The Impact of Scaffolding on the Historical Thinking Skills of Middle School Students

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to some incredibly important people in my life. First, to my students everywhere, you have challenged me to become a better curriculum leader and a better historian. Many of you have inspired me beyond anything that you can imagine. Second, to my colleagues, you have helped create a drive inside of me to seek the best in my students and myself. You have also put up with my seemingly unending impromptu lectures about the newest thought I had on pedagogy.

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Abstract

This study focuses on discovery of what combination of scaffolds will allow 8th grade social studies students to successfully interact with primary source historical documents. The teacher–researcher examined the impact of scaffolding on two obstacles to learning in the discipline of history: (a) the inability of students to navigate successfully through primary source material (reading comprehension) and (b) the inability of students to apply historical details to the broader context of history when dealing with primary sources. The study used a case-study design to collect qualitative data consisting of field notes, teacher and student interviews, and student artifacts. The study population consisted of middle school students from a rural Title I-designated South Carolina public middle school. The findings included three stages of scaffold application with multiple primary source documents. Further the teacher-researcher concludes best practice scaffolds for middle level students’ interaction with primary source documents must include: a preparatory scaffold that requires students to complete a performance task that requires them to engage deeply with background information, adapted documents that have been leveled for the reading abilities of the students, an established close reading and annotation routine for students and guided questions that require answers with text evidence that help students dive into the complex issues of the document.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Summarize, compare, explain, and analyze are among the words used to describe the learning expectations for South Carolina eighth-grade social studies students (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011). The influence of Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy of higher-order thinking is evident in the state standards for middle and high school students. Bloom’s levels of thinking and the abundance of scholarship and research conducted since 1956 indicate educators’ desire for students to migrate from lower-level thinking to the realm of higher-order or critical thinking. Contemporary scholars who follow in Bloom’s traditions want teachers and students to engage with original ideas (Krathwohl, 2002). Educators should be preparing students and citizens to create knowledge, not simply to recall and repeat arbitrary information from a given discipline (Dewey, 1916; Eisner 2011).

The release of A Nation at Risk in 1983 prompted a fear of U.S. students falling behind their global contemporaries; since then, U.S. educators have endured the pressures of high-stakes testing in the primary and secondary years (Spring, 2014). In fact, since the advent of Horace Mann’s common school paradigm (using public money to educate the masses) in the late 1830s, school administrators have needed to justify the money spent to the community (Spring, 2014). Educators have developed a near-obsession with school report cards because of legislation such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Common Core (Vogler, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011; Vogler & Virtue, 2007). Further, in light of the burgeoning student debt incurred in pursuit of postsecondary education, U.S.
taxpayers have grown to expect educational institutions to produce students with higher-order thinking skills (Steele & Williams, 2016). For example, Sir Richard Branson discussed the business community’s desire for higher-order original thinkers (Hotson, 2015). Branson labeled these original thinkers “disruptive talent” because of their ability to “innovate” and “challenge conventional wisdom” (as cited in Hotson, 2015, para. 9). In fact, according to a 2014 survey by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, 59% of college students viewed themselves as “qualified” in areas of critical thinking and problem solving (Fabris, 2015). However, only 24% of employers agreed (Fabris, 2015; Hotson, 2015).

One teacher–researcher can do little immediately to remedy the perceived lack of qualifications in the students who leave K-12 for higher education or the work place. However, recognition of this phenomenon, when combined with classroom observations of students’ struggles, may represent an opportunity to examine and reflect upon the professional practice of history instruction. The ethics of the teaching profession—caring about students’ best interests—require that educators thoroughly consider past, present, and future professional practices (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011).

A deep inquiry into the issues of critical thinking in the history classroom may provide an understanding of the reasons people study history. If students are asked, “Why study history?”—based on the teacher–researcher’s years of experience in the history classroom—most students today will proffer the sullen reply, “Because the school makes me.” Sullen students notwithstanding, history is everywhere. Everything has a history, from the computer, to the gaming system, to the ideas that organize people’s
lives. Becoming willing to participate in critical inquiry of history provides students with a relevant illustration of how the world works (Stearns, 2013).

People have been interested in history since the days of ancient Egypt and Greece. People have always sought contexts for their lives. For example, Homer’s rendition of mythological exploits in *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* offered the earliest Greeks a background for their civilization (Breisach, 2007). Herodotus and Thucydides eventually took up the mantle, launching something akin to history as they relayed the tales of the confrontation between the East and the West and the study of the polis (Breisach, 2007). Herodotus’s work was broad and general. However, Thucydides narrowed the focus of inquiry to the specificity of critical analysis (Breisach, 2007; De Ste. Croix, 1977; Kelly, 1991). Thus, history began a transformation from a collection of stories of the past to a science of deep, critical inquiry about the past.

Many students see history as a collection of facts that must be memorized; therefore, they deem history useless. Most of the digital generation can immediately answer any factual historical inquiry using their mobile devices. However, having access to historical facts in isolation does not create informed citizens (Wineburg, 2016). The development of judgment, critical thinking, and the skill of interpreting the “unfolding human record” produce an informed and engaged citizenry (Stearns, 2013, “Why Study History,” para. 1). Although historical facts may not change unless new evidence is discovered, history is constantly changing—or at least interpretations of history are constantly changing (Bentley, 1999; Breisach, 2007). Through critical inquiry of the past, scholars can identify shifts in societal attitudes. However, critical inquiry requires researchers to examine history in the context in which it occurred (Wineburg, Martin, &
Monte-Sano, 2013). Critical inquiry also requires examining historians in the contexts in which they wrote (Bentley, 1999; Breisach, 2007; Pace, 2004b; Wineburg, 2001; Wineburg et al., 2013). For example, Bentley (1999) pointed out that when critically examining the cold rationality common among writers of the Enlightenment period, scholars must recognize that the Scientific Revolution dominated the context of the world in which they lived. Further, historians of the Enlightenment era battled the authoritarianism of the Church and the Kings (Bentley, 1999). These issues definitively affected the interpretations and viewpoints offered during the era. Similarly, 21st-century readers must examine the musings of Jefferson, Kant, Montesquieu, and Rousseau in the contexts in which they wrote to understand their work fully (Bentley, 1999).

An informed and engaged citizenry (Stearns, 2013, “Why Study History,” para. 1) is supported by students developing the skills required to undertake critical inquiries into the past; during these inquiries, they gather empirical knowledge, interpretations, and critiques of reality in order to “improve human existence by viewing knowledge for its emancipatory or repressive potential” (McLauren & Giarelli, 1995, p. 2). Critically studying human history improves society by challenging students to examine current ideological systems and beliefs based on the current realities of society. Further, society is improved by encouraging students to seek an understanding of past situations rather than responding to the promotion of a particular new ideology (Burbles, 1995).

Developing students’ critical, or historical, thinking skills requires more than reflection on the topic and the articulation of a clear reason to study history. Developing students’ historical thinking skills requires educators to explore the existing scholarship of teaching and learning, including the implications of recent scholarship for the practice
of history instruction. For example, Trigwell (2010) studied teacher-focused and student-focused classrooms. Trigwell’s study of over 8,000 postsecondary students showed a direct correlation between teaching and depth of learning. Further, writers for the American Psychological Association (APA) Learner-Centered Principles Work Group (1997) noted the correlation of instructional practices and learning success. In light of Trigwell’s research and the APA Work Group report, employing action research as a method for solving a problem of practice can potentially imbue students with deeper learning and understanding in the history discipline. Action research is the systematic inquiry conducted by a teacher to solve a problem of practice they face in the classroom. Action research “allows teachers to study their own classrooms” (Mertler, 2014, p. 4).

The major roadblocks to critical thinking in the instruction of history are not new. Approximately 80 years before the American Psychological Association’s report for educational reform, Wesley (1916) of Howard University lamented two major problems that plagued history teachers: “what to teach” and “how to teach” (p. 329). Wesley (1916) hoped

the teaching of history in the future may become a pleasurable and profitable exercise to both teacher and pupil, and that it may cease to be the deadening grind of memorizing which it has been to the average student in the past. (p. 329)

In fact, teaching students to think critically in the discipline of history should be a “pleasurable and profitable exercise . . . not a deadening grind” (Wesley, 1916, p. 329).

The practice of history—the record of humanity—has continuously evolved through the centuries as historians have discovered new evidence from the past, focused a more critical eye on the past, and gained new understandings of the past (Bentley, 1999;
Breisach, 2007). Likewise, the instruction of history should similarly challenge students to apply the same critical examination to the work of the historians who came before them.

Historiography, or the study of the study of history, provides insight into how historians of a particular era approached their particular craft (Cheng, 2008). Historians have often divided these approaches into time segments, or schools, of history (Breisach, 2007). From the Greek historiography of Herodotus, to the French *Annales* School, to the historical materialism of the Marxists, to the Turner frontier thesis, members of each new school learn from their predecessors and add to scholarly understanding of the human record. A closer look of recent U.S. historiography shows the change of focus and a growing specialization occurring over just a few decades. In the 1960s and early 1970s, a republican focus dominated American history, fostered by the likes of Bailyn, Wood, and Morgan (Appleby, 1985). Social and cultural histories began to emerge in the late 1970s and into the 1980s through the work of historians such as Weibe and Hamby (Breisach, 2007).

Further, with the proliferation of publishers, coffee shops, bookstores, and digital media, interest in specialized history has grown. Specialized history normally involves particular subjects or events such as the U.S. Civil War, the history of education, military history, or popular culture (Bentley, 1999; Breisach, 2007). In addition, the explosion of popular history monographs that appeal to a large swath of the public and make the top-seller list in coffee-house bookstores have often been written by nonhistorians. In sum, although the schools of historical thought have evolved into new versions, they all have the goal of critically examining ideas, events, and people from the past.
Modern historians seek to engage in more than a recitation of facts. They seek a critical inquiry into the past to create a better society (Pace, 2004b). This desire for critical inquiry necessitates that history students develop the skills of historical thinking and the ability to examine sources, critically consider the context of historical event, and corroborate evidence. Students should be taught to think like historians (AHA, 1998). In the process of “doing history,” students are preparing themselves for lives as informed citizens (Bain, 2000; Calder, 2006; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Lowenthal, 2000; Wineburg, 2001).

**Rationale for Problem of Practice**

State-mandated standards have determined the scope of content for history courses in the K-12 public school environment (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011). Institutional leaders or members of government agencies determine course textbook selection, content coverage areas, and learning standards across K-12 history instruction. Many details remain for the teacher to sort out; however, the governing authority currently determines the general standards and indicators. This structured and institutionalized system of established learning objectives has not always been the case. An 1881 survey of over 800 U.S. colleges and universities shows there were only 11 professors of history (Reuben, 2007). Reuben (2007) noted the growth that occurred with the creation of new curricula and electives in higher education institutions. In fact, by 1930, Harvard University had more than 22 professors of history, but only four were dedicated to the study of American history (Reuben, 2007).

Although the history professorship in the United States began as Eurocentric, the emphasis began to shift toward the study of American history—in fact, over 58% of
history dissertations between 1885 and 1915 focused on the United States (Reuben, 2007). Similarly, the focus of K-12 history instruction throughout the nation was on citizenship, consisting of a homogenization of recent immigrants and various natives into a unified American society (Spring, 2014). At the beginning of the 21st century, academics, school board members, and policymakers at state departments of education did not openly declare the purpose of history and social studies courses was to make “American citizens.” Reuben (2007) argued that the purpose of history instruction has been to engender in students an “understanding” of “the present” and to encourage the vigorous participation of the students in “the political and social life of the nation” (p. 34). However, helping students understand the present and vigorously participate in the political and social life of the United States and of their local communities in the 21st century requires that instructors at all levels actively move beyond content toward critical inquiry (Stearns, 2013).

Perhaps more than in any other discipline, history instructors face a unique task—it is impossible to cover every facet of content for a given era. Therefore, the instructor’s delimitation of material, aided by the guidance provided by learning standards, determines the focus or organizing principles for instruction. The American Historical Association (AHA; 1998) offered useful guidelines for instructors to consider when constructing course lesson plans and pacing guides. First, content must contain an adequate amount of fact-based information to allow students to discover themes and issues of the era studied (AHA, 1998). Second, the content must offer the “full range of human activities” of the era (AHA, 1998, “Statement on Excellent Classroom Teaching of History—Course Content,” para. 5). Finally, according to the AHA, excellence in
teaching history must intimately involve the skills of historical thinking through which students gain the opportunity to examine issues from multiple perspectives. In other words, teachers must allow students to do the work of historians by examining issues through multiple sources. However, students’ learning experiences must align with the learning objectives. If historical thinking is the objective, then teachers must create learning experiences that allow students to experience what it means to think historically (Tyler, 1949). More than a century ago, Dewey (1897) argued that “what a child gets out of any subject presented to him is simply the images which he himself forms with regard to it” (p. 38). Students’ actions of historical thinking follow Dewey’s model of students forming their own images of historical-based content through the examination of primary sources.

