unnecessarily confusing, or so real-world that they have not yet been solved by professionals. Instead, they should be simple, clear, and direct in their approach to challenging the student to try out the kinds of problem-solving that exists in the real professional world. An excellent example from the Phillips-Exeter math curriculum is as follows:
	1. *Problem #8: “Kelly telephoned Brook about a homework problem. Kelly said, “Four plus three times two is 14, isn’t it?” Brook replied, “No, it’s 10.” Did someone make a mistake? Can you explain where these two answers came from?”* (“Mathematics 1 Problem Set,” June 2011). From the very first page of the Phillips-Exeter problem set, this is ill-structured in the best way: there is enough information here to “solve” the problem quite easily, making appropriate to a beginning math student. But the answer is not a number: rather, it is the justification or “proof” to support the clarification of a classic real-world confusion. In order to arrive at the solution, a student must work through her assumptions, approach the issue from several different angles, and come to the “distributive property” on their own, without being told what it is at all.
2. Integrated: By nature, any problem that attempts to be remotely real-world cannot hope to only live in a single discipline. Therefore, the best PBL problems are ones that incorporate other disciplines, both in terms of content (as with a math problems that mentions real historical events) and as a way of introducing alternative approaches to knowledge (as with a scientific problem, like the discovery of the causes of cholera, that asks students to examine the issues through lens of social science and urban planning as well as a purely medical phenomenon). Another interesting Phillips-Exeter problem that incorporates social science is:
	1. *Problem # 10: “Wes bought some school supplies at an outlet store in Maine, a state that has a 6.5% sales tax. Including the sales tax, how much did Wes pay for two blazers priced at $49.95 each and 3 pairs of pants priced at $17.50 each?”* (“Mathematics 1 Problem Set,” June 2011). As taxes are deeply connected to fundamental issues of governance and fairness, this problem could have been even more deeply integrated by asking students to take this a step further and mediate on Wes’ reasons for driving all the way up to Maine to visit an outlet, and whether the gas money he spent made it worth it (and whether the government of Maine made a good choice in maintaining low taxes to support local business).
3. Encouraging of collaboration: Because PBL is not about getting the “right” answer, but rather about understanding how a solution was arrived at and why it works, a PBL classroom immediately develops a discussion-oriented culture that is fertile ground for developing collaborative, trusting relationships. The more a teacher fosters this approach by refusing to act as a source of answers or judge of success, the better this culture will take hold and transform student thinking. One of the most exciting outcomes of these ideas is that the teacher is now no longer the “provider of information” (either through lecture or through the choice of texts), but rather someone whose sole function is to coach students through the development of problem-solving skills.
4. Reflected upon with both self- and peer-assessment: Meta-analysis becomes the heart of the PBL learning process. In order to improve their problem-solving skills, students must engage in continual reflection on their process. Self-assessment of growth and challenges helps to encourage a growth-oriented mindset that sets students up for the kinds of habits of mind that will allow them to persevere and work through challenges. Similarly, peer critique helps students to see each other as guides and mentors as they help each other build and deepen their problem-solving skills.
5. The basis of assessments: In order to evaluate whether students have achieved a good understanding of the material, teachers must find ways to give assessments of some kind. However, these tests must be aimed at assessing students’ problem-solving skills as well as their understanding of the concepts that they have gleaned from their homework problems.

Usefully, Savery also makes the distinction between this Problem-Based approach and both “project-based” learning (which he feels is overly product-driven, an interesting criticism) and “case-based” learning in which case studies form the central focus of class (which he feels is overly contrived and teacher-driven).

Where Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is Being Used

Interestingly, Problem-Based Learning, as it is discussed in the literature now, seems to be coming primarily out of Medical Schools and Mathematics graduate programs. These two strands converged on a similar approach to a related problem, though they do not seem to have influenced each other at all (we probably are looking at convergent evolution in this case). The problem for both areas was that the undergraduate education that most Medical students and Mathematics Ph.D. candidates had received taught them the key information they needed to know, but had failed to teach them a way of thinking that ultimately would make them good doctors and mathematicians. The kinds of skills that make a doctor a great diagnostician or a mathematician a great inventor of new math have to do with an ability to structure their own problems, learn independently, value collaboration, think on their feet, and find answers when information is incomplete. Instead, professors found that students had excelled in memorization, short-cuts for test-taking, isolated study-habits, over-preparation for assessment, answering just what was asked, and reliance on hand-holding levels of structure. Therefore, some key programs have started to design a Problem-Based curricula as a way to “un-train” these bad habits and grow their students into successful additions to their profession.

The Medical School side of this convergent set of ideas is just heating up, with much publication around this topic appearing in the last decade. On the other hand, the mathematics side has been around for much longer and seems to have come from one remarkable individual: a professor who taught at UT-Austin from 1920 to 1969 named R. L. Moore. He was an important mathematician in his own right, but perhaps his greatest contribution (and passion) was his work as a master teacher who influenced several generations of mathematicians with his unique and unusual style of teaching. His influence in the (admittedly small) community of math is such that his students, and their students in turn, came to be known as the Texans, and are marked as having a recognizably eccentric approach to the study of math. Rather than lecture his way through a class like freshmen calculus, which he taught with relish until they forced him to retire, Moore provided a “very carefully selected sequence of problems” for students that they worked away at individually and as a group. As students solved them and attempted to present them to the class, they discovered the math for themselves, becoming “active [participants] in the learning process” (Mahavier, 1997). The “Texans” that this created were noted for their independence of thought in math departments, though some of the studies also suggest that this created an intense spirit of competition in the classroom – a feature I’m not terribly fond of (Halmos, 1985).

Interestingly, there does not seem to be much out there that deals with how this PBL approach might look in a high school history classroom. There are, of course, two possible reasons for this: on the one hand, it could be because no one has really tried it yet, which means that some exciting work could be ahead. On the other hand, it could be that there is nothing published on this because it simply isn’t feasible. The purpose of this action research project will be in part to find that out.

Other Key Sources of Inspiration Beyond Problem-Based Learning

There are several other key strands that will become an important part of this research that are worth mentioning here as well. Though I will focus primarily on a Problem-Based approach in this project, I also think that projects have an important place in the classroom. Thus, Project-Based Learning (the other PBL) will play an essential role in bringing the daily problems to life in a real-world context.

Similarly, though the problems I pose will lead students through the heart of the learning that will take place, I ultimately want to use PBL to encourage them to develop the skill of designing their own problems. There has been some great work done recently on building student research skills, and especially on how to get students to develop their own research questions (Rothstein & Santana, 2011). I want to incorporate research on project-based learning and student research skills more deeply into my action research.

