

Year 1: What You Must Know Before You Press Go!

Your Role as a History Teacher!

At Success Academy, we believe that students are capable of mastering rich historical content and that the best way for them to do that is through inquiry learning. We expose students to primary sources at an early age and ask them to wrestle with both the meaning of particular documents from the past and also big historical questions, including the rise and fall of civilizations, the origins of war and the settlement of peace, the evolution of the role of government, and the economic and social motivations of global events.

As a history teacher, your job is to guide scholars as they evaluate primary and secondary sources. You must help them build historical arguments, marshaling specific evidence to support their historical claims. Fundamentally, your role is to teach scholars how to think historically, not what to think. We present scholars with a diverse range of voices and source material in our curriculum to dispel any one-sided story of history, and we expect scholars to evaluate these competing narratives to have a broader and more complete understanding of the past.

Your role is also that of a content expert and facilitator: You must demand nuanced thinking that acknowledges multiple points of view, evaluate scholar arguments, ask thoughtful questions, and expect scholars to use accurate historical evidence to defend their ideas. While you are entitled to your own interpretation of history outside of the classroom, you must guard against imposing your personal beliefs on scholars or disregarding arguments that challenge your worldview.

This inquiry-based approach to history requires that you embrace mastery of content. It is critical that your scholars understand key dates and the chronology of major historical events in order to unpack larger political, social, economic, and cultural ideas over time.

An inquiry-based method for studying history also demands that scholars avoid presentism — looking at the world through our current values and morals. Instead, they must seek to understand how people thought and acted in the past. You must consistently challenge scholars to study the source of historical evidence and to consider how the context, audience, purpose, and period influenced individuals and societies through time.

And of course, the study of history requires scholars to read critically, drawing upon evidence to construct convincing arguments and then expressing those arguments clearly both orally and in writing. So history teachers are literacy teachers too!

5 Habits of Great Historians

Great historians and teachers of history focus on five key habits:

1. **Great historians always build background knowledge to understand the essential facts about a topic.**
 2. **Great historians always notice the source of a historical document and evaluate its reliability by considering the audience, purpose, language, and point of view.**
 3. **Great historians always consider the historical context and how time and place impact individuals and their perspectives.**
 4. **Great historians always identify big ideas in history and the evidence used to support them.**
 5. **Great historians always examine historical evidence to find similarities and differences between accounts and to determine what most likely happened and why.**
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5 Habits of Great Readers

Great readers and teachers of reading, focus on five key habits every time they read:

1. **Great readers always make mind movies.** In other words, readers always create pictures in their minds and envision the story happening as they read.
 2. **Great readers always look for the big idea and the evidence to support it.** They think about what is happening or what they learned, and what this makes them think about the main point of the book or text. They think about the details the author employs to support the big idea.
 3. **Great readers always read the title and think about the title as they read.** They think about how the events or information in the text connect back to the title.
 4. **Great readers always notice vocabulary words whose meaning they don't know.** They use the context of the word in the sentence or on the page to figure it out.
 5. **Great readers always notice interesting language and structures that support the big idea.** Authors make purposeful choices when crafting their pieces. The writer's use of imagery, word choice, conventions, text features, or structure for the text all work to develop the big idea the author is conveying.
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5 Habits of Great Writers

Great writers and teachers of writing, focus on five key habits every time they write:

1. **Great writers always have a strong idea.** They always have an idea they want to convey before putting pencil to paper.
2. **Great writers always include evidence that develops, supports, or proves their idea.** They know an idea isn't enough — they must convince their readers.
3. **Great writers always organize their writing so that it's simple and clear and avoids redundancy.** They understand that to make a point, quality is better than quantity.
4. **Great writers always reread their writing and make it better by revising.** They get rid of anything that isn't doing something useful.
5. **Great writers always check that their grammar, punctuation, and spelling are correct.** They know that great writing will be ignored if it is riddled with errors.