While examining issues through multiple sources, students and instructors alike should be aware of and attempt to engage in uncovering hidden curricula (Adams, 2013; Chan, 2013; Noddings, 2013; Thornton, 2013). The hidden curricula of history and social studies include contributions of those normally ignored in a traditional White Eurocentric telling of the story of humanity (Spring, 2014). For example, throughout K-12 history and social studies instruction covering manifest destiny, texts and instruction have often excluded the impacts of “God-ordained” westward expansion on the environment, as well as the oppression and genocide of Native Americans and the belittling of Mexican descendants residing in the lands taken by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Anzaldúa, 2013; Spring, 2014). In addition, important African American contributions and oppressions that go well beyond the antebellum tragedy of slavery have been ignored (Blackmon, 2008). Further, the U.S. history of hatred toward the lesbian,
gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities has often been hidden from view (Chan, 2013; Sumara & Davis, 2013; Thornton, 2013; Valenzuela, 2013). The hidden curricula should be uncovered through students’ critical inquiry as they learn to think historically. Critical inquiry includes asking whose views are missing from the story. Through an honest examination of the past, a better society can emerge.

A critical examination that uncovers hidden curricula and develops critical thinking concerning the history of the United States (or any other designated construct) must use primary sources. Primary sources are the main ingredients of the historian; secondary sources serve as seasoning. A primary source is a source that is closest to the event, idea, or person under consideration (Marius & Page, 2010). A secondary source is normally the writing of someone about a primary source (Marius & Page, 2010). The use of primary source documents in a middle school history course is vital to presenting students with the opportunity to examine a full range of historical issues, to think historically, and to analyze differing viewpoints (Mandell, 2008; Wineburg, 2016; Wineburg et al., 2013). Students must receive the opportunity to go beyond textbook answers, which by nature represent someone else’s constructed history.

Students should examine the historical evidence and compare multiple points of view to arrive at their own historical narratives (National Center for History in the Schools, n.d.). The use of primary documents provides a unique opportunity for students to go beyond a “deadening” memorization of a series of events from the past to acquire knowledge (Wesley, 1916, p. 329). In addition, accessing primary sources provides students the chance to uncover hidden curricula by asking probing questions about the past. Thus, studying primary sources helps students accomplish the important and
complex task of “doing history.” Pace (2004b) underlined the importance of this thought, arguing that studying history can motivate students to evaluate others’ claims critically, to develop a capacity to examine issues from multiple perspectives, to “recognize the long-term consequences of actions, and to master dozens of other subtle mental operations that are absolutely necessary” for individual and societal success (p. 1190).

Grasping the power, promise, and possibilities of history and social studies instruction, policymakers in the state of South Carolina have organized their current social studies standards, centering them around an “enduring understanding” of certain ideas and concepts that should be transferable to “new learning and situations” (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011). Wiggins and McTighe (2005) argued that focusing instruction on an “enduring understanding” provides students with knowledge and skills that extend well beyond the classroom (p. 128-129). For this case study, the standards for eighth-grade social studies instructional content known as South Carolina: One of the United States were relevant (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011). The main thrust of the course of study, or its “enduring understanding,” involved the history of South Carolina as a colonial power, a state in the new Republic, the conflict of slavery, and the emergence of South Carolina into the post-Reconstruction era during which social and economic justice become a major theme (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011). It is important to note that new standards for social studies instruction in South Carolina were proposed and released to the public in December of 2017, with an anticipated implementation of 2020. Two items of importance to this study appear in the new proposed standards. First, the standards continue to use Wiggins and McTighe’s (2005) principles of “enduring understandings.” Second, historical thinking skills are
embedded in the new standards beginning in grade 4 and continuing through high school (South Carolina Department of Education, 2017). This is a clear indicator that a coverage model of history pedagogy has been deemed insufficient in achieving South Carolina’s desire to produce graduates with excellent skills that include critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, and “knowing how to learn” (South Carolina Department of Education, 2017, p. 6).

The current standards established by the South Carolina Department of Education (2011) explicitly require instructors to teach “social studies literacy skills for the twenty-first century” (p. 60). Student mastery of social studies literacy skills are paramount to a student’s ability to interact with historical primary source documents successfully and to the teacher’s ability to provide transferable learning experiences. The skills most germane to this study included the ability of students to

- identify and explain the relationships among multiple causes and multiple effects;
- evaluate multiple points of view or biases and attribute the perspectives to the influences of individual experiences, societal values, and cultural traditions; and
- cite specific textual evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary sources (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011, pp. 126–129).

The development of historical thinking as students interact through critical inquiry with primary sources from history can produce an enduring understanding of humanity, which can help students recognize, understand, and accept changes in society over time, thus
preparing students for the challenges they will face as they attempt to expand equity and equality to all groups.

Statement of the Problem of Practice

The problem addressed in this study was middle-level students’ struggle to engage critically with primary sources from history. In fact, this problem became readily apparent in the classroom when teachers asked students to examine primary source documents. The vagueness and complexity of the historian’s craft presents a challenge to the novice history student, necessitating instruction and opportunities for practice (Middendorf, Pace, Shopkow, & Diaz, 2007).

It is notable that in the setting of this study, teachers were disinclined to approach primary sources in their social studies classes. Although the textbooks chosen for sixth- and seventh-grade instruction at the school provided multiple opportunities to examine primary sources, including specific lessons on historical thinking, the teachers and curriculum leaders did not use the textbooks because the books did not “adequately cover the content in the standards” (personal interview, J. Apple, June 7, 2017). Sixth graders read Spielvogel’s (2014) Discovering our Past: A History of the World, Early Ages, and seventh graders read McGraw Hill Education’s (2014) Contemporary Cultures: 1600 to the Present. Instead of using the textbooks, sixth- and seventh-grade teachers exclusively used support documents from the South Carolina Department of Education to ensure coverage of the content on SC Pass standardized tests. Additionally, personal interviews with teachers in the social studies department and the curriculum supervisors at the research site revealed that only two of five teachers used any primary source materials as a part of their curricula and instruction (C. Chewning, personal communication,
Finally, a complete review by the teacher–researcher of the weekly lesson plans for the social studies department at the research site for the 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 academic years confirmed that only two teachers (one being the teacher–researcher) systematically included primary source documents in their lesson plans. There were no primary source documents used in the sixth grade and seventh grades. The absence of primary source documents from the curriculum and the lack of any instruction regarding how to interact with these documents created a deficit of critical inquiry that was readily apparent when students reached the teacher–researcher’s classroom in eighth grade. The historian’s craft demands the skill of inquisitive questioning. However, student-centered inquiry was not a part of the culture at the research site. In a recent survey provided by the school district in concert with AdvanceED, students and their parents self-reported that the top three things most often done in class at school were listening to the teacher, completing worksheets, and taking tests (AdvanceED, 2017).

Considering the deficit in instruction and practice, it is little wonder that observations by the teacher–researcher showed that depending upon the age and complexity of the primary source historical document, students most often questioned where to begin their analysis. The teacher–researcher’s observations and the observations of other researchers (e.g., Middendorf et al., 2007; Pace, 2004a; Wineburg, 2001) have shown that students struggle with historical documents, especially documents or other primary source materials dated prior to the 20th century. The teacher–researcher
has instructed middle school, high school, and community college students in the coastal South Carolina region and found that students of all levels have struggled with the use of primary sources. Often, students failed to comprehend the meaning of the documents, rarely connected the documents to the underlying historical eras, and did not attempt to place the documents in the historical context. Students struggled to engage with the primary source documents in a critical way. That is, students rarely asked inquisitive questions of primary source documents, the era, or the author. These skills exemplify the historian’s craft.

Wineburg (2001) examined the way historians approach primary sources by using think-aloud techniques with historians and students. Wineburg (2001) compared the thoughts of each as they read an identical primary source document from history. He labeled the process of comparing how groups read historical texts the “epistemology of text” (p. 76). Wineburg (2001) wrote, “For students, reading history was not a process of puzzling about the authors’ intentions or situating texts in a social world but of gathering information, with texts serving as the bearers of information” (p. 76). Student participants’ questions reflected the lower levels of Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy as they looked for facts to remember and concepts to understand (Wineburg, 2001). In another study that focused on high-performing students, Wineburg and Schneider (2010) observed that the group of students in their sample actively accessed prior knowledge as they read a primary source document, allowing them to think critically and climb Bloom’s taxonomy from the lower levels of recall to higher levels of evaluation and analysis.
In contrast, when Wineburg and Schneider (2010) examined the actions of historians as they assessed primary sources, they noticed that historians immediately searched for what they did not already know, trying to get at “the document’s untold story” (p. 60). Thus, how historians approached history, including analyzing historical documents, seemed to be different from the typical learning process proposed by Bloom (1956) of moving from a base of knowledge to a higher level of evaluation (Wineburg & Schneider, 2010). When historians analyzed a primary source, they seemed to take time to think critically about the source first (Mandell, 2008; Wineburg, 2001). They began by critically questioning the source, content, author, and motivations, and by searching for what was unsaid and hidden (Mandell, 2008; Pace 2004a; Reisman, 2012; Wineburg, 2001).

The “epistemology of text” (Wineburg, 2001, p. 76) was relevant to the socioeconomic and educational attainment context of the middle grades (grades 6 through 8) public school classroom. In this case study, eighth-grade students taught by the teacher–researcher in a rural South Carolina public middle school comprised the study population. The course of study was eighth-grade social studies, also known as South Carolina History. The South Carolina Department of Education (2012) designated the standards, indicators, and essential knowledge for students of the course in the Grade 8: Support Documents.

The study setting consisted of a middle-grades public school in a coastal South Carolina county. The school itself was a Title I institution in which approximately 95% of students received free or reduced lunch. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over 21% of the county’s population lived below the poverty level in 2015, compared to
18.1% of the South Carolina population and 15.4% of the national population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The 2015 high and low median SAT scores for the adjacent county’s high schools were 1322 and 1607, respectively (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). In comparison, the 2015 high and low median SAT scores for the high school associated with the target population of the study were 1231 and 1473, respectively (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015).

Historical thinking, or “doing history,” is a complex but useful skill for students to learn. However, combining this complex task with the socioeconomic and educational preparedness context found in this study’s environment, a distinct and untenable problem of practice began to emerge. How does an instructor teach the skills of a historian to students who are at so many different academic starting points? How does an instructor teach the skills needed to analyze a historical document if students struggle to read? How does an instructor teach students to synthesize historical events and ideas, to integrate their own analysis into a narrative wherein they create history, if they struggle with the basics skills of reading, writing, and reasoning? Pace (2004b) argued that history instruction is doomed to failure unless educators are willing to modify pedagogical practices for students who are not “privileged” or “pre-educated” (p. 1191). Considering the best interests of their students means instructors have an ethical obligation to modify their practices in an effort to engage all students, not just the “pre-educated” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011).
Research Question

The primary research question of this study was “What combination of scaffolds allow 8th grade social studies students to successfully interact with primary source historical documents?”

This question guided the general direction of the research; questions that were more specific emerged as the constructs of scaffolding, decoding the disciplines, and historical thinking became operational in the classroom setting. Additional questions emerged regarding identifying effective instructional scaffolds for student comprehension of the primary source documents. For example, what scaffolds were effective in assisting students to begin thinking historically? In addition, what scaffolds were instructionally effective and allowed students to demonstrate historical thinking skills?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this action research case study was to examine and describe the impact of scaffolding tools and techniques on eighth-grade social studies students’ abilities to access and interact with primary historical source documents successfully, thereby allowing them to think historically. The students’ ability to handle primary source documents skillfully as historians is paramount to their ability to achieve a measure of historical thinking. The pedagogical technique of scaffolding was employed as a treatment to solve the problem of practice. Scaffolds are supporting tools employed by a teacher. They are intended to help a student to bridge the gap between their current cognitive ability, or skill set, and the desired future cognitive ability, or skill set. In other words, scaffolds provide a temporary support structure that allows a student to achieve more than would normally be the case. Once a student is capable of achieving the
desired cognitive or skill goal, the temporary scaffold support is removed (Ormrod, 2009). Throughout this study multiple scaffolds are employed in an attempt to identify the combination that allows students to successfully interact with primary source historical documents. Some of the scaffolds employed in the study include excerpted and emphasized texts; graphic organizers; guided reading questions; leveled texts; close reading and annotation routines; and leveled texts.

The teacher–researcher examined the effectiveness of multiple scaffolds with primary source documents among the study population. Applying scaffolding tools and techniques in the areas of reading primary source documents gave students an opportunity to understand primary sources and establish the historical context in which the sources occurred. This action research case study used descriptive qualitative data, including student documents and artifacts, student interviews, student discussion, and teacher–researcher field notes to describe the operation of scaffolding as students interacted with various primary source documents from history.

**Conceptual Framework**

Two theoretical concepts provided a framework and grounded this study: scaffolding and discipline decoding. Scaffolding emerged from the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976). Vygotsky (1978) theorized a zone of proximal development wherein a new level of knowledge or achievement is possible when an expert provides students with assistance or aid. The resulting aid could move students from a current level of knowledge or skill to a new improved level of knowledge or skill (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding also emerged from the work of Wood et al. (1976), who described the “scaffolding process” that allowed learners to achieve a goal
that would normally be beyond their capabilities by providing structured assistance from a teacher (p. 90). The ultimate goal of scaffolding is to create a capacity of combining “component skills into higher skills” (Wood et al., 1976, p. 89). In sum, as theorized by Vygotsky (1978) and Wood et al. (1976), scaffolding is the process by which a teacher or expert provides an intentional assistive structure for students in their mastery of a given body of knowledge or set of skills. Smit, van Eerde, and Bakker (2013) broadened the scope of scaffolding to the whole-class setting by postulating that teachers can apply broad scaffolds and teaching aids class-wide rather than individually.