**What does Problem-Based Learning look like in a History class?**

History “Problems”

Here is where I will lay out the plan for how I want to introduce Problem-Based Learning (PBL) into my own History class in the fall. Inevitably, this plan is a work in progress, one that I will continue to shift and tweak over the summer and throughout next year. However, it stands on the following principles:

* Adheres to the classic PBL approach discussed above
* Built on nightly homework problems that are real-world and “ill-structured” (see appendix for examples)
* Includes daily classroom discussion of problems that focuses on the problem-solving process
* Incorporates regular self- and peer-assessment of skill development
* Founded on the idea that historical content (what happened in the past) is simply the steel against which students hone their skills in historical thinking (aka, “research” skills, discussed in more detail below)

Nightly homework will consist of 3-4 “problems” that should take a total of 45 minutes to an hour to complete. In this case, the problems are strongly worded opinions about historical events and issues that students must research and choose whether to accept or reject. For example, a student may be presented with the statement, “The Berlin Airlift was a waste of time and money.” Though they will have a basic background on the Cold War, they will not yet have studied the Berlin Airlift, and thus will have to conduct simple research to achieve enough mastery of the issue to form an opinion on the statement. Intentionally, strong “value” language, such as the word “waste,” are chosen to make the problem both real-world (in the sense that this is just such an issue that politicians and diplomats argued over and that historians continue to debate) and ill-structured, in that it requires further definition and a clarification of assumptions, and thus may be successfully argued on both sides. Finally, the simplicity of the wording and problem help to maintain the students’ focus on a single, clear goal: to master a basic understanding enough to form a clear opinion in approximately 15 minutes.

Much of the research students do will be conducted online and through e-textbooks. Though in a sense students will still largely be using textbooks or textbook-like writing to complete their homework, this is a far different experience than simply being handed a pre-chosen work to digest in full. What I hope to see is active use of readings that they seek out and discover as tools to acquire enough information to come to a conclusion. In order to refine students’ ability to conduct effective, active research, constant self- and peer-assessment of the research project will be an essential component of this work. (See appendix for more detail on the technological tools that students will use to support their research process and meta-cognitive experiences).

When they arrive in the classroom, students will collaborate in small groups and prepare a mini-debate on the homework problems. The debate will allow students to share research techniques and require them to support their conclusions with specific evidence. Their class notes on these presentations and debates will form the basis of their content-learning.

The most difficult and yet essential component of this approach is the active shift in the role of a teacher from information-holder to information-gathering coach, such that the students work primarily on gathering and holding the information themselves and the teacher plays a supportive role in structuring this experience. Any teacher-driven lectures will be skill-based (such as learning how to “read” a painting as a primary source, or learning about a type of critical theory, such as Marxism, that might serve as a framework for studying history, or learning a whole range of basic to complex research skills and mindsets) rather than content-based (for example, listing the major battles of World War I). Similarly, materials put forward solely by the teacher, such as primary sources, images, objects or secondary opinions, should, whenever possible, be presented as a “database” or curated list that students can choose from and add to. They should only be presented by the teacher when they are not readily accessible from a problem-based search, in keeping with the idea that history does not “come from” the teacher and is “knowable” and accessible for the student.

Process Not Product: Skill-Building Over Content in a History Classroom

One of the really powerful potential effects of a problem-based approach in the history classroom is the way in which it will hopefully shift the focus from learning “about” to learning “how.” Rather than simply learning about stuff that happened in the past (a passive experience), students will learn how to conduct research such that they begin to use the “stuff” to construct a narrative (a fundamentally active process). For the purpose of clarity and simplicity, I will call this whole skill “research,” though I mean that in the broadest possible sense, as when people talk about “thinking like a researcher.” Far more than learning how to use a card catalog, learning “research” (in my mind) encompasses the following concepts:

* Texts are tools: students learn to read with a purpose in mind, examining the information from texts (both primary and secondary) as evidence to build a case or cases about history.
* Research is cyclical: students learn to see the value in constantly re-assessing the information they are taking in and fitting it into a growing pattern of existing knowledge, a process which requires a constant cyclical return to the original research problem rather than a linear walk from one idea to the next.
* Research is about questions not answers: students learn to use each new piece of information to generate another question, rather than to settle on a simple answer – true research has no bottom.
* History is story-making: students learn to see historical events, objects, and ideas as interconnected in many possible different conformations – as strands with which they can weave their own narrative. “Doing” history is as much about creativity as it is about cold facts. (By the way, so is all research, including supposedly “hard” disciplines like science or math!)
* Knowing is not knowing: students learn that good research is not about learning every possible knowable detail in the universe, but rather knowing what is “enough” to achieve a small corner of mastery, always keeping in mind what one still does not know.

Students will hone their research skills and develop their understanding of the principles above through their nightly history “problems,” but they will also get a chance to dive into deeper and more individually-driven research at the end of each “problem set” (aka, unit – which will include 15-25 problems). Students will go through the process of researching one issue from the problem set in more depth, and work towards creating their own research problem or question, which they will seek to answer. These deeper research experiences will occur at least five times over the course of the year, so students will have significant opportunities to develop their skills. For example, the Cold War problem set will cover a number of key events, from the Berlin Airlift to the Cuban Missile Crisis to the Space race, and in the “deeper research” part of the unit students can choose to focus in on any one aspect those events to explore in greater detail. As the gain a more complex understanding of their chosen subject, they will be shaping their own research questions, in effect designing their own problem as well as its solution.

Challenges of PBL

I would be remiss if I did not address the fact that there are real potential challenges for bringing a problem-based approach into a history classroom. Here are some of the obvious concerns that swirl around this approach, based on common assumptions about the teaching of history, and how I plan to address them:

* There are no real “problems” in history (as there are in math) – at least not ones that can be tackled without access to a serious research library and some quality time in dusty old archives. My answer to this: the practice of History isn’t really about discovering the diary at the bottom of the trunk or revealing some shocking “secret” or cover-up that transforms what we think about the past. Most historians build their careers around arguing how to view a particular time in history, adding no new “facts” to the mix at all. Therefore, spending some time arguing about what an event meant, and using readily accessible information from the internet to support one’s arguments, is a pretty good approximation of the problem-solving done by historian every day.
* In Math and Medicine, there is ultimately a “right answer” in a way that there just isn’t in the social sciences – and the achievement of “rightness” is part of what’s exciting about being involved in these fields (as when researchers actually prove a theorem or cure a patient). My answer to this: part of what is fun about history is the lack of a simple right answer because it allows each new researcher the chance to make their case in their own way. However, I do worry about the missing “eureka” moment that math and science can so clearly provide for young students – too easily, it could become my job as the teacher to be the arbiter of “right,” putting me right back into the position I was avoiding. The key here will be to celebrate great theories and the making of exciting connections between key themes and ideas. Professional historians have “eureka” moments, perhaps as much if not more than scientists, and by the same token scientists are never simply proved “right” in the way that laypeople imagine. What will be essential for making this successful is a finely-tuned sense of subtly.
* Timing and differentiation are a major challenge: by asking students to perform such a complex task (basically completing several mini research papers every night), I am laying a huge burden on those with weaker critical-thinking skills or discomfort with independent work. My answer to this: transparency. It will be important to be extremely clear and open about how much I am asking of students, and how much I expect it to take time for them to grow into their ability to do this easily and successfully over the course of the year. Each day, students will share “tricks of the trade” and go through other meta-cognitive activities designed to shed light on the fact that everyone struggles, that there is support for all levels and abilities, and that it is possible for everyone to grow and improve at their own pace.
* The more student-driven nature of this homework could easily be perceived as more difficult than what other teachers are giving (and perhaps “worse” or “unfair”).My answer to this: The careful roll-out of this project at the beginning of the year will be essential to its success. I fully expect that the first few weeks will be a battle for hearts and minds in which I will need to convince students of the value of the hard work and perseverance necessary for this approach. The payoff is the sense of ownership and empowerment that this can offer, but students must feel supported at the same time so that they can get to the point where they see the true value underneath.
* Tradition, tradition, tradition: the traditional High School Research Paper requires that students develop some strange, antiquated skills(like “source number requirements,” an anti-Wikipedia stance, and MLA citations) that I either embrace or discard. If I hold onto these too tightly, I’ll make each night’s homework a battle over minutiae; but if I relax on these and focus on allowing my students to range freely and follow their own interests, then I am in danger of failing to train them for obsolete but ultimately essential skills of high school and college. My answer on this: much of this I will have to remain flexible on, waiting to see how it all goes as the year progresses. The key will be to structure the nightly assignments as well as the long-term unit goals so that all these skills are incorporated in some ways, but so that none feels forced or burdensome. The best case for any of these approaches will come from need rather than law (as when Wikipedia is abandoned because it actually has limited functionality, not because of an arbitrary ban on the part of the teacher).

**School Setting: Pacific Ridge School**

The Pacific Ridge School, an independent school in Carlsbad, California, is a unique blend of new and old in both culture and practice.  On the one hand, we just opened our doors 5 years ago, with an exciting new curriculum that strives to break down traditional structures and modes of thinking.  Our first batch of seniors walked across the graduation stage last spring, and you can still smell the fresh paint in many of the classrooms.  But despite this newness, we are also heavily rooted in the tradition of east coast independent schools.  Our founder and head of school, as well as the majority of our faculty, has long experience in those institutions, and the central, defining piece of furniture in 90% of our classrooms (a “Harkness table”) was designed in 1931 for Phillips-Exeter Academy.

Our newness means that we have two distinct types of families that choose to enroll their children. On the one hand, there are the passionate “founding families” that send their children to a school that they were themselves instrumental in bringing to Carlsbad. They have high hopes, and matching high expectations, for every aspect of the curriculum and daily experience. The flip side of this coin is that a notable majority of families were not expecting to send their children to private school at all, but took the opportunity once one appeared in the neighborhood. They are curious and hopeful about the potenital positive affect of a private education on their children, but have little experience with independent school culture or classroom expectations. Both groups either pay a hefty amount or receive financial aid to meet the costs. Some important numbers that will help to illustrate the school as a whole:

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| **2011-2012 School Grades & Enrollment** | **2011-2012 Family Costs** | **Class Requirements and Weekly Schedule** |
| **Middle School:** Grades 7-8, 75 students per grade**Upper School:** Grades 9-12, 90 students per grade maximum (currently 90 students in grade 9, 75 in grades 10 and 11, and 40 in grade 12). | **Tuition:** $23,500**Optional Bus Transportation:** Round Trip - $2,425, One-way - $1,600**Books:** Approximately $400 to $600, depending on grade.**Uniforms:** See Lands End for pricing.  **Trips:** June trips for Middle School and Upper School grades. | **Subjects**: Most students take English, History, Math, Science, a World Language, and an Art concurrently.**Schedule**: Classes run on a block schedule – each course meets every other day for 90 minutes (a total of 78 class meetings per year). Grades are entered on a trimester system, though students remain in the same classes throughout the year**Additional Studies**: In grades 7-10, all students engage in Service Learning, and each year ends with a two-week Global Travel program. |

A New Curriculum: Integration Planning and Practice

The central goal of our curriculum at Pacific Ridge is cross-disciplinary integration that encourages students to see the connections between the subjects of their classes. When the school was founded, a board of advisors was hired to develop an overview of our first integrated curriculum. They chose books, the order of units, and in some cases the types of assignments for each major subject (English, History, Science, Math, World Languages, and the Arts) so that there would be clear links between disciplines. For example, History classes would cover Medieval Europe while English classes would assign *Canterbury Tales* while Biology classes would study the plague and epidemic disease. “Trimester Questions” were designed as engaging touchstones that each course could connect to in different ways and consider from different angles. A favorite of those that many people continue to refer back to as a hallmark example (even though it has since been replaced) is “Who owns water?”; it is representative because it is complex and intriguing, brings up important modern ethical issues, and feels “universal” while being specific enough that each discipline can refer to it in its own way.

The founding curriculum, with its integration points and Trimester Questions, was put into practice in the school’s first year. As teachers worked with the model, they tested the concepts and filled in the details, always looking for ways to refine and expand upon those first integration plans. The greatest strength of the concept of integration is that it requires constant discussion and feedback across disciplines. As we grew, we tweaked, modified, expanded, and in some cases fully rehashed the original plan so that the goal of integration could be met in increasingly efficient, useful, and interesting ways. Some of those early ideas were powerful enough to last and grow into central, important projects that have become part of our budding traditions. Others have become institutional punch-lines because they never quite worked, despite repeated attempts to fit them into our daily practice.

The challenges of integration are an interesting mix of fairly obvious logistical barriers and subtle philosophical traps. The most glaring problem, which comes up as a perennial itch that we never quite scratch, is the scheduling one. While English, History, and Science classes are all single grade-level courses, Math, Language, and Arts classes are mixed-level and sorted by interest and ability. Therefore, a Biology class and a Graphic Design class are only likely to share a few of the same students; any integration points brought up in one will only connect to some of the students in the other. And while the Trimester Questions were intended to solve this problem, they create their own confusion and always look better to an outsider trying to understand our curriculum than to an insider trying to practice it.