Another relevant theory for this study was discipline decoding. Discipline decoding (identifying what makes an academic discipline unique) is a cross-disciplinary model that teachers can use to assist students in learning to think in a specific discipline (Middendorf & Pace, 2004). This work emerged as an effort to “bridge the gap between the marvelous strategies for increasing learning” that developed in the previous decades from educational researchers and the “concrete experiences of faculty trying to help students master specific material in particular disciplines” (Middendorf & Pace, 2004, pp. 2–3). In the context of the discipline decoding theoretical model, evidence of at least seven obstacles, or “bottlenecks,” to learning in the discipline of history appeared (Diaz, Middendorf, Pace, & Shopkow, 2008; Middendorf et al., 2007).

Two of the theoretical bottlenecks to learning in the discipline of history listed by Diaz et al. (2008) were vividly portrayed in the setting of this study. These stood out as primary bottlenecks among the study’s population:

- an inability of students to navigate successfully with primary source material (reading comprehension) and
• an inability of students to apply historical details to the broader context of history when dealing with primary sources (Middendorf et al., 2007).

These two bottlenecks create a hindrance to the development of historical thinking skills in the middle school social studies setting. The other bottlenecks identified by Middendorf et al. (2007) are important but secondary to this study. Simply put, if students cannot comprehend the primary source document or cannot associate a document with a historical era, the other “bottlenecks” (mostly associated with historiography and evaluating historical arguments) are irrelevant and more appropriately addressed in higher-level history courses in which students have mastered these building block skills. Arguably, the two bottlenecks identified represent what Wood et al. (1976) classified as “component skills” in historical thinking. With the primary bottlenecks identified, a scaffolding plan was implemented in an effort to influence academic achievement positively, as measured by historical thinking.

Methodology

This was an action research descriptive case study. The study used a variety of student-created documents, teacher–researcher field notes, student discussions, and student interviews for data collection and analysis to provide the most accurate descriptive report of the participants, treatment, and results (Schram, 2006; Yin, 2012, 2018). The case study was bound by participant selection and time.

Participant selection. The participants of this study were students assigned to the teacher–researcher’s course by school district administrators, based on normal enrollment practices. The participation of students in the study followed all guidelines and procedures established by the home school district and Institution Review Board policies.
Written permission was obtained from the building supervisor and from the district Superintendent of Education’s office. Further, students and parents provided written acknowledgement of informed consent for study participation. In addition, all participants’ identities remained confidential through using pseudonyms; only the teacher–researcher knew students’ real identities. In order to ease the logistics of data collection, the case study focused on one block of students that most resembled the general population characteristics of the entire school. From that class of 25 students, data collection focused on six students who were representative of the class and completed the assignments involved in the study.

The data collected from these six students were prone to researcher biases and internal validity issues because of the small sample size (Yin, 2012). Therefore, attempts were made to mitigate problems with validity. At each step of the treatment and data examination, the data from the six students were examined to determine next steps. Finally, the six students’ results were further examined by having two teachers (one ELA and one social studies) consider the teacher-researcher’s conclusions for each stage. The other teachers were asked to identify evidence of comprehension and contextualization. This was then compared to the conclusions of the teacher-researcher. This procedure was done in an attempt to mitigate researcher bias.

**Research site.** The research took place in a physical classroom on the campus of a rural middle-level public school in a coastal South Carolina county. The middle-level campus was adjacent to the high school campus. The middle-level campus consisted of one large building for the instruction of sixth- through eighth-grade students. At the time of this study, approximately 450 students attended the school in the three grades. The
building also included a media center, exploratory classrooms, gymnasium, cafeteria, guidance offices, and administration offices. The school used technology such as smart boards. Each teacher had a laptop computer. The researcher’s classroom was equipped with a Chrome Book cart. The teacher–researcher and students used Google Classroom. The school administration consisted of a principal, one assistant principal, and one curriculum coach. The staff assigned to eighth-grade instructional duties included eight teachers; three teachers were in their second year of public school service, two had fewer than four years of service, and three had more than five years of public school service. Three of the eight teachers had graduate degrees.

**Length of case study.** The purpose of the study was to examine and describe the impact of scaffolding on middle school students’ abilities to think historically with primary source documents from history. Choosing such a broad purpose for the study could have allowed it to continue for an unknown time. In fact, because of the nature of action research, once this case study was completed, the teacher–researcher would automatically repeat the cycle of reflection, revise/plan, implement, observe, and examine results (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Mertler, 2014). With this in mind, the study was restricted to a 14-week period between September 2017 and January 2018. Notably, 14 instructional days were lost because of school-wide testing, field trips, special speakers, and two natural disasters.

**Treatment.** The methodology of this action research descriptive case study followed a general routine. First, the teacher–researcher applied limited scaffolding in the initial stage. Second, the teacher-researcher applied moderate scaffolding in the middle stage. Finally, the teacher-researcher applied major scaffolding in the final stage.
Initial stage (limited scaffolding). The teacher modeled interaction with a primary (or secondary) source using a think-aloud modeling technique (Wineburg, 2001). The teacher-researcher annotated a document prior to class with his thoughts as he read the document. This document was shared with the students and the teacher-researcher went through his thinking line by line in a whole class setting with the students.

The teacher–researcher’s interaction with each document focused on three elements. First, the teacher–researcher addressed the source of the document (Who wrote it? Why did they write it? What point of view did they represent? [looking for bias]). Second, the teacher–researcher addressed the historical context of the document (What else was going on that might be affecting the motivation of author? If the document was an effect, what were the causes?). Third, the teacher–researcher addressed reading between the lines (Who or what was missing from the document [minorities or disadvantaged groups]? What did the author imply but not explicitly state?)

Next, the teacher–researcher grouped students heterogeneously according to Lexile reading levels. Students collaboratively attempted to replicate the interaction with the primary (or secondary) source documents. During this process, the teacher–researcher monitored the progress of student groups and offered additional instruction and assistance, as students requested and as students’ needs became apparent.

Finally, independently, students attempted to interact with the primary (or secondary) source documents through writing prompts designed to elicit their thinking on a document.
**Middle stage (moderate scaffolding).** During this stage, the teacher–researcher continued to model interaction with a primary (or secondary) source using think-aloud techniques, as occurred in the initial stage (Wineburg, 2001).

Next, students continued to work collaboratively. However, in this stage, student grouping occurred homogeneously based on Lexile reading levels. Students with lower Lexile reading levels were placed together in an attempt to allow the teacher–researcher more focused time with those who might need assistance.

Finally, students independently answered writing prompts that sought to drive their thinking toward an inquisitive exploration of the document (Mandell, 2008; Wineburg, 2016; Wineburg et al., 2013). Although students were required to answer the prompts independently, they were allowed to collaborate continuously, providing an opportunity for more critical thinking about the document (Fisher & Frey, 2015).

**Final stage (major scaffolding).** During this stage, the teacher–researcher continued to model interaction with a primary (or secondary) source using think-aloud techniques, as occurred in the initial and middle stages (Wineburg, 2001). However, during the final stage, explicit modeling was not done in whole group but on occasion with individual students or small groups as needed. Further, during this stage, the teacher–researcher introduced a routine for approaching primary and secondary source documents consisting of active close reading, collaborative discussions, and text-dependent questions (Beers & Probst, 2015; Fisher & Frey, 2015). It is important to note that during this stage, students received adapted (leveled) primary source documents, not the original texts.
Next, students worked collaboratively on primary source documents but self-grouped in pairs or threes. This created both homogeneous and heterogeneous groups (based on Lexile level).

Finally, students independently answered text-dependent questions designed to aid in general comprehension, reveal the implied meanings of a document, and show the historical context of the document. Although students were required to answer independently, collaboration on the answers was encouraged.

**Significance of the Study**

This action research case study is significant because it provides a descriptive window into the challenges facing social studies instructors in South Carolina schools as they attempted to implement new standards focused on historical thinking and critical inquiry in the discipline of history. Further, the study provides a description of potential solutions to the difficulties facing teachers in the implementation stage of the new standards. Through an examination of the impact of various levels and types of scaffolding, this case study provides a description of one attempt to unlock the bottlenecks of comprehension and historical context occurring during the study of primary source documents in the middle-level classroom.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are inherent limitations with action research in general and with case studies specifically. Action research includes the researcher as an active participant in the treatment process, creating potential validity issues (Trochim, 2006). Further, the population sample for action research is normally limited to a classroom or to a particular building, thereby severely limiting generalization (Trochim, 2006; Yin, 2012, 2018).
This action research case study was limited by these facts. The study was also a descriptive case study, further limiting the results of the study. In addition, many people confuse “nonresearch” case studies (often used for teaching) with research-based case studies (those designed to follow research procedures and protocols that limit bias and other validity concerns; Yin, 2018, p. 20).

Although the primary source documents selected by the teacher–researcher have been recognized as milestone documents in the development of the United States and South Carolina, they focused primarily on the theme of politics and governance because of the time constraints and state-mandated coverage standards. This created a weakness of the study, even though documents studied throughout the academic year more adequately reflected the assumption that primary source documents provide broader insight into various facets of the eras—for example, the economy, daily life, and social themes, including the view of minorities and disadvantaged groups (AHA 1998; National Council for the Social Studies 2010; Thorton 2013; Valenzuela 2013; Wineburg 2001).

Finally, a perceived weakness or limitation of this action research case study derived from the nature of action research. Inherent and unavoidably embedded in the action research approach is a continual cycle of planning, action, observation, and adjustment undertaken with the purpose of achieving practical improvement in classroom curricula and instruction, not necessarily publication in peer-reviewed journals (Mertler, 2014).

**Dissertation Overview**

This action research case study represented an attempt to solve a problem of practice, identified as two bottlenecks to learning in the discipline of history:
comprehension of primary source documents and an inability to place the primary sources in their historical context (Middendorf et al., 2007). Successfully removing these bottlenecks to learning may allow students to interact successfully (think like a historian) with primary source documents from history (Wineburg, 2001). The teacher–researcher employed multiple techniques of scaffolding in an effort to eliminate or effectively mitigate the two bottlenecks to learning (Beers & Probst, 2015; Fisher & Frey, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978; Wood et al., 1976). The action research evolved through three iterations as the teacher–researcher changed and adapted the scaffolding to address the results experienced in the classroom. This action research descriptive case study offers a window into the challenges that face K-12 South Carolina teachers as the State finalizes adoption and begins implementation of new social studies standards by 2020. These new standards reorient instruction in South Carolina away from a coverage model toward a model that focuses teachers and students on historical thinking skills and critical inquiry (South Carolina Department of Education, 2017).

Definitions of Terms

**Bottleneck.** Bottleneck is a label given to the moment or place in a course of a given discipline wherein significant impediments to learning exist (Middendorf & Pace, 2004).

**Contingent scaffolding.** The term contingent scaffolding refers to the practice of applying instructional and curriculum assistance only when needed and intentionally removing the assistance when it is not needed (Beed, Hawkins, & Roller, 1991).

**Decoding the discipline.** Critical thinking is not generic. In higher education, specific cognitive processes occur within disciplines. For example, the way a calculus
teacher approaches a math problem is different from the way a historian approaches a historical argument in a primary source document. The thinking processes of a given discipline need to be “decoded,” or translated, for those who are not expert in the field, especially for the students beginning in the discipline. This decoding greatly increases student learning (Middendorf & Pace, 2004).

Deculturalization. Deculturalization is the systematic and institutional process of restricting and eliminating the culture of a specific group by those with power so that the preferred culture of those in power becomes the norm or mainstream culture (Spring, 2014).

Distributed scaffold. Distributed scaffolds are instructional/learning aids that occur throughout the learning process, as opposed to a scaffold deployed only at the start of a given learning experience. In the context of this study, distributed scaffolds include systematic and planned rereading of complex texts, collaborative conversations about the text, systematic annotation of texts, and guided questions that depend on the text (Fisher & Frey, 2015).

Historiography. Historiography is the study of historians and historical schools of thought on a given subject within the discipline of history (Breisach, 2007).

Historical thinking. Historical thinking is a phrase designed to capture the thinking skills practiced by the experts in the field who tend to have a large role in the discipline of history (Wineburg, 2001). These thinking skills are further described as (a) a recognition of change over time; (b) the ability to understand context; (c) the capacity to use causality to construct explanations about the past; (d) an ability to understand contingency and the implied interconnectedness of history; and (e) the
capability to grasp the complexity of differing viewpoints, causalities, and contexts of a historical issue (Andrews & Burke, 2007).

**Primary source document.** A primary source document is a document that is closest to the actual person, event, or idea being studied (Marius & Page, 2010). Primary source documents can include transcripts of speeches, letters, editorials, posters, handbills, or similar items (Marius & Page, 2010). They must be proximal to the subject of study (Marius & Page, 2010).

**Scaffolding.** Scaffolding refers to temporary and adaptive support of students in the learning process (Smit et al., 2013).

**Secondary source document.** A secondary source is a document that is normally removed from the original event, written by an author who was not an eyewitness to the event, most often using primary sources (Marius & Page, 2010).

**Self-scaffolding.** Self-scaffolding refers to the process in which students begin to apply analysis tools independently without explicit direction from an instructor (Wass & Golding, 2014; Wood et al., 1976; Vygotsky, 1978).

**Un-coverage.** The term un-coverage refers to traditional history survey courses designed to cover a historical timeframe and all the content of that era; however, what normally occurs in this environment is the covering up, as under a blanket, of the skills needed to stimulate historical thinking because the content coverage is the primary focus (Calder, 2006). Un-coverage techniques are designed to remove the metaphorical blanket from these skills by reorienting the organizing principles of the course away from content coverage and toward skill coverage (Calder, 2006). It should be noted that content is not abandoned; the historical thinking skills are taught through the content (Calder, 2006).
Zone of proximal development. The term zone of proximal development refers to the idea that a certain phase of instruction is “slightly too difficult for students to do on their own but simple enough for them to do with assistance” (Wass & Golding, 2014, p. 671).
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review of the literature regarding history curricula and instruction, scaffolding, and educational research methods provides a foundation for this study. It is important to explore the discoveries of others studying the field, to identify theories that apply to this problem of practice, to discern the actions of others who have addressed similar problems of practice, and to inventory other research questions that relate to the topic. This literature review will assist readers to place this study into the broader context of the scholarship of teaching and learning in history.

This action research descriptive case study was guided by the following research question: “What combination of scaffolds allow 8th grade social studies students to successfully interact with primary source historical documents?” In the context of the research question and methodological approach, the teacher–researcher reviews the literature in a framework built from four elements: (a) the historiography of American history from the discovery of the New World to the establishment of the nation under the U.S. Constitution, (b) the methodology of the study, (c) the theoretical base of the study, and (d) the historical context of American public education.

Literature Review of American Historiography

An examination of historians’ work regarding the founding of the United States helps identify the comprehension difficulty of the primary sources used and establishes the importance of using the sources to create enduring understanding or historical thinking. Seven broad standards apply to eighth-grade social studies in South Carolina
(South Carolina Department of Education, 2011). Of the seven standards, the mastery of five depends on students having an enduring understanding of the founding of the nation, including South Carolina’s unique contribution (South Carolina Department of Education, 2012). This period of history contains many primary source documents that are vital to an understanding of the world today but are inaccessible to struggling readers or those untrained in the methods of historical thinking and inquiry.

**Historiography of America’s founding.** Developing an understanding of the major issues involving the founding of the nation is the first step toward a mastery of the learning standards established for the eighth-grade course of study in social studies. Therefore, the first historical era examined by the students in this study concerns the founding of the United States. Although a student’s recitation of the facts of the founding, including dates, would be impressive, such a recitation would not demonstrate higher-order thinking, especially not historical thinking (Calder, 2006; Pace, 2004a, 2004b; Wineburg, 2001). Through a teachers’ use of primary source documents and scaffolded instruction, students can develop the ability to locate source documents, comprehend documents through close reading, and place the documents into the proper historical context (Calder, 2006; Pace, 2004a, 2004b; Wineburg, 2001). Further, through instructional techniques, students may begin to ask critical questions regarding issues, such as who is not represented, who is oppressed, and what biases are evident.

Students studied excerpts of modified versions or full original texts from the following documents to study the founding of the Republic: (a) the *Virginia Charter*, (b) the *Mayflower Compact*, (c) the *Autobiography of Olaudah Equiano* (a first-person account of the middle passage), (d) the *Charleston Tea Party* article, (e) excerpts from
the *Journals of Oliver Hart* written as he traveled throughout the backcountry of South Carolina in 1775 rallying support for independence, (f) the *Declaration of Independence*, (g) the *Articles of Confederation*; (h) the United States *Constitution*, (i) the *Bill of Rights*, and (j) *George Washington’s Inaugural Address*. To ensure students recognized that primary sources were not all long, laborious documents, students also examined an image of the slave ship *Brookes* as a supplementary piece to the *Autobiography of Olaudah Equiano*. All these primary sources directly related to the founding of the United States, including South Carolina’s role in creating the new nation.

In the context of the primary source materials regarding the founding of the nation, the teacher–researcher reviewed the work of previous historians in a brief historiographical discussion of the founding. Scholars have offered many different theories over the last 200 years in an attempt to describe and explain the founding of the United States adequately. For example, in the 19th century, Bancroft (as cited in Breisach, 2007) proposed the divine hand of providence and the deified traits of the founders as the primary impetus for the founding. Bancroft’s idea of providential circumstances appears in the *Mayflower Compact* (King James I, 1606). As America transformed from an agrarian to an industrial country, Bancroft’s thesis and the founders’ motives came into question by a group of historians who focused on the economic impact of the American Revolution (Bentley, 1999). In contrast, Charles and Mary Beard (1927) offered their ideas through the lens of an economic interpretation of the founding, arguing that economics was the primary factor leading to the American Revolution and the framing of the *U.S. Constitution*. 
In this study, students engaged with these ideas as they examined the motives associated with the Virginia Charter and the Autobiography of Olaudah Equiano (a first-person account of the middle passage). Beard (as cited in Breisach, 2007) mostly dismissed Bancroft and other early historians’ ideology-based theories—in Beard’s view, the proper method for interpreting history was through the realm of economics. In contrast, Turner (1910), a contemporary of Beard’s, combined the idealism of individualism and liberty with the economics of westward expansion; as a historian, Turner not only viewed the history of America through the lenses of ideology and economics but also attempted to develop a history through a sort of compilation of the two. More recently, Ellis (2000) focused on the founders themselves, because “men make history,” and the generation responsible for the founding knew they were making history (p. 4). Ellis further argued that the success of the founding was based on the founders’ intellectual, cultural, and social diversity; the founding represented what “was and still is a group portrait” (pp. 16–17).

Bailyn (1992) and Wood (1998) provided the most comprehensive work focused on the ideological underpinnings of the American founding. Bailyn posited that an ideology that began nearly a century earlier provided the intellectual transformation that produced the American Revolution. Wood extended Bailyn’s work by illustrating the importance of the Enlightenment and classical republican virtues in the founding of America. Further, Maier (1997) provided readers with the inside story of the canonization of the Declaration of Independence and the ideological mythology that surrounded Jefferson’s most famous document. Bobrick (1997) provides a vivid image of the Revolutionary War and the importance of Washington’s leadership. Berkin (2002)
critically discussed the compromises and the contexts through which the U.S. Constitution evolved, from competing plans to a bundle of compromises that strengthened the nation but also excluded the powerless. These ideological and political aspects of the founding were revealed as students closely read the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights in the documents’ respective historical contexts. Such an analysis encouraged students to follow an additional inquiry regarding who was excluded from these milestone documents of politics and ideology.

**Literature Review of Teaching Methods**

Previous researchers in teaching and learning in history have largely focused on studies of the primary and secondary educational levels but have excluded the topic of pedagogy. Previous researchers have mostly examined teacher-centered approaches focused on state-mandated test achievement, rather than on student-centered constructivist approaches that stimulate critical thinking. Research shows that history instruction is often abandoned if it is not going to be tested by the governing authority, in order to make time for other subjects that will be tested (Vogler, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011; Vogler & Virtue, 2007).

Since Wineberg (2001), some scholarship of history teaching and learning has emerged to shift the focus to an identification of the most effective instruction and curriculum design for the history course (Calder, 2006; Hitchcock, Shoemaker, & Tosh, 2000; Lowenthal, 2000; Sipress & Voelker, 2011; Yilmaz, 2009). The majority of K-12 students are exposed to a coverage type of history course in which teachers are focused on covering the facts as they face high-stakes end-of-year testing (Vogler, 2003; Vogler
Current researchers have moved away from a pedagogical model organized around covering a set amount of historical content toward a model that emphasizes instruction in historical thinking skills (Calder, 2006). The growing emphasis on historical thinking skills is evident in South Carolina as the State moves toward embedded historical thinking skills in the new standards (South Carolina Department of Education, 2017). Moving away from organization by content toward historical thinking requires an examination and explicit identification of the skills of historians, as well as identification of the bottlenecks that prevent students from learning these skills (Diaz et al., 2008; Middendorf & Pace, 2004; Middendorf et al., 2007; Pace, 2004a, 2004b; Wineburg, 2001). These skills are inherently valuable in the middle school classroom and must be taught if social studies is to fulfill the state mandate of creating enduring understanding among students (AHA, 1998; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2010; South Carolina Department of Education, 2011, 2017).

Recognizing that there are certain identifiable skills that historians have learned necessitates the development of pedagogical techniques that will teach students these skills (Middendorf et al., 2007; Middendorf & Pace, 2004). It is also vital that assistive methodologies for practicing these skills be created along with a mechanism for assessing student progress toward mastery (Mandell, 2008; Wineburg et al., 2013). Techniques and tools in cross-curricula course scaffolding and whole-class scaffolding have provided examples of successful implementation of teaching the skills required for historical thinking (Cleary & Neumann, 2009; Dotolo & Nicolay, 2008; Gritter, Beers, & Knaus, 2013; Mandell, 2008; Smit et al., 2013). Recent literature has provided innovative
techniques for assessing student progression, including “for and against” issue essays, student essays specifically designed to solicit historical thinking, and assessment activities that foster students’ decisions about the historical significance of places or people (Hounsell, 2000; Voelker, 2008; Wood, 2012). The scaffolding tools adapted for this study included the distributed scaffolds of systematic and planned rereading of complex texts, collaborative conversations about the text, systematic annotation of texts, and guided questions that depend on the text (Fisher & Frey, 2015); close active reading techniques, including annotation tools (Beers & Probst, 2015); multiple graphic organizers (Lapp, Wolsey, Wood, & Johnson, 2015); and modified primary source documents (Stanford History Education Group, 2016).

This action research case study incorporated the theories on historical thinking and discipline decoding established by Wineburg (2001) and Middendorf and Pace (2004). The theories regarding historical thinking have shown that when historians examine a text, they are not simply looking for information. Instead, historians are “puzzling about the authors’ intentions,” trying to situate a “text in a social world,” viewing “sources as people” with motives and emotions (Wineburg, 2001, pp. 76–77). Historians question validity and accuracy by placing multiple sources side by side to examine accuracy, motives, and biases (Middendorf et al., 2007; Wineburg, 2001). Wineburg (2001) noted that through historical thinking, people are called on to see human motive in the text we read; called on to mine truth from the quicksand of innuendo, half-truth and falsehood that seeks to engulf us each day; called on to brave the fact that certainty, at least in understanding the social
world remains elusive and beyond our grasp [but] school history possesses great potential for teaching students to think and reason in sophisticated ways. (p. 83)

In this study, the theories of historical thinking were operationalized by using scaffolding techniques identified in the aforementioned literature to encourage students to engage in modes of thinking similar to those used by historians. Students were guided in the process of historical thinking through scaffolded instruction and tools. In this study, the teacher–researcher describes the impact on the study population’s ability to comprehend and interact with primary source documents and place them in their historical context as scaffolds were applied and modified.

The use of action research or practitioner inquiry has developed over previous decades. Richardson (1994) noted that practitioner inquiry and research, as opposed to more formal research, can have an immediate impact in the classroom. Similarly, Anderson (2002) and Metz and Page (2002) found the benefits of action research evident when they observed the increased practice of states arbitrarily imposing formal research findings on schools, regardless of local concerns. Metz and Page noted great educational research gains could be derived from practical research. Cochran-Smith and Power (2010) indicated the importance of practitioner inquiry by identifying the trend in teacher preparation programs designed to create teacher–researchers.

**Literature Review of Theoretical Base**

**Primary through secondary history instruction.** In the U.S. elementary and middle school educational settings, the subject of history is normally part of a larger body of instruction labeled *social studies*. Not until students reach middle and high school do they encounter stand-alone history courses. Scholars throughout the United States have
completed much research in the area of social studies instruction in the environment of high-stakes testing and government-mandated coverage standards (Vogler, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011; Vogler & Virtue 2007). The review of the theoretical literature begins in this context. Most of the students who participated in this research study spent most of their educative experience in classrooms that seemed to be driven by government initiatives, such as the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, the 2009 Race to the Top Act, and the many other government initiatives implemented in the previous two decades (Spring, 2014). Vogler (2003, 2005, 2008, 2011) has extensively studied the instructional changes that occur when teachers face state mandates and high-stakes testing. The instructional changes typically prompt teachers to migrate away from student-focused approaches known to stimulate critical thinking and problem solving toward a more teacher-dominated pedagogy (Vogler & Virtue, 2007). Vogler and Virtue (2007) argued,

Teachers under the pressure of high stakes tend to increase their dependency on teacher-centered instructional practices. . . . High-stakes testing has served as a catalyst for a movement away from constructivist, student-centered approaches such as discussion, role-play, research papers, and cooperative learning. (p. 56)

In fact, high-stakes testing appears to lead to low student discovery and teachers teaching for test improvement rather than for student improvement (Vogler, 2003). It appears that most modern students are emerging from high school learning environments that have solely focused on the facts of history as required by state-mandated testing, rather than from environments focused on the development of the skills inherent in historical thinking.
The Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies (1894) purported that the subject of history was “unequalled for its opportunities of comparison, . . . study of cause and effect,” and its promotion of “the invaluable mental power which we call judgment” (p. 168). Wise judgment based on an ability to think critically is increasingly important to the global society in light of growing diversity and an interconnected economy (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, & Stone, 2012). Lee and Ashby (2000) suggested the focus of history is not only about the narrative of the past and its characters and events but also about the multiple contradictions and viewpoints that form the narrative, and ultimately, what the history student does with those contradictions. Most modern historians would likely agree that the 120-year-old assertions from the Committee of Ten (1894) report remain valid today. Fisch (as cited in Dean et al., 2012) eloquently observed that students today are being prepared “for jobs that don’t exist yet, which will use technologies that have not been invented yet, to solve problems we have not yet realized” (p. 149).