Less glaring but somewhat more insidious is a constant low-level concern that we do not quite know what “integration” really is. Is it something we do for show, and therefore a thing to go at as publically and obviously as possible? Or is it supposed to yield some growth in students that they would otherwise be missing, and can we measure this? Or does it not have any end but to improve our professional development by encouraging teachers to learn from each other? These questions tend to rise to the surface at the beginning of each school year, and then simmer down as we get lost in the daily practice of lessons, planning, and grading. But they never quite disappear.

Team Organization: Supporting Integration with Structure

Structurally, Pacific Ridge is organized in an unusual manner, and this format is directly designed to support the project of integration. Instead of the traditional departmental groups, where teachers meet and conduct the majority of their daily colleague interactions in disciplines, we meet and are organized as grade-level teams. Thus, each grade (7 – 12) has a team of teachers from different disciplines; each teacher in the school is assigned to a team – usually the one that oversees the majority of their students.

The team has two central goals: they work to build and improve curricular integration for the grade level, and they act as the primary overseer and support system for the students in the grade. They meet twice weekly, and are lead by a “Team Leader” – usually a teacher, promoted from within, who has expressed interest in developing leadership skills but has little previous administrative experience.

While all teams have similar goals, the way they go about achieving them varies widely, and is largely influenced by the approach of the Team Leader and their tendency to adhere to or depart from tradition. The original approach taken by teams in the first years of the school took the form of open-ended conversations about students and curriculum; several teams continue to take this approach in the fifth year of the school. During the designated “student” meeting, teachers bring up names of students that they are concerned about, others chime in with stories about that student, and the team attempts to find ways to support these students. Similarly, during the “curriculum” meeting, each teacher shares what they are working on in the coming week and others mention possible points of integration.

As the school has grown, however, our population has changed dramatically (we started with 80 students and 10 faculty members, and are now at more than 400 students and 50 faculty members), decreasing the efficiency and success of these informal conversations. In our ninth grade class of 92 students, for example, we could not hope to discuss each one in any reasonable detail with one meeting a week, especially when most of the teachers on the team only teaches 25 to 40 of those students. Thus, many of the team leaders are looking to formalize conversations with new protocols, finding creative ways to meet the goals of supporting students and building an integrated curriculum.

Student Support

One of the team’s primary functions is to monitor student growth and challenges, both academically and socially. All of the advisors for the grade level are on the team, and act as advocates and conduits for information between their advisees and the faculty. Advisors meet briefly twice a week with students (10 minutes on Monday, 25 minutes on Thursday) to bond, discuss upcoming events, and check in about progress. Advisors also sit in on meetings between parents and teachers whenever possible.

More complex personal and social issues that arise are handed off to the “Student Support Team” (added in the fifth year of the school), which is made up of the school nurse, the school counselor, the Dean of Students, and the academic coach. The addition of this support team takes the immediate burden of finding solutions to complex emotional problems off of the grade-level teams, and allows them to focus on the more manageable day-to-day issues of the academic success of, and group dynamics within, the class. Beyond a focus on individuals, the grade-level team is responsible for the experience of the class as a whole, and has 90 minute blocks once every two weeks to promote the development of the group. These block periods are used to prepare for class-wide integrated activities, discuss and work with issues that arise with the class as a whole, have celebrations for class achievements, and bond and develop as a group.

Pacific Ridge Classrooms: Harkness table & method

Pacific Ridge classrooms are largely uniform in design, and our class size and schedule encourage this homogeneity between classrooms. Classes have between 10 and 18 students in them, with the majority being 13-16 students per class, and all academic periods are 90 minutes long. The small groups and long classes allow us to use the “Harkness” method for our classrooms.



The “Harkness” method refers to both a style of teaching and the furniture in the classroom that promotes this style. The central object in 90% of Pacific Ridge classrooms (with the exception of science and computer labs and art rooms) is a large oval seminar table, similar in design to a board room table, which students and teachers sit around together. This design is remarkably different from a teacher-centered classroom with individual student desks in rows (see diagram), and it promotes an atmosphere that emphasizes discussion and de-emphasizes the role of the teacher as leader. Students are taught to participate in open-ended “Harkness discussions” in all disciplines, and thus are encouraged to take ownership of their learning and leadership among their peers. This method was develop in 1931 for Phillips Exeter academy, and the design for the tables as well as the original research about how to use them as a teaching method come from this tradition.

Harkness discussions are used quite differently in different classes, and as with the goal of “integration” look more obviously positive and straightforward from the outside than they do to teachers wrestling with strategies to use it effectively every day. While the vast majority of Pacific Ridge teachers far prefer this classroom set-up and the philosophy behind it, conversations about how best to use this format are frequent. Many of these conversations are about sharing best practices, but some also reflect concerns and anxieties about whether or not teachers are using it “correctly” and whether or not the format is appropriate for all subjects. There are two frequent issues that arise that are particularly telling: the idea that “you can’t Harkness about math” and the concern that “grading” Harkness discussions requires superhuman listening skills and complex rubrics. It seems to me that both of these concerns cut to the core of teacher anxieties about giving up their role “at the front of the room” – a role in which they are expected to have the “right” answers (which for some reasons math represents in many peoples’ minds) and to grade and judge students on their ability to repeat back those answers. Thus, the Harkness table and method, while they are central to the mission of Pacific Ridge, remain a source of discussion and some low-level tension that reveals teachers’ continuing struggles with their role and place in the classroom.

My Classroom: What I am working on in my teaching

As I begin this research project, I am entering my 8th year as a teacher, and the enduring goal of my work has always been to create a classroom that is a safe space for students: one in which they grow and feel supported in this growth, take ownership over their learning and gain confidence in their ability to direct their process, and can engage in deep and meaningful dialogue with their peers about ideas that are fundamentally important to them.

In the last few years, some of the larger ideas and projects that I have worked on that I have been most proud of are:

* Creating a method of assessing writing that is growth-oriented, such that students are assessed on a personalized rubric and are awarded for improvement over time as they work to develop professional-quality writing. This approach stands in contrast to the traditional method of assessing all students on a universal rubric built around holding students to standards that embrace a recognizably “high school” style (such as the 5-paragraph essay).
* Building an approach to teaching history that is thoroughly integrated with other disciplines, in terms of content, skills, and “ways of thinking.” In this, I am most influenced by the International Baccalaureate program’s “Theory of Knowledge” class, which I taught for several years before coming to Pacific Ridge. This class seeks to challenge students to compare the ways in which different disciplines have specific “lenses” through which they see the world, approach problems, and find solutions. In all my teaching, I look to find ways to highlight this way of learning.
* Encouraging student leadership in Harkness discussions by using a variety of methods (chalk talks, world café, debates, etc.), each of which seek to draw out different kinds of students and allow them to participate and take ownership over certain ideas in their own way.
* Developing a culture of open feedback in the classroom, in which students are encouraged to give me and each other clear and straightforward feedback, and improve their comfort with taking in that feedback in turn.