Research and scholarship into the activities, skills, and knowledge that should define history instruction have evolved substantially over the past two decades. Booth and Hyland (2000) provided a useful structure for discussing the scholarship by dividing it into three subcategories: (a) history course design, (b) enhancement of teaching and learning, and (c) learning and assessment. These categories provide a useful framework to examine the current literature.

**History course design.** Historically, the content and focus of school curricula has paralleled the construction of other subject areas. Spring’s (2014) history of the American school showed the evolving purposes of school instruction throughout the history of the nation. Spring observed that those in power have largely determined the
overriding purpose of education in the United States. From creating a unified nation from the fractured and independent states after the Revolutionary War to the intentional deculturalization of the Native American and Hispanic populations, schools have been dominated by a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant American exceptionalism ethos (Spring, 2014). Likewise, this same ethos has dominated U.S. history curricula throughout most of the nation’s history, providing few if any alternative viewpoints and rarely challenging students to expose the many contradictions with which history is replete (Spring, 2014).

Although the ethos has changed dramatically over the past few decades, some curricula have continued to relegate many minority groups to the fringes of society and to the fringes of educational content. For example, in an examination of Seguin High, Valenzuela (2013) provided a stark modern example of the natural Hispanic culture being “subtracted” from the school by officials and curricula, although its student body was “virtually all Mexican” (p. 289). Sumara and Davis (2013) noted the heteronormativity in modern curricula, identifying an underlying assumption that all characters were heterosexual, thereby silently creating the norm of society. Thornton (2013) extended the heteronormativity argument by specifically pointing to the absence of homosexuals in any U.S. history content. Sears’ (1991) study of the experiences of 36 men and women who identified as homosexual illustrated the painful real-life consequences of a community that marginalized nonconformists.

Homogenization of content does not promote the development of judgment or critical thinking. Burbles and Rice (1991) showed that having open conversations about people’s differences “requires us to re-examine our own presuppositions and to compare them against quite different ones; to make us less dogmatic about the belief that the way
The world appears to us is necessarily the way the world is” (p. 405). During the postmodern era, historians have become more focused on examining differences and contradictions that exist in history, rather than pursuing a content narrative focused on American exceptionalism or Eurocentrism (Slatterly, 2006). This shift requires a move away from a content-coverage model (Calder, 2006; Sipress & Voelker, 2011).

Focusing history curricula design on historical thinking rather than on content has dominated much of the recent literature. Calder (2006) proposed a “un-coverage” model for history survey courses. Calder abandoned the pretense of covering a massive amount of material in favor of selectively covering content designed to teach students the skills needed to think historically. This model allowed students to uncover the “linchpin ideas of historical inquiry” (p. 1363). Calder described in detail the history survey course he taught using this “un-coverage” philosophy and the historical thinking the approach generated in his students. Likewise, Erekson (2013) described the History Survey Project at the Center of History Teaching and Learning at the University of Texas at El Paso. In the History Survey Project, Erekson selected six “Fellows” to engage in a systematic process of professional development with guidance provided by Calder, Pace, and Booth. The “Fellows” changed their history course designs to reflect recent cognitive scholarship and the desire to stimulate historical thinking rather than simply cover a set of facts (Erekson, 2013). At this time, Erekson’s project is ongoing.

Sipress and Voelker (2011) proposed an argument-based course design. In their proposed paradigm, the organizing principle for the course consisted of historical arguments rather than coverage of content. The ultimate goal was for students to integrate “historical modes of thinking into their daily lives” rather than sitting through a
course filled with facts that seemed useless (p. 1064). Meanwhile, Hitchcock et al. (2000) claimed that regardless of the model, historical content and historical skills should be taught simultaneously.

**Enhancing teaching and learning.** Wineburg (2001) offered revolutionary insight into the topic of teaching and learning history. Wineburg defined the topic of historical thinking and provided a discussion on the different cognitive approaches to documents used by historians and students. Further, Wineburg offered insight on the use of assessments to understand knowledge attainment by students. He also provided a case study in contextualized thinking using the speeches of Abraham Lincoln and comparing the thought processes of teacher-education candidates. Wineburg’s work laid the foundation of cognitive research specific to the discipline of historical thinking.

Wineburg and Schneider (2010) suggested that the foundational activities of historians when examining documents were not a consideration of the facts they knew about a document—rather, historians immediately declared what they did not know. Their responses imply that historical thinking begins with what is not known rather than with the facts retained on a given subject. Considering the years of coverage pedagogy that the students in this case study have endured, student success in historical thinking with a primary source document can be described as something as simple as the student learning to ask questions—for example, “Who was left out? What was the author’s motive? What else was happening when this was written?”

Pace (2004b) extended Wineburg’s (2001) work by challenging those in postsecondary history education with the fact that in “every act of teaching, there are two different forms of knowledge”—knowledge of the content and knowledge of how the
content “may be taught and learned” (p. 1171). Pace suggested that successfully teaching students to do history and think historically depended on identifying the skills needed to think historically. Pace noted previous scholarship at the primary and secondary levels but pointed out a need for new scholarship of teaching and learning of history in the context of higher education.

Middendorf and Pace (2004) developed a decoding model aimed at providing teachers in higher education a method of examining, identifying, and removing roadblocks to learning and thinking in their discipline. This model was developed in a manner that allowed it to be applied in multiple disciplines (Middendorf & Pace, 2004). Pace (2004a) applied the model to decode reading in the history discipline. In alignment with Wineburg’s (2001) theoretical claim that history experts engage different cognitive skills when analyzing a text, Diaz et al. (2008) used the decoding model to identify the major bottlenecks to learning in the history classroom. Their study consisted of 90-minute videotaped interviews of 17 history-department faculty who identified seven primary bottlenecks to students’ historical thinking.

**Learning and assessment.** Yilmaz (2009) noted that students learn best when actively engaged. However, Yilmaz also issued a warning that all instructional activities must be designed to create a sophisticated understanding of the past and to employ historical thinking skills. Learning is an active process wherein students construct their understanding of the past through historical thinking (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Buoncristiani and Buoncristiani (2012) observed that recent research in cognition has shown that people learn best when they are engaged in their own learning. Further, the ability to think, and then think about thinking, is not an innate human characteristic;
rather, this reflective action must be taught (Buoncristiani & Buoncristiani, 2012). Unique to the discipline of history, historical thinking is a particular way of thinking not confined to professional historians but available to middle school students.

Hounsell (2000) offered insight into the use of the essay as an assessment tool. However, Hounsell warned that essays should be used to help students “grasp the exacting demands of analytical and critical thought in history and to learn how to convey” those thoughts in a clear coherent manner (p. 191). Voelker (2008) designed a methodology for assessing students’ historical thinking consisting of presenting a historical statement followed by requiring students to argue for or against the statement in paragraph form. The purpose of the assessment was to determine if the students had such a command of the material, ideas, and concepts that they could capably argue both viewpoints on the issue, illustrating successful historical thinking (Voelker, 2008). In an ideal world, this type of assessment could have been adapted for the purposes of this case study; however, the students in the study were in their infancy of learning to think critically and in writing.

Wood (2012) conducted a case study of a course and an assessment structure in which students were asked to discover the details of a particular historical object, place, or person. Wood assessed students’ ability to think like historians by asking them to argue if a place or object should be afforded historical landmark status. Students presented evidence to support their decisions.

**Scaffolding.** Wood et al. (1976) and Vygotsky (1978) established the theories that support what modern instructors call *scaffolding.* Smit et al. (2013) brought the conceptual ideas established for individual instructional assistance to a whole-class
setting over 35 years later. Their empirical research established a theoretical justification for whole-class scaffolding that could be “employed to foster long-term learning processes” (p. 831). Wass and Golding (2014) offered a simplification of Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development for implementation while teaching in the context of higher education.

In an examination of his own higher education history teaching practice, Bain (2000) applied the theoretical ideas of Wood et al. (1976) and Vygotsky (1978) using two operational principles. According to Bain, the first principle was to “externalize all thinking in the classroom,” and the second was to create “supports for disciplinary thinking” (p. 335). Bain labeled the process that occurred in the classroom cognitive apprenticeship. Bain used informal writing, or thinking on paper, as a tool for students to externalize their thoughts and reveal to the instructor any difficulties they may be encountering. Another tool involved students’ development of narratives from facts at hand, allowing the students to construct their knowledge and explore multiple viewpoints (Bain, 2000).

Bain’s (2000) principles and activities showed the dichotomy of learning from texts that history instructors encounter. Kintsch (1986, 2009) proposed a contrast between objectives in reading a text. First, if the educational outcome is for the student to remember a specific text, coherence of the text is paramount; however, if learning from a text is the preferred outcome, then a situational model should be employed (Kintsch, 1986, 2009). Bain’s activities allowed students to create a situational model. Learning from the activities occurred as they were allowed to “construct from the text a mental model of the situation” in their own words using the facts present in the historical
dialogue with the instructor and class (Kintsch, 1986, p. 106). Kintsch (2009) further noted that constructivists’ theory of learning supported an active process wherein students must be allowed to construct meaning rather than passively absorbing information from a text or instructor.

Brown (2007) stated that actively engaging with a text was paramount to learning from the text. Brown argued that students should connect with the text in various ways, including examining the historical context of each text, rewriting a text through paraphrasing, and attempting to connect the text itself to current events related to the students’ lives. Throughout, this process of annotation and engagement with the text, students connect the text to themselves and making meaning of the material (Brown, 2007).

Cleary and Neuman (2009) examined the challenges of history students working with primary sources and illustrated several strategies to aid or scaffold students. The strategies included the use of mnemonic devices to remember the procedures for historical document analysis (Cleary & Neuman, 2009). Gritter et al. (2013) provided a case study of scaffolding using academic language in an advanced placement United States history course. The authors offered multiple examples of scaffolding that appeared to have a positive impact on historical thinking; however, like many others on this topic, this study was purely descriptive (Gritter et al., 2013). Dotolo and Nicolay (2008) illustrated their attempts to create writing assignments in a learning community that included courses on early Britain and English history. The writing assignments themselves created a scaffolding effect as students progressed from one assignment to the
next; the component skills learned in the previous assignments built competence for the next assignments (Dotolo & Nicolay, 2008).

**Implementation and operation of scaffolding.** A basic framework for scaffolding begins with the instructor modeling the activity or skill; next, the entire class makes an attempt, followed by the class dividing into smaller cooperative groups to continue the activity; finally, individual students attempt to complete the tasks (Ellis & Larkin, 1998). This framework allows multiple support opportunities from the instructor and the students’ learning community. This framework also provides an opportunity for the instructor to offer differentiated and responsive instruction based on observations through the scaffolding framework. Tomlinson (2015) argued that the only way for instructors to advocate successfully for students is to prepare willingly for the diversity of learning that exists in classrooms today by employing responsive instruction. Although differentiation is not scaffolding, acknowledging the diversity in the classroom may help adapt and correct instruction. Dack and Tomlinson (2015) pointed out that recognizing diversity in the classroom allows instructors to first identify “culturally influenced learning patterns” and move past them to the individuals’ readiness and specific needs (p. 12).

In discussing Hogan and Pressley’s (1997) eight essential elements for scaffolded instruction, Larkin (2001) noted the importance of feedback during scaffolding as students attempted mastery. Larkin claimed that timely feedback encourages students to become independent of the scaffold. Beed et al. (1991) successfully applied the concept of contingent scaffolding. Contingent scaffolding applies assistance only as needed and then methodically removes the scaffold, thereby creating independence (Beed et al., 1991).
In a pretest–posttest quasiexperimental study, McNeill, Lizotte, Krajcik, and Marx (2006) examined the influence of continuous scaffolding versus faded scaffolding (slowly removing assistance) with a group of middle school science students. The researchers found significant academic gains for all students using scaffolds; however, in the posttest results, the students in the fading scaffold treatment group displayed significantly stronger explanations and an increased ability to reason or think critically (McNeill et al., 2006). Robinson et al.’s (2006) use of three quasiexperiments and one true experiment revealed similar results. Robinson et al. examined scaffolding through students’ use of partially completed note-taking graphic organizers.

In this study, the teacher–researcher adapted Beers and Probst’s (2005) work on the inherent need for students to learn active reading strategies. Beers and Probst argued that teachers must provide tools for students to learn the art of close reading to access complex texts adequately. Fisher and Frey (2015) provided further direction in the development of scaffolds that aid students in understanding complex text; they recommended collaborative conversations and intentionally designed text-dependent questions that force students to think critically about their reading.

The literature regarding the effects of scaffolding on historical thinking has primarily consisted of descriptive studies. Little experimental, quasiexperimental, or preexperimental work has been completed in the context of higher education. This study extends the theories of Wineburg (2001), Pace (2004), and the many others mentioned previously (Andrews & Burke, 2007; Booth & Hyland, 2000; Calder, 2006; Middendorf et al., 2007; Reisman, 2012). This action research case study provides a description of
the impact of scaffolding on students’ abilities to interact with historical documents in a
diverse middle school setting.

**Literature Review of the Historical Context of American Public Education**

Adler (1982) argued that in a democratic society, the schooling of the best of
society is the best schooling for the entirety of society. Although Adler had many critics,
a fundamental truth exists in the argument: All students deserve the best education
possible. Throughout the history of curricula and instruction, contrasting educational
philosophies have emerged—from Dewey’s (1897) articles of pedagogy to Bobbitt’s
(1918) reduction of human life to lists of activities to be mastered; from Counts’s (1932)
desire to remake the social order through teachers to Tyler’s (1949) attempt to question
the direction of curricula studies. Even Eisner’s (1967, 2001) dissent from the objectives
movement and his questioning of schools that produced students who labored for a grade
rather than working at learning (and thereby deriving self-satisfaction from the process)
show that the philosophy of education has been constantly changing as the methods of
previous generations have been challenged and ultimately replaced or modified to fit the
new situations society has presented.

The reality of education in the 21st century is that all modern scholars have been
influenced by the work of those who came before. This study was built on a
philosophical foundation consisting of a diverse amalgamation of certain aspects of 20th
century scholars. Dewey (1897) argued that preparing students for their future lives
required teaching them to take “command” of themselves in body and mind (p. 34).
Tyler (1949) provided the four fundamental questions that modern educators ask prior to
curricula or instructional planning.
Many past scholars have influenced the philosophical basis of this study; however, Doll’s (1993) argument that curricula and instruction should encompass richness, recursion, relations, and rigor can be seen throughout. Doll’s (1993) four Rs—richness, recurrence, relation, and rigor—are evident throughout current scholarship of teaching and learning in history. Richness and recurrence occur through contingent and distributed scaffolded assignments that require students to connect multiple historical facets, make judgments concerning cause and effect, and interact with historical (and possibly foreign) documents and materials (Doll, 1993). Relation is accomplished through requiring students to connect historical events, characters, documents, and ideas to their modern lives (Doll, 1993). The requirement for historical thinking provides the rigor. In an examination of the contradictions of history, the multiple viewpoints of history and the various different reports on the same historical event throughout history create an environment of “interpretation and indeterminacy” (Doll, 1993, p. 221).

Eisner (2001) asked, “What does it mean to say a school is doing well?” This question should cause great institutional reflection; however, the better question for modern instructors should be “What does it mean to say students are doing well?” Are students laboring to memorize a set of mind-numbing and deadening facts? Alternatively, are they working to construct their own knowledge of history, including its many viewpoints and contradictions through historical documents in an effort to take command of their lives and judgments to become the agents of future “social progress and reform”? (Dewey, 1897, p. 39).
Summary

The historiography of the founding era is filled with incredible scholars who have challenged many of societies assumptions. From Beard (1927) to Bailyn (1992) these scholars and more have developed a road map of critical inquiry that illustrates a need to continuously question the past. Further, the primary sources of this era are foundational and paramount to understanding the society that evolves into the modern United States of the twenty-first century (Wood, 1998). The teaching of history during the last decade and a half has been sporadic depending on high stakes state testing requirements (Vogler, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011; Vogler & Virtue 2007). The ability of students to successfully interact with primary source documents is predicated upon their ability to comprehend the documents (Diaz et al., 2008; Middendorf & Pace 2004). Further it is imperative to critical understanding that students also be able to place the document into the proper historical context (Wineburg, 2001). The tools of scaffolding are the starting point for teachers and their desire to make primary sources accessible to students (Vygotsky, 1978; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976).
Chapter 3: Action Research Methodology

Problem of Practice

The problem addressed in this study was middle-level students’ struggle to engage critically with primary source documents from history. The problem is obvious in the classroom when teachers present students with primary source documents. The complexity of these unique documents, combined with the vagueness and inquisitiveness of the historian’s craft, present a significant challenge to the novice history student, necessitating instruction and opportunities for practice (Middendorf et al., 2007). In addition, the research site for this action research descriptive case study presented some unique challenges. Primary source documents and thinking skills have historically not had even a minor role in the curricula plans for the social studies department. Department members have created a deficit in instruction by focusing all their efforts on a coverage model that has yielded poor results. For example, more than 50% of students at this site did not meet social studies standards in the 2017 SC Pass test (for comparison, the state average of middle school students who did not meet expectations was 27% for the same period; South Carolina Department of Education, 2017).

Considering the deficit in instruction and practice, it is little wonder that observations by the teacher–researcher have shown that depending upon the age and complexity of a primary source historical document, students often question where to begin their analysis. The teacher–researcher’s observations and the observations of other researchers (e.g., Middendorf et al., 2007; Pace, 2004a; Wineburg, 2001) have shown that
students struggle with historical documents, especially documents or other primary source materials dated prior to the 20th century. The teacher–researcher has instructed middle school, high school, and community college students in the coastal South Carolina region and found that students of all levels struggle with using primary sources. Students often fail to comprehend the meaning of the documents, rarely connect the documents to the underlying historical eras, and do not attempt to place the documents in the historical context. Students struggle to engage with the primary source documents in a critical way, rarely asking inquisitive questions of primary source documents, the era, or the author. These skills exemplify the historian’s craft.

Research Question

The research question of this study was “What combination of scaffolds allow 8th grade social studies students to successfully interact with primary source historical documents?”

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this action research case study was to examine and describe the impact of scaffolding tools and techniques on eighth-grade social studies students’ abilities to access and interact with primary historical source documents successfully, thereby allowing them to think historically. The students’ ability to handle primary source documents skillfully as historians is paramount to their ability to achieve a measure of historical thinking. The pedagogical technique of scaffolding was employed as a treatment to solve the problem of practice. The teacher–researcher examined the effectiveness of multiple scaffolds with primary source documents among the study population. Applying scaffolding tools and techniques in the areas of reading primary
source documents gave students an opportunity to understand primary sources and establish the historical context in which the sources occurred. This action research case study used descriptive qualitative data, including student documents and artifacts, student interviews, student discussion, and teacher–researcher field notes to describe the operation of scaffolding as students interacted with various primary source documents from history.

**Action Research Design**

**Setting and time frame of the study.** The research took place in a physical classroom on the campus of a rural middle-level public school in a coastal South Carolina county. The middle-level campus was adjacent to the high school campus. The middle-level campus consisted of one large building for the instruction of sixth- through eighth-grade students. At the time of this study, approximately 450 students attended the school in the three grades. The student population was 50% White, 50% African American, and less than 1% Hispanic. Males and females at the site were equally represented, with almost exactly 50% of each. This action research descriptive case study focused on six students (three male, three female, three White, and three African American) as they encountered primary source documents from history. To protect the identities of the participants and the setting, pseudonyms are used throughout the report.

The school building included a media center, exploratory classrooms, gymnasium, cafeteria, guidance offices, and administration offices. The school used technology such as smart boards. Each teacher had a laptop computer. The teacher–researcher’s classroom was equipped with a Chromebook cart; the teacher–researcher and students used Google Classroom. The school administration consisted of a principal, one assistant
principal, and one curriculum coach. The staff assigned to eighth-grade instructional duties included eight teachers; three teachers were in their second year of public school service, two had fewer than four years of service, and three had more than five years of public school service. Three of the eight teachers had graduate degrees.

The purpose of the study was to examine and describe the impact of scaffolding on middle school students’ abilities to think historically with primary source documents from history. This broad purpose of the study could allow it to continue without definitive time boundaries. In fact, because of the nature of action research, once this case study is completed, the teacher–researcher will repeat the cycle of reflection, revise/plan, implement, observe, and examine results (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Mertler, 2014). Given this approach, the study was restricted to a 14-week period between September 2017 and January 2018. Notably, during this period, 14 instructional days were lost because of school-wide testing, field trips, special speakers, and two natural disasters.

**Participants in the study.** The participants in the study included the teacher–researcher, two administrators, two teachers, and six students. The students selected for this case study were a convenience sample. They were the only students to complete the treatment across all three stages of the study.

**The teacher–researcher.** At the time of this study, the teacher–researcher had been teaching social studies courses for the previous seven years. He taught eighth-grade history for three years, two of those at the research site. During the course of this study, the teacher–researcher was named the new social studies department chair for the research site. He held an undergraduate degree in business administration and a graduate
degree in history (with an emphasis on American history). In addition, he completed 60 graduate credits in the field of education toward a doctorate of education. He was endorsed as an online instructor and had satisfied the South Carolina Read 2 Succeed requirements. He taught 12 credit hours per year of some combination of HIS 102 (Western Civilization Part II) and HIS 201 (American History from Discovery to 1877) for the local community through an online portal. Prior to teaching, the teacher–researcher owned and operated a small business in the insurance industry for 17 years.

**James (teacher).** At the time of this study, James was a teacher on site who helped the teacher–researcher protect the validity of this by examining the data to look for evidence of reading comprehension and contextualization among the study. James had been a teacher for over three years in the South Carolina public school system. James was currently finishing a master’s of education.

**Sonya (teacher).** Sonya was a teacher on site who helped the teacher–researcher protect the validity of this by examining the data to look for evidence of reading comprehension and contextualization among the study. She had been a teacher for two years and had a master’s of arts in teaching.

**Jade (student).** Jade was a White female student. Her Lexile reading level was higher than grade level.

**Alexa (student).** Alexa was a White female student. Her Lexile reading level was higher than grade level.

**Jill (student).** Jill was an African American female. Her Lexile reading level was on grade level.
**Sam (student).** Sam was a White male. His Lexile reading level was on grade level.

**Joe (student).** Joe was an African American male. His Lexile reading level was below grade level.

**Mark (student).** Mark was an African American male. His Lexile reading level was below grade level.

**Research Methods**

In this action research descriptive case study, data were collected from field notes of the teacher–researcher’s observations and reflections, student interviews and discussions, student annotations of primary source documents, and student-produced documents.

**Field notes.** One of the characteristics of education action research is that the teacher–researcher is involved with the study participants. However, subtle nuances emerge in a teacher’s mind after a day in a class. These nuances of thinking only emerge as the teacher–researcher reflects on the success or failure of a lesson into which he or she has invested time and energy. Further, these insights, although inappropriate to share with students or colleagues, are germane to producing excellent curricula and instruction design. Teacher–researcher field notes were used in this descriptive study to illustrate the false starts that occurred as primary source documents were introduced and scaffolds were developed and deployed. In addition, teacher–researcher field notes were used to provide a window into the thought processes of the teacher–researcher as the study progressed. Further, field notes were used to document student attitudes toward the task.
of reading primary source documents. Finally, field notes were used to illuminate some of the student struggles and successes as they engaged in rigorous extended thinking.

**Student interviews and discussions.** Data were extracted through field notes of individual interviews and conversations between the teacher-researcher and students and the teacher-researcher’s observations of student small-group discussions. A vivid picture emerged of students’ growth in historical thinking and ability to inquire about documents and topics, as well as some students’ desire to “do history” and others students desire to “not do history.”

**Student annotations of primary source documents.** Artifacts in the form of students’ notes written in the margins of primary source documents, were retained in this case study so that the teacher–researcher could examine and report on the annotations gathered after a particular close reading scaffold. Students’ ability to engage actively and begin an inquiry into a primary source document is critical to their ultimate understanding of the document and their ability to connect the document to the underlying historical context (Wineburg 2001). The student-produced notes on the documents provided a litmus test of missing elements in their understanding or the misconceptions they may have had about the document or era.

**Student-produced documents.** Throughout the study, students were given opportunities to produce various documents as they worked with primary source documents. As they worked with elements such as graphic organizers and brief writing assignments, students were prompted to show their thinking through writing. This form of data collection allowed more flexibility for students to make their thinking transparent. These student artifacts were completed after scaffolding was employed with the students.
It was then mined for examples of historical thinking, possible misconceptions, and gaps in historical thinking to instruct the next round of scaffolding and instruction.

**Collaboration to protect validity.** Throughout each stage of the study, James and Sonya provided the teacher-researcher with thoughts on student results and procedures. With each set of documents James and Sonya reviewed the work of the six case study students and offered their comments on reading comprehension and the students’ ability to contextualize. James and Sonya had complete access to all student work through Google Classroom (they were added as additional teachers for the class). James and Sonya did not know the conclusions of the teacher-researcher prior to seeing the evidence from students.