**Methods:**

Tackling the research question, “What happens when students engage in problem-based learning in a history class?” is in some ways wildly open-ended. Because I have only the most preliminary sense of what this experience will actually be like, I will have to continuously revise what I’m looking for as I go along. What follows is first an overview of the types of data I will collect, and then a description of the areas of PBL impact that I expect to study – though as the year progresses I will keep my eyes open for other potential areas that I may not have predicted. The ways in which data collection and analysis will help illuminate these areas is laid out in a table at the end of this section. Going forward, I expect to focus most closely on “Authority” and “Ownership,” but I will give equal weight to all in my baseline survey so that I have early data to use as a foundation no matter what direction my research goes in.

Data Collection Overview:

The following is a preliminary plan for the kinds of data collection methods I want to use over the course of my research. With the exception of the entry survey, I fully expect this to grow and change based on my initial findings at the beginning of the year. For a more detailed break-out of what I am looking for in this data, see the table at the end of the Methods section.

* Entry Survey in order to establish a clear “baseline” for my students’ experience so that I can choose specific students to focus on for my case studies.
* Choose Case Study Students: based on the entry survey, I will have a clearer sense of where each of my students falls along the following spectra. :
* Interviews and Focus Groups: In order to capture a variety of perspectives and experiences, I will choose several students as case studies for interviews and focus groups who represent a range of experiences and feelings about PBL. Over the course of my action research project, I will meet regularly with my case study students to get a sense of their development.
* Structured student meta-cognitive work: Students will engage in regular meta-cognitive reflections on their research process, including creating “annotated” videocasts of their actual research on a topic and doing reflective journaling on their research experiences. These assignments are built into regular coursework, but for my action research I will code them for language that relates to the impact that PBL is having on their experience of learning history.

Problem-Based Learning in a History Classroom: Predicted Areas of Impact

The following are the areas in which I expect to see the clearest impact of Problem-Based Learning on how my students experience the study of history. For more detail on how I will collect data to study these areas, see the table at the end of this section.

1. Authority: I think that problem-based learning will fundamentally alter how students think about where history “lives.” This issue revolves around the question of authority: who writes history, where does our knowledge about history come from, what is the role of interpretation and narrative-making in any writing of history? Questioning historical authority could easily go the simplistic route of claiming that “victors write the history” or that it is important to “question everything (there are lies everywhere!),” but neither are ultimately especially meaningful or valuable. What is important is not so much that students “question” every source as much as it is important that they question the idea that there is any “one” authority from which all knowledge springs. I think that problem-based learning will allow students to shift their thinking so that they see historical knowledge as something that is created by many different viewpoints and interpretations. I will look to collect data in the following ways:
2. Ownership: As students shift their sense of the “locus” of historical knowledge, I think they will find a far greater sense of ownership of the ideas and events they study. While “ownership” is difficult to gauge, I think the key here is that I expect to see a change in the way in which they talk about the content. Similarly, I expect this feeling of ownership to change the way in which students talk about choosing and pursuing research topics for in-depth research papers. A sense of mastery and pride in expertise should present itself far earlier on in the research process, guiding the experience rather than coming as a surprising outcome at the end of an otherwise painful process.
3. Ease: Another thing that I think problem-based learning will do is that it will make students feel like history class is more “natural” – this is a vague concept (and perhaps difficult to measure) but I think that all the things that history students are supposed to be able to do, know, and recall will ultimately be easier and feel less “effortful” than they otherwise would, including writing research papers, taking tests that require students to recall key concepts and find connections between them.
4. Habits of Mind: I also think that problem-based learning will encourage key habits of mind, such as persistence, self-reliance, creative problem-solving, and a growth-oriented mindset. This is an area that is ripe for integrated research across disciplines: it would be particularly interesting to look at the way that these same students solve math problems or deal with challenges in a language class, etc.
5. Leadership: Finally, I think that problem-based learning will increase students’ sense of their own potential for leadership in the classroom: I expect their ability to speak their mind, persuade others, be valued for their expertise, and applaud these qualities in others to grow and shape the way in which they respond to each other.

In the scope of this research project, it is unlikely that I will be able to delve deeply into each of these five areas, but I will use these as initial guides to getting a “baseline” to begin my data collection. As trends emerge and my interests and observations clarify my direction, I will focus in on just one or two of these (or perhaps one or two ones I have not yet anticipated). My current strongest interest lies in studying the first two more deeply, because I think the question of ownership and authority are central to the development of deep critical-thinking skills, and are fascinating in their own right. In many ways, the idea that this PBL approach would be easier for students, instill good habits of mind, or improve student leadership, are most likely just added benefits, though I of course want to leave the door open to those as potential areas to focus my research if they turn out to be particularly interesting.

Problem-Based Learning: Plan for Data Collection and Analysis

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Authority | Ownership | Ease | Habits of Mind | Leadership |
| Entry Survey: I will ask about … | To get an overall sense of how students think about **historical knowledge**, I will ask about:* Where students go when they have questions about the past.
* How they relate to adults as authority figures and bearers of knowledge
* How they feel about specific “recognized” sources of authority (textbooks, internet search engines, non-fiction, documentaries, etc.)
 | To get an overall sense of how students will experience the change that PBL brings about in **homework**, I will ask about:* Their experience of completing nightly homework
* Its perceived value in their lives
* Their feelings about its purpose within the framework of education
* Their personal comfort with managing their time effectively

To get a sense of students’ habits of minds when it comes to problem solving, I will ask about:* Their experience of working on difficult problems
* Whether they see themselves as persistent or easily frustrated
* Questions that get at “growth” vs. “fixed” mindset (Dweck)

To get a sense of students’ feeling about reading comprehension and research, I will ask about:* Their personal comfort with reading complex texts
* Their feelings about their own facility with conducting basic internet or library research
 | To get an overall sense of how students experience **Harkness discussions**, I will ask about:* Their comfort with speaking in class
* How they view their natural “role” in Harkness discussion

To get an overall sense of how students experience **collaborative group work**, I will ask about:* Their past experience with group work
* How they see themselves as most effective contributors in a group
 |
| Exit Cards and Follow-Up Surveys: I will try to get at… | How students’ relationships to traditional sources of authority (published or individual) changes over time | How students’ sense of ownership over the history-making process changes over time | How students compare this way of studying history with more traditional ways in terms of its ease, naturalness, and usefulness | How students’ perception of their habits of mind have changed over time, especially when it comes to persistence and mindset | How students’ feelings about participating in Harkness discussions and collaborative group work has changed over time. |
| Interviews and Focus Groups: I will ask about … | In order to get at students’ changing sense of **historical authority** and their **ownership** over history, I will ask them questions that get at how they feel about authors they have read, concepts they have studied, and their own growing body of research. Some interview techniques that should be useful are:* Asking students to “walk me through” their research product, and noting what they focus on, what language they use to express their understandings, etc.
* Having students describe a key “turning point” in their understanding of a topic: what happened, how it felt, etc.
* Asking about any changes that students have noticed in the way they think about history as a result of this PBL experience
 | In order to get a sense of students’ **daily experience** with PBL, I will ask them about the following, listening for both what they say and how they describe their experiences:* Their daily homework routine
* An experience that frustrated them / excited them
* A moment where they “lost track of time” when they were working on a problem / a problem during which time felt “heavy” and where distractions were magnified
* A change or two they have noticed in how they work through problems
* Something they have gotten notably better at over the course of several problem sets
* A goal they want to set for themselves for future work.
 | In order to get a sense of students’ **collaborative classroom experience** with PBL, I will ask them about the following, listening for both what they say and how they describe their experiences:* The daily class routine
* A class that felt like it zipped by / a class that seemed never-ending
* A classroom moment that they are proud of / wished they could do over
* A person that they continually have trouble working with / love working with and why (for both)
 |
| Meta-Cognitive Reflections: I will look for the following… | I will code student meta-cognitive reflections to look for changes in their perception of **authority** and **ownership** by…:* The way they describe how they perceive value in sources
* How they criticize or praise their sources
* The language they use in their interpretations of historical events
* The way they chart their intellectual journey through the research process
* The clarity with which they can identify topics that particularly interest them
 | I will look at changes over time in student reflections on their:* Speed and effort in completing problems
* Responses to “dead ends” as they work
* Tone in which they describe their process
 | I will look at changes over time in student reflections on:* How they feel their work is perceived by others in the class
* The impact they see their research and ideas having on Harkness discussions
 |

Data Collection Timeline:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | PBL in the Classroom | Research Goals |
| September | * Roll-out approach
* Letter home to parents
* Complete first small “unit” including research paper (see appendix for detailed timeline and basic unit organization)
 | * Give baseline survey
* Establish student groupings along spectrums listed above
* Conduct early follow-up interviews and focus groups
* Get first meta-cognitive videos and writings on research process
 |
| October | * Begin second major “unit,” adding in primary source requirements in research
* Focus second research paper on around a single source
 | * Re-assess approach based on first unit observations
* Re-survey if necessary
* Continue interviews and focus groups
* Refine process for meta-cognitive work
 |
| November& December | * Begin third major “unit,” adding in critical theory concepts
* Focus third research paper on critical theory concepts
 | * Continue to re-assess and collect data as necessary
 |
| January | * Finish off third “unit” research paper
* Begin fourth “unit”
 | * Collect final data as necessary
* Closing interviews and focus groups
* Final meta-cognitive work for research project
 |

**Appendix:**

See attached for the following:

* Example PBL assignment for History class (from the Cold War unit)
* Example PITP / Project-Based experience (Bake Sale Myth from Industrial Revolution unit)
* Tentative outline for PBL in the classroom over the course of the year (full outline in draft form)

Modern World History

Spring 2012

Discovery Statements: Early Cold War Diplomacy [Sample Problems]

Format of Response: In a Google Doc…

1. Write 2-3 sentences that capture the idea of “yes, but…” and “no, but...”
2. Several bullet points of specific evidence that support your claim (cite quotations properly, especially if you are using a source that is not the textbook reading)

Where do I find evidence?

* All evidence can be found in the textbook *(Bentley-Ziegler available on workplan)*
* BUT you may also conduct your own online research, just:
	+ Don’t get taken in by strange websites that are peoples’ random ramblings
	+ Make sure that evidence is sound and well cited
	+ Use recommended sites: Facts on File, the Internet Modern History Sourcebook (a collection of primary sources organized by topic)
* AND you MUST do “beyond the textbook” online research for at least ONE of the five statements.

**STATEMENTS:**

1. The Berlin Airlift was a waste of time and resources for the Allied forces.
2. The United Nations effectively fulfilled its purpose (as outlined in the preamble to its charter) through its actions during the Korean War (1950-1953).
3. The “domino theory” that Eisenhower put forward as the rationale for the U.S. involvement in Korea in the 1950s was also a good justification for the U.S. intervention in Cuba in the early 1960s.

Molineaux

Ancient World History

The Bake Sale Myth: the Economics of Work and the Industrial Revolution [Sample Project]

Goals:

The goal for this project is to get students direct real-world experience of economic relationships in order to help them understand the business, ethical, and personal challenges people faced during the profound transformations of the Industrial Revolution. To fully understand this period in history, it is important that students have a firm grasp of the choices that laborers, businesspeople, and consumers make, and how those choices form a dynamic marketplace. Most tangibly, I want students to be aware of the “hidden” costs of business (raw materials, power, transportation, etc.) as well as the “human” costs of business (labor, consumers, entrepreneurs, etc.), and have a high-stakes authentic need to keep these challenges in mind.

Essential Questions:

* Are bake sales an efficient way of raising money for a cause?
* Do emotional connections change the way we make business decisions? Should they?
* How can we perform cost-benefit analyses that include the “intangibles” of human experience?

Project Timetable:

1. **Creating a Plan:** Students will choose a microlending partner to raise money for (on [www.kiva.org](http://www.kiva.org)) and set a donation goal. Assuming a starting capital of $25 and use of the whole group as “labor,” students will prepare a business plan (in groups of 4) for a bake sale to raise this money. They will have to research *all* costs (ingredients, cost of transportation, electricity or gas for cooking, etc.) and *all* profits (how much will they charge, how much will they sell, etc.), and will present this business plan to the class, who will act as a “board of investors”.
2. **Executing on the Plan:** Each group will prepare food and advertising, and on a designated day the class will set up and run bake sales. They will keep track of costs and profits in real time, as well as a detailed record of the time spent on each activity.
3. **Assessing Success:**  Each group will calculate their net profit and the total time spent on their efforts, and assess whether or not this was a good use of their fund-raising efforts. If they had taken their $25 and labor and spent it in other ways, would they have been able to make a greater profit and increase their donation to their Kiva partner?
4. **Deciding to Reinvest:** Each group will decide what to do with their money, either: 1) Reinvesting it in another bake sale, 2) Trying another tactic for fundraising, or 3) Giving it “as is” to their Kiva partner.
5. **Analyzing the Experience:** Students will write a letter to their Kiva partner discussing their experience and what they learned from it, connecting it to the history of the Industrial Revolution they have studied, and asking them for business advice of their own.