**Procedure**

This action research descriptive case study followed three stages of scaffolding as students moved through a series of primary documents. The initial stage of the study provided few scaffolds beyond teacher modeling and assistance as needed. The middle stage of the study featured more scaffolds than the initial stage; these included vague guided questions designed to direct the student toward historical thinking. The final stage of the study featured significant scaffolding for students, consisting of leveled texts, annotation tools, text-dependent comprehension questions, and text-dependent questions designed to elicit historical thinking.

**Treatment: Initial stage (limited scaffolding).** The initial stage of the case study included preparatory lessons conducted between September 4 and September 15, 2017. (Written informed consent was obtained for all students in the study during this time.) These lessons were designed to instruct students on the differences between primary and
secondary sources, source bias, and historical context. The lesson *Lunch Room Fight* by the Stanford History Education Group (2016) was used to illustrate each of these elements to students. Once these preliminaries were addressed, students were presented with primary source documents as described in the following paragraphs.

*The Virginia Charter and the Mayflower Compact.* The first two documents with limited scaffolding were presented between September 18 and September 29, 2017, using a specific routine. First, the teacher–researcher provided lecture and reading assignments that illustrated the historical context of England’s establishment of colonies in the new world. Next, students applied the Cornell note-taking method (Pauk 2000) to record key points and ideas from both lecture and readings. Third, students viewed digital excerpts of the *Virginia Charter* and the *Mayflower Compact* inside Google Classroom in a Google Doc. In both documents, emphasis was added by making key phrases and word bold. In the assignment, the teacher–researcher asked students to read the document and use the comment feature of Google Docs to make their thinking explicit (e.g., “comment on whatever enters your mind as you read the documents”; see Appendix A and Appendix B).

Next, the teacher–researcher modeled historical thinking by projecting the *Virginia Charter* and reading it to the class using think-aloud technique described by Wineburg (2001). Students were instructed to discuss with a peer the differences between their thinking and the teacher’s thinking. As this discussion occurred, the teacher–researcher informally observed and participated by checking in with all student peer groups to ensure they were on topic. Finally, students were asked open a new assignment on Google Classroom containing an exact copy of the earlier assignment.
Students were asked to work through the *Virginia Charter* and the *Mayflower Compact* a second time, adding comments of whatever came to mind as they were reading the documents. When the assignment was completed the teacher-researcher reviewed the results of students looking for comprehension and contextualization. The results were shared with James and Sonya for their thoughts.

*The Autobiography of Olaudah Equiano.* The next document presented to students was an excerpt from *The Autobiography of Olaudah Equiano* contained in the course textbook (Hicks, Kerwin, Greaves, & Stewart, 2013). This excerpt was paired in the text with an illustration of the interior cargo space of a slave ship called *Brookes.* This primary source document was presented to students between October 2 and October 6, 2017, using a specific routine. First, the teacher–researcher provided a brief lecture on the “middle passage,” including a demonstration of the dimensions allotted for each passenger. The dimensions allotted for male slaves (six feet by one foot four inches) and female slaves (five feet ten inches by one foot four inches) were recreated by placing a taped rectangle on the classroom wall.

Next, the teacher–researcher assigned students to read the excerpt from *The Autobiography of Olaudah Equiano* and answer the question, “How does the illustration of the *Brookes* slave ship match Equiano’s description of the middle passage?” (Hicks et al., 2013, p. 57). Students reviewed a diagram of the slave ship *Brookes* (Printed Ephemera Collection, Library of Congress, 1788) and were encouraged to try to “fit” into the rectangles on the wall. The teacher-researcher made field notes of student conversations during the class as students moved through the room and discussed the
reading and what it must have been like. Finally, students were asked to describe in their own words the middle passage in an exit slip.

**The Charleston Tea Party article and Oliver Hart’s Journals.** The next step in the initial stages of the case study included two primary source documents specifically linked to South Carolina. These documents were included in a larger document-based question lesson plan published by the South Carolina Department of Education and created by the teacher–researcher (Cox, 2017). These documents were presented to students between October 9 and October 13, 2017, using the following routine. First, the teacher–researcher introduced the historical context of the independence movement in South Carolina through a brief lecture on the series of events that occurred throughout Colonial North America between 1763 and 1775.

Next, the teacher–researcher gave each student a copy of the *Charleston Tea Party* article (South Carolina Gazette, 1774). A teacher’s version of the document (Appendix C) included the original document modified to show the teacher–researcher’s thoughts that emerged as he read the document; the thoughts were projected onto the screen (Cox, 2017). Students were also given written background information and a timeline to review (see Appendix D and Appendix E). The teacher–researcher read the entire document and script, modeling the way a historian interacts with a primary source document from history. Finally, students received the *Journals of Oliver Hart* (Hart, 1775/1975; see Appendix F). Students were expected to read the journal excerpts, and using all available information, respond to the writing prompt, “What were the different attitudes toward independence in South Carolina during Hart’s travels through the
backcountry?” The teacher-researcher collected student work and recorded observations, student comments, and interviews through field notes.

The *Oliver Hart Journals* ended the initial stage of the case study. Results were examined by the teacher-researcher and shared with James and Sonya. The teacher-researcher created new scaffolds based on the results of the initial stage. The initial stage of the study contained limited scaffolding. Scaffolding was increased during the middle stage.

**Middle stage (moderate scaffolding).** The middle stage of the case study featured increased scaffolding for students. Part of this scaffolding included a shift in the modeling of historical thinking with the primary source documents. The teacher–researcher’s interaction with each new document focused on the source of the document (Who wrote it? Why did they write it? What point-of-view did they represent? [looking for bias]). The teacher–researcher asked about the historical context of the document (What else is going on that might be affecting the motivation of author? If the document is an effect, what are the causes?); and reading “between the lines” (Who or what is missing from the document [minorities or disadvantaged groups]? What is implied by the author but not explicitly stated?; (Stanford History Education Group 2016; Wineburg, 2001). Think-alouds by the teacher–researcher were no longer done in whole group but were conducted as he interacted with smaller groups of students who were working on a document. This stage of the study focused on the *Declaration of Independence* and an excerpt of the *Articles of Confederation*.

**The Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation.** The middle stage of the descriptive case study featured two foundational documents. The
Declaration of Independence—or at least the idea (mythology) of it—is well known to most students. Meanwhile, the Articles of Confederation are practically unknown to students. These documents were presented to students between October 16 and November 10, 2017, using the following routine. First, the teacher–researcher reminded students of the historical context of the movement for independence among the colonies through a brief lecture. Students were reminded of the timeline provided earlier in the month and encouraged to use it as the approached their readings and primary sources (Appendix E). The teacher–researcher provided students with the support document 8-2.3 (South Carolina Department of Education, 2012). Students created their own notes from the support document using the Cornell note-taking method (Pauk 2001).

Next, students were assigned to homogeneous groups of two based on reading grade level (above grade-level reading and at or below grade-level reading). Lexile range scores derived from the fall 2017 MAP testing were used to determine reading grade level (NWEA, 2017). The teacher–researcher assigned students whose top range was 1110 and above to one group and those whose top range was below 1110 to a second group. This procedure was based on the grade conversion chart provided by Newsela (Davis, 2018).

Third, students received a copy of the Declaration of Independence based on their grouping. Students whose Lexile levels were at least 1110 received copies of the original text. Students whose Lexile levels were below 1110 received an adapted version leveled to a Lexile of 1030 by Newsela. Both groups received a source note with the version of the Declaration that provided some important background information (see the Declaration of Independence, including the source note in Appendix F).
Fourth, students received a Google Doc designed to guide them in sourcing and contextualizing the document (Wineburg, 2001), as well as to generate a deeper comprehension of the document (Pace, 2004a; see Appendix G). Next, students were asked to create a summary that explained what they had discovered from closely reading the document. Further, students were prompted to include their thoughts on the motives behind the *Declaration of Independence*. Finally, the teacher–researcher presented an excerpt of the first few lines of the *Articles of Confederation*. Only the first few lines of the document were studied using think-aloud technique (Wineburg, 2001). Students were asked to collaborate as they annotated the document based on the teacher–researcher’s comments (see Appendix H for script). During this stage of the study, the teacher-researcher collected student produced documents through Google Classroom and field notes of observations, student group discussions, and interviews with the students. These were shared and discussed with James and Sonya. The teacher-researcher used the results of the middle stage to create new scaffolds for the final stage of the study.

**Final stage (heavy scaffolding).** The final stage of this study focused on three documents: The *United States Constitution*, the *Bill of Rights*, and *George Washington’s Inaugural Address*. This stage featured heavy scaffolding consisting of Lexile-leveled documents and specific instructions and routines for close reading and annotation. (It is noteworthy that these close-reading routines had been practiced on secondary documents in the preceding weeks, including peer and teacher feedback. See Appendix I for the close reading and annotation procedures posted on the classroom wall.) In addition, the teacher–researcher asked guided question designed to elicit general comprehension and reveal some of the implied meanings hidden within the text. These documents were
presented to students during between January 10 and January 26, 2018, using the following routine.

First, the teacher–researcher gave students a brief introduction, process, and procedures lecture. This process included a reminder of the close reading and annotation routine and a brief introduction to the three primary source documents (only naming them and the order in which they should be addressed). In addition, the teacher–researcher directed students to the locations of materials. The United States Constitution was handed out to students; the Bill of Rights and George Washington’s Inaugural Address (and the guided questions that accompanied each) remained on the materials table in the front of the room for student groups to obtain when they were ready to move on. The teacher–researcher directed that all three documents had to be turned in with answers to the guided questions.

Next, the teacher–researcher provided students with a copy of the United States Constitution adapted to a 990 Lexile level by the Newsela Staff (2016a). The Bill of Rights (Newsela Staff, 2016c; Lexile level 980) and George Washington’s First Inaugural Address (Newsela Staff, 2016b; Lexile level 1080) were placed in the front of the classroom so students could move from one document to the next when they were ready. Students were asked to closely read and annotate the documents. Once they finished their close reading and annotation, they moved into self grouped pairs or threes following the established classroom discussion routine.

Students received written directions and guided questions indicating how they were to approach the document collaboratively (see Appendix I through Appendix L). The teacher observed the pairs as they processed the primary source documents, offering
assistance as needed. Students proceeded to the next documents as they were satisfied with their answers to the questions and investigation of the documents.

Finally, the teacher–researcher assigned students to find 10 historically significant events, ideas, or people who had an impact on Washington becoming the first president of the United States or were important during the lead-up to his election. Students received a three-column graphic organizer with stimulus questions to guide them toward contextualizing Washington becoming president (see Appendix M). This was provided to students as an aid but it was not required for students to complete the document.

**Data Analysis**

Data consisted of field notes of the teacher–researcher’s observations and reflections, student interviews and discussions, student annotations of primary source documents, and student-produced documents. The learning “bottlenecks” mentioned in discussions of primary source document theories proposed by Middendorf et al. (2007) and the theories of historical thinking proposed by Wineburg (2001) were used in a theory-directed content analysis to examine the data evidence of scaffolding’s impact on historical thinking (Yin, 2012, 2018). Field notes on observations, student discussions and student interviews; students’ annotations of documents; and students’ answers to writing prompts and guided questions were examined for evidence of primary source document comprehension and evidence of the students’ ability place the document within its historical context. During each stage of treatment these sources of data were reviewed by the teacher-researcher, with the review of evidence leading to changes in the types and amount of scaffolding for the next stage of the study. The first step of analysis for each stage included the teacher-researcher examining student annotations of a primary source
documents for comments by the students. The next step involved the teacher-researcher examining any documents created by the student or answers to guided questions. Finally, the teacher-researcher examined the field notes of teacher-researcher observations, student discussions, and student interviews. This evidence and process was shared with James and Sonya during each stage for their thoughts and discussion. These conversations focused on the question does the evidence show comprehension and contextualization.

The data were analyzed for evidence that the learning “bottlenecks” in the discipline of history (i.e., comprehension of primary source documents and contextualization of documents; Middendorf et al., 2007) were remedied or mitigated through scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976; Vygotsky, 1978). Further data analysis showed evidence of students’ ability to source historical primary source documents (i.e., ask questions about the documents’ origins, authors, audiences, and author biases and motives; Wineburg, 2001).

Considering the action research nature of this descriptive case study, it is important to note that data analysis occurred at each stage of this project. The data analysis of the evidence at each stage led to changes in the amount and types of scaffolds in subsequent stages. As students continued to struggle in the initial and middle stages of the case study the scaffolding was increased in an effort to help students overcome the barriers of reading comprehension and contextualization.

**Summary**

The action research descriptive case study developed multiple levels of scaffolding as students interacted with primary source documents from history. As
students attempted to glean understandings from the documents, the scaffolds were modified based on the struggles students exhibited with the documents. The study took on three distinct phases as documents and scaffolds changed. The final stage of the study contained the most scaffolding of any of the other stages as the teacher-researcher modified the assistance to students based on the documents they were interacting with and the previous struggles. The student work collected was examined by the teacher-researcher and two other teachers to find evidence of comprehension of the documents and evidence of students development of the ability to contextualize the primary source documents.
Chapter 4: Findings from the Data Analysis

This action research descriptive case study focused on middle-level students’ interactions with primary source documents from history. Based on their own qualitative research, Middendorf et al. (2007) theorized seven “bottlenecks” to learning in the discipline of history. Two of the “bottlenecks” to learning are directly relevant to this study. The first involves the inability of students to comprehend the meaning of the text. The second concerns the inability of students to place the primary source document into its correct historical context. When either condition is present, students are prevented from thinking like historians. This problem becomes overwhelming to teachers and students as they approach primary source documents.

For many of the students in the sample, this study was the first time they had been presented a primary source document. The teacher–researcher examined the social studies department lesson plans from the previous two years to anticipate and explain problems or phenomena that might emerge during the middle stage of the study. Each teacher was required to submit a lesson plan weekly that included standards covered and methods used. Further, all teachers embedded into their lesson plans the electronic files of all materials. The school maintained lesson plans electronically, archived in a cloud for ease of access. For the purposes of this study, with the approval of the building supervisor, the building curriculum specialists granted the teacher–researcher unlimited access to the plans for the 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 academic years.
The examination revealed that the case study group had not been exposed to primary source documents in the sixth grade (2015–2016) lesson plans. Further, during seventh grade (2016-2017), only one of the two seventh-grade teachers used primary source documents during any lessons. This teacher taught only two sections of seventh grade history during 2016–2017, of seven sections offered in the school. (The teacher’s first year in the classroom was 2016–2017.) Through interviews with the teacher, it was determined he/she had planned no instruction with the students regarding how to examine primary source documents nor were any routines established for close reading or annotation of documents.

Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 show the inaccessibility of some primary sources to students (and to some teachers). Figure 4.1 shows the original text of the primary source as Washington presented it on Thursday, April 30, 1789, in New York. Figure 4.2 shows an adapted version leveled to a 1080 Lexile reading level.

Washington’s original text is an example of a historically significant source from the 19th century that presents a barrier to students learning from primary source documents. Some could argue that by deploying adapted documents, students are not using the “primary source” in question. Although this is true from a literal standpoint, using the logic of reductio ad absurdum as our guide, critics would be forced to conclude that students are not using primary source documents if they study a primary source that has been translated from one language to another. (Many history doctoral programs require candidates to be proficient in reading a foreign language so they can access the true original primary sources of their focus areas. This is vital to the scholarship of history but irrelevant to the middle level.)
Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives:

Among the vicissitudes incident to life no event could have filled me with greater anxieties than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the 14th day of the present month. On the one hand I was summoned by my country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love, from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and, in my flattering hopes, with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years—a retreat which was rendered every day more necessary as well as more dear to me by the addition of habit to inclination, and of frequent interruptions in my health to the gradual waste committed on it by time. On the other hand, the magnitude and difficulty of the trust to which the voice of my country called me, being sufficient to awaken in the wisest and most experienced of her citizens a distrustful scrutiny into his qualifications, could not but overwhelm with despondence one who (inheriting interior endowments from nature and unpracticed in the duties of civil administration) ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own deficiencies. In this conflict of emotions all I dare aver is that it has been my faithful study to collect my duty from just appreciation of every circumstance by which it might be affected. All I dare hope is that if, in execution this task, I have been too much swayed by a grateful remembrance of former instances, or by an affectionate sensibility to this transcendent proof of the confidence of my fellow-citizens, and have thence too little consulted my in capacity as well as disinclination for the weighty and untried cares before me, my error will be palliated by the motives which mislead me, and it consequences be judged by my country with some share of the partiality in which they originated.

Figure 4.1. Original transcribed text of George Washington’s First Inaugural Address, 1789.

Fellow Citizens of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Of the difficulties which arise in life, no event could have filled me with greater anxieties than receiving the notification that you sent me on the fourteenth day of the present month. On one hand, I was summoned by my Country, whose voice is can only hear with awe an love. I was asked to leave a home which I had chosen so happily. I had firmly decided that the place would be a refuge for me in my older years. This retreat has become more dear to me every day, as well as increasingly necessary. I have had frequent problems with my health as time has gradually done its damage. On the other hand, the seriousness of the task to which the voice of my Country has called me, overwhelmed me with sadness. This kind of request would be enough to awaken in the wisest and most experienced of her citizens, a distrustful look at his own qualifications. I have inherited inferior qualities form nature, and I am unpracticed in the duties of civil administration. I am quite aware of my own shortcomings. Having these conflicting feelings, all I dare say is, I have thought carefully to decide what my duty is. I have tried to consider every situation which it might affect. All I dare hope, is, that making this decision, I have not been too influenced by happy memories of former times, or by an affectionate appreciation of the confidence my fellow-citizens have in me. I hope I have considered well enough whether I am up to the challenge of the weighty and untried problems placed before me. I hope I have considered my desire my desire to avoid such problems. If I have not considered any of this properly, any mistake should be excused by my good intentions. The results of my decisions will be judged by my Country. Hopefully my Country shares some of the same affection that helped me make my decision.

Figure 4.2. Adapted 1080 Lexile version of George Washington’s First Inaugural Address.

Note. Adapted from Famous speeches: George Washington’s first inaugural address, by Newsela Staff, 2016b, New York, NY: Author.
The critical point is that the ever-present ideas, concepts, and conflicts in historical primary source documents are what are pedagogically important, not a middle-level student’s ability to process archaic language and sentence structures. However, any adaptation for reading level must be completed with deliberate care not to destroy or modify the original intended meaning or context of the document. Searching for the meaning and historical context of primary sources represents the daily cognitive routine of historical thinking and constitutes a transferable critical thinking skill students can apply in the real world.

Wineburg (2001) argued that professional historians have a unique approach to primary source documents. He observed that historians frame their interactions with primary source documents by first considering what they do not know. Wineburg (2001) claimed that the historian’s craft involves an ability to inquire or interrogate a primary source document. Further, like Middendorf et al. (2007), Wineburg (2001) confirmed that placing a primary source document in its historical context is paramount to truly understanding an event, idea, or historical era.

This action research descriptive case study focused on the impact of scaffolding on a group of middle-level students as they interacted with primary source documents from history. The scaffolds were designed to break down the “bottlenecks” to learning from historical primary source documents and stimulate historical thinking. The case study proceeded through three distinct stages: initial, middle, and final. During each stage, students were assigned primary source documents and provided accompanying scaffolds. As the study progressed through the stages, scaffolds changed based on results from the previous stage.
Research Question

The primary research question of this study was “What combination of scaffolds allow 8th grade social studies students to successfully interact with primary source historical documents?”

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this action research case study was to examine and describe the impact of scaffolding tools and techniques on eighth-grade social studies students’ abilities to access and interact with primary historical source documents successfully, thereby allowing them to think historically. The students’ ability to handle primary source documents skillfully as historians is paramount to their ability to achieve a measure of historical thinking. The pedagogical technique of scaffolding was employed as a treatment to solve the problem of practice. The teacher–researcher examined the effectiveness of multiple scaffolds with primary source documents among the study population. Applying scaffolding tools and techniques in the areas of reading primary source documents gave students an opportunity to understand primary sources and establish the historical context in which the sources occurred. This action research case study used descriptive qualitative data, including student documents and artifacts, student interviews, student discussion, and teacher–researcher field notes to describe the operation of scaffolding as students interacted with various primary source documents from history.

Findings of the Study

The findings for this action research descriptive case study are presented chronologically as they occurred throughout the stages of the study. Within each stage,
findings are arranged and reported based on the primary source documents and the scaffolding employed with those documents. Further, the comprehension of the text, historical contextualization of the text, and sourcing of the document are highlighted as evidence that the students successfully interacted with the primary source documents, thereby displaying some of the skills associated with historical thinking. Table 4.1 that follows provides an easy reference for the types of scaffolds used throughout the three stages.

**Findings for initial stage.** The first stage of the case study provided students with multiple primary source documents and various minimal scaffolds. The initial exposure to primary source documents occurred through the *Virginia Charter* (Figure 4.3) and the *Mayflower Compact* (Figure 4.4). Both of these primary source documents were delivered as excerpts but remained in their original text.

The teacher-researcher applied three scaffolds. First, the teacher-researcher used excerpts rather than the full documents. In addition, emphasis was added to the excerpts to draw attention to key points in the texts. The second scaffold consisted of explicit teacher–researcher modeling of historical thinking with the *Virginia Charter*. Finally, the scaffold of collaborative student discussion about the document was used. Prior to receiving the documents, over the course of two days, students learned background information on the English settlement and colonization in North America. Students received the background information through teacher–researcher presentation, student readings, and a video-recorded lecture by the teacher–researcher (allowing them to revisit it if needed).
Table 4.1

**Scaffolding Employed Throughout the Three Stages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Primary source documents:</th>
<th>Scaffolds:</th>
<th>Rationale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td><em>Virginia Charter, Mayflower Compact, Autobiography of Equiano, The Charleston Tea Party, and Oliver Hart Journals</em></td>
<td>excerpted documents with emphasis added, background information on documents, and teacher modeling of historical thinking</td>
<td>these scaffolds were the starting point for the study based on the available scholarship (Mandel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td><em>Declaration of Independence and The Articles of Confederation</em></td>
<td>leveled text for those reading below grade level, sourcing and contextualization graphic organizer, homogeneous collaborative grouping, teacher modeling of historical thinking</td>
<td>these scaffolds were employed based on the observations during the initial stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td><em>The Constitution of the United States, The Bill of Rights, and George Washington’s First Inaugural Address</em></td>
<td>meaning making preparatory scaffold, close reading and annotation routine, text-dependent guided questions, homogeneous collaborative groups, leveled primary sources for all students,</td>
<td>these scaffolds emerged as the best combinations based on the experienced gained in the first two stages of the study. Prior to starting the final stage, students were explicitly instructed in a close reading and annotation routine. A meaning making performance task that focused on the United States Constitution was assigned to prepare students for their reading of the sources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Also we do, for Us, our Heirs, and Successors, DECLARE, by these Presents, that all and every the Persons being our Subjects, which shall dwell and inhabit within every or any of the said several Colonies and Plantations, and every of their children, which shall happen to be born within any of the Limits and Precincts of the said several Colonies and Plantations, shall HAVE and enjoy all Liberties, Franchises, and Immunities, within any of our other Dominions, to all Intents and Purposes, as if they had been abiding and born, within this our Realm of England, or any other of our said Dominions.

Figure 4.3. The text of the Virginia Charter, April 10, 1606.

Note. Emphasis added with bold text to direct students to key words and phrases. Adapted from King James I. (1606, April 10). The first charter of Virginia; April 10, 1606. Retrieved from the Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/va01.asp

Students received digital copies of the excerpts through Google Classroom and commented using the Comment tool in Google Docs to record what they were thinking as they read each document. Students were told the purpose of the assignment was to record what they were thinking while reading the documents. The teacher–researcher told students no answers were right or wrong. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 show the responses of the case study group to provide a window into student thinking.

Findings for the Virginia Charter and the Mayflower Compact. The student comments in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 show the challenge facing novices of historical thinking. The comments also show the importance of reading comprehension in breaking down the first bottleneck to learning—understanding the meaning of the text (Middendorf et al., 2007; Middendorf & Pace, 2004).
### Table 4.2

**Student Comments on the Virginia Charter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Student comments on the <em>Virginia Charter</em> (transcribed verbatim from student work)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>• What is a heirs? &lt;br&gt; • What is a Dominions? &lt;br&gt; • What is abiding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>• What is abiding? &lt;br&gt; • The words that are capitalize[d] in the middle of a sentence must be important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>• Everyone is included, since it says all and every persons. &lt;br&gt; • Everyone had their rights when they were born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>• I think of the state of Virginia. &lt;br&gt; • The part about everybody having all liberties reminds me of the law for the U.S. that says everyone has the same rights. &lt;br&gt; • What are the several colonies and plantations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexa</td>
<td>• What is a charter? &lt;br&gt; • I’ve never understood why there is a ‘s’ at the end of the word persons. Why not just say people. &lt;br&gt; • I love the part about ‘any children born within any limits and precincts shall have and enjoy all liberties’ because it explains that no matter what race you are, if you were born within the limits, you are considered a citizen and get equal rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>• They considered everyone living in the colonies as English. &lt;br&gt; • The children are born with rights and are still a part of England.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 29 comments made by the case study students for both documents, 11 involved vocabulary or other simple comprehension issues. (These numbers were determined by the teacher-researcher, James and Sonya reviewing the student work and identifying comments as related to vocabulary. Only those all three agreed on were
counted in the 11 mentioned.) In reference to the *Mayflower Compact*, Jill simply stated, “I don’t understand any of this paragraph.”

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, e&.

Having undertaken for the **Glory of God**, and **Advancement of the Christian Faith**, and the Honour of our King and Country, a **voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia**; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, **covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick**, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof to **enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices**, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which **we promise all due submission and obedience**.

In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at **Cape Cod** the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth.

Anno Domini, **1620**.

*Figure 4.4. Text of the *Mayflower Compact*.*

### Table 4.3

*Student Comments on the Mayflower Compact*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Student comments on the <em>Mayflower Compact</em> (transcribed verbatim from student work)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Joe     | • What is cape cod?  
          • Sovereign, what does it mean?                                                  |
| Mark    | • Why would somebody name be underwritten