Modern World History Unit Planning:

78 CLASSES TOTAL

Overall Generic structure of Units:

1. Entry point day – “selling” what’s interesting about the unit, focusing in on some stories that illustrate the main themes, laying out an overview of the period
2. Discovery statements 3-4
3. Discovery statements 3-4
4. Discovery statements 3-4
5. Discovery statements: write up 1 argument in detail for homework (essentially a 1-page analytical essay backed up by researched evidence), then quiz in class for mastery of details & retention of information (ID format – what it is/why is it important)
6. Project / PITP work: either writing or project creation
7. Discovery statements 3-4
8. Discovery statements 3-4
9. Discovery statements 3-4
10. Discovery statements: write up 1 argument in detail for homework (essentially a 1-page analytical essay backed up by researched evidence), then quiz in class for mastery of details & retention of information (ID format – what it is/why is it important)
11. Research Paper (digging deeper on one Discovery statement discovery): thinking
12. Research Paper research
13. Research Paper writing
14. Research Paper writing

Five major units:

1. Exploration / Renaissance / Reformation / Scientific Revolution
2. Revolutions across the Atlantic – French Rev, Slave Revolts, Colonial Independence Revolutions
3. Industrial Revolution & Imperialism – globalizing world
4. Nationalism / WWI / Rise of Fascism
5. WWII / Cold War / Postcolonial experience

Day-by-Day Breakdown:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Unit | Homework | Classwork | Ideal IntegrationPoints |
| Exploration / Renaissance / Reformation (Sept & Oct) | 1. Interesting thought-provoking reading on maps / review world geography
 | * World Geo game/quiz/exercise
* Entry point day – **Mapping**: geography in general, but larger question of how ideas and our sense of ourselves in the world influence (and are influenced by) our decisions and actions.
* Overview on period – some kind of really memorable lecture/doodle
* How-to on Discovery Statements
 | English = MacbethChemistry = Invention & Discovery (alchemy!) |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Exploration & Conquest in 1500, basic overview**
 | * Strengths & weaknesses of societies, predicting the fate of civilizations – G,G,&S argument from GGS primary source on conquistadors & summary of findings
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Renaissance** (European advantages leading to conquest)
 | * Power of an idea: humanism – Hamlet break-down, look at paintings
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Reformation**
 | * Religion & personal identity and freedom – Protestant vs. Catholic images
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Counter-Reformation / Scientific Revolution**
 | * Equivocation concept – Macbeth, Guy Fawkes Day, Galileo: Letter to Duchess Cristina
 |
| 1. Discovery statements: write up 1 in detail for homework / prep for Quiz
 | * Quiz
* Critiques of timelines, maps, resource sheets, discovery statement write-ups
* Set-up for PITP work
 |
| 1. Project / PITP work: either writing or project creation – **Mapping, Galileo, visiting religious institutions, visual art, Face to Faith**
 | * Project work
* Introduction of research paper
 |
| 1. Research Paper (digging deeper on one Discovery statement): thinking – **why innovation is disturbing, intellectual debates that matter, visual art/science focus on an object**
 | * Quotation & resources lay-out
* Universal issue: what the world should know more about?
 |
| 1. Research Paper research
 | * Finalize topic and research
 |
| 1. Research Paper writing
 | * Peer critique of writing & research
 |
| 1. Research Paper writing – finish
 | * Paper share-out
 |
| Revolutions across the Atlantic – French Rev, Slave Revolts, Colonial Independence Revolutions (Nov & Dec) | 1. Thought-provoking reading on revolution – violence, beliefs, etc.
 | * Entry point day – **Revolutions**:
* Overview of French Revolution – some kind of visual to pull it all together?
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= French Revolution First Phase**
* Addition of primary source requirement for Discovery Statements – can use suggested sources (FoF, Fordham, Liberty Equality Fraternity website)
 | * “What is the Third Estate?” reading – voice and power in work/labor
* Declaration of Rights of Man 🡪 declare your rights exercise
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= French Revolution Reign of Terror** – PS req
 | * Symbols of freedom and logic in cartoons
* Conscription debate
 | English = Hard Times |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= French Revolution Napoleon** – PS req
 | * Power of spin + creating a hero – place in democracy?
 |
| 1. Discovery statements: write up 1 in detail for homework / quiz in class
 | * Quiz
* Prep for project (RAFT?)
 |
| 1. Project / PITP work: either writing or project creation – **RAFT project, fomenting revolution at PRS?**
 | * Work on project – digging for greater use of evidence
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= American Revolutions**
 | * Similarities & differences – how do we compare apples & oranges in history? **- Primary Source analysis: letters Jefferson/Bolivar**
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Slave trade & revolts**
 | * Slave trade & oppression – again, how to compare?
* Map analysis – how can maps act as data?
 |
| 1. Discovery statements: write up 1 in detail for homework / prep for Quiz
 | * Quiz
* Begin work on Research Paper
 |
| 1. Research Paper (digging deeper on one Discovery statement): thinking – **modern revolutions – have they changed?, focus on a document**
 | * Sharing work on Research Paper
* What is universal?
 |
| 1. Research Paper research
 | * Finalize topic
 |
| 1. Research Paper writing
 | * Critique on writing
 |
| 1. Research Paper writing
 | * Paper share-out
 |
| Industrial Revolution & Imperialism – globalizing world (Jan & Feb) | 1. Thought-provoking reading on **industrialization**, **urbanization**, **globalization**, etc. – morality and business
 | * Entry point day – **Working conditions, economic inequality – Morality and business**
* Factory Doodle overview
* Possible addition of novel to read during this time or over winter break -- warning for students to plan ahead for this.
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Agricultural Rev to Factory System –** PS req
 | * Making a t-shirt exercise – what does it actually take to manufacture on a larger scale?
* PITP: organize a visit to a factory OR bake sale myth?
* Develop reading schedule for concurrent novel
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Urbanization and Effects of Factory System –** PS req
 | * Daily life, urban planning – technology and family relationships
* Change and hardship (Woolen worker’s petition & other primary sources)
 |
| *End of Trimester 1* |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Critique of the system: Owens, Marx, etc.**
 | * Criticisms comparison
* Primary source analysis on Karl Marx vs. Owens
 |
| 1. Discovery statements: write up 1 in detail for homework / quiz in class
 | * Quiz
* PITP work – Bake Sale Myth or factory visit finalization
 |
| 1. Project / PITP work: either writing or project creation – **Seed grant prep?, visiting local non-profits, factory visits, travels of my t-shirt, bake sale myth**
 | * Present work on Bake Sale Myth or factory visits
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Colonies as raw materials & markets**🡪**conquest**
 | * Corporations protecting their assets internationally: how does that work – recent stories of corruption
* Morality & business in an international setting, role of government in this – especially when there are inherent inequalities at work
* Especially: famines in Ireland &India
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Spheres of influence diplomacy: dominating the world stage**
 | * Is there morality in diplomacy? (Does might make right?)
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Colonial worldview**
 | * “Shooting an elephant” or other powerful reading – mindset of imperialism.
* Racism in cartoons – need for “justification” of actions
 |
| 1. Discovery statements: write up 1 in detail for homework
 | * Prep for “midterm” (late December)
 |
| 1. Test + Midterm exam
 | * Midterm
* Prep for research paper – something based on a longish work of literature (read over Winter break if not yet complete)
 |
| *Winter Break* |  |
| 1. Begin thinking about Research Paper (digging deeper on one Discovery statement): thinking – **social justice, equality vs. freedom? – Focus on culture/experience, use of novel?** (Perhaps novel over winter break?)
 | * Research paper work – universal idea?
 | English = All Quiet |
| 1. Research Paper research
 | * Refining research paper topic
 |
| 1. Research Paper writing
 | * Critique
 |
| 1. Research Paper writing
 | * Further critique
 |
| Nationalism / WWI / Rise of Fascism (Mar & Apr) | 1. Thought-provoking reading on nationalism & morality
 | * Entry point day – **Hitler’s story, Dali painting**
* Overview of period, especially focusing on ideal of nationalism
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Nationalism & unification vs. multinational empires**
 | * Nationalist call to arms primary sources
* Serbia vs. Ireland vs. Germany & Italy -- fighting for or fighting against?
* Geography of Europe focus
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Lead-up to WWI**
 | * Cartoon Map analysis
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= WWI – machine war, loyalties**
 | * Trench warfare
 |
| 1. Project work: **the Bad Show**
 | * The Bad Show discussion of morality
* Introduction of project on morality
 |
| 1. Discovery statements: write up 1 in detail for homework / quiz in class
 | * Quiz
* Project work
 |
| 1. Project / PITP work: either writing or project creation – **morality project of some kind**
 | * Project work & presentation
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Russian Rev as a reaction to WWI**
 | * Marxism revised as a critique of WWI – Lenin readings
 |
| *February Break* |  |
| 1. Optional discovery statements over break: ask someone what they think about issues around the **Great Depression** and the **Age of Anxiety** (economic crisis, Freud and psychoanalysis, surrealist art)
 | * Treaty of Versailles 🡪 Great Depression
* Visual art analysis with surrealism / Age of Anxiety & Freud
 | English = Dystopian Novels |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Rise of Hitler & Mussolini & Stalin; Fascism & Power**
 | * Primary source analysis on fascism: targeting scapegoats, imagery of unity around national symbols
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Appeasement to WWII start**
 | * Primary sources: justifying appeasement, elaborate show to allow appeasers to be satisfied with conquest
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Early Axis victories**
 | * WWII source analysis – focus deep on several key issues
* Clear geography, clear timeline
 |
| *End of Trimester 2* |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Turning point & victory**
 | * WWII source analysis – focus deep on several key issues
* Clear geography, clear timeline
 |
| 1. Discovery statements: write up 1 in detail for homework / quiz in class
 | * Quiz
* Memorials Project introduced
 |
| 1. Project / PITP work: either writing or project creation – **Memorials project**
 | * Memorials Projects presented
 |
| 1. Research Paper (digging deeper on one Discovery statement): thinking – **dystopian novel connections – focus on morality & values**
 | * Research topic work
 |
| 1. Research Paper research
 | * Research topic work
 |
| 1. Research Paper writing
 | * Critique
 |
| 1. Research Paper writing
 | * Further critique
 |
| WWII / Cold War / Postcolonial experience | 1. Thought-provoking reading on **Atomic Bomb, war games, MAD, paranoia**
 | * Entry point day **–** Setting the scene for the fear and paranoia of the Cold War
 | English = NightChemistry = Nuclear Chemistry |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Early Cold War Diplomacy**
 | * United Nations documents, Marshall plan thinking, Truman doctrine wording: who keeps the world “free” and “prosperous” and “safe”?
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Cold War at Home / beyond Iron Curtain**
 | * Kitchen Debate video, Un-American activities, etc.
 |
| *Spring Break* |  |
| 1. PITP or Project – preparing for oral history interviews: find a subject to interview (homework over break)
 | * Interview prep for project, nailing down subjects.
 | English = Post-Colonial Novels |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= End of the Cold War**
 | * Regan & Hollywood vision, concerts at the Berlin Wall, Vaclav Havel, etc.
 |
| 1. Discovery statements: write up 1 in detail for homework / quiz in class
 | * Quiz
* More interview skill-building prep
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= 1948 & Postcolonial World: India, Israel, South Africa**
 | * Gandhi and Satyagraha
* Apartheid – Chris’ story?
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= China in the Cold War**
 | * 20th century China primary sources
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Postcolonial Revolutions & the Cold War: Korea & Vietnam**
 | * Stories and primary source readings from Korea & Vietnam
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Postcolonial Revolutions & the Cold War: Africa**
 | * Battle of Algiers stories, Congo, etc.
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Postcolonial Latin America**
 | * United Fruit in Guatemala to Cuba: Che’s path
 |
| 1. Discovery statements 3-4 **= Rise of Islamism: Afghanistan and Iran**
 | * “Ism” discussion: religious extremism
 |
| 1. Discovery statements: write up 1 in detail for homework / prep for quiz
 | * Quiz
* Project work on oral histories
 |
| 1. Research Paper (digging deeper on one Discovery statement): thinking – **oral history project**
 | * Project work
 |
| 1. Research Paper research
 | * Research prep
 |
| 1. Research Paper research
 | * Research prep
 |
|  | 1. Research Paper writing
 | * Critique
 |
| 1. Research Paper writing
 | * Paper Share
 |
|  | 1. Finals prep
 | * Finals prep
 | Finals |
| 1. Finals prep
 | * Finals prep
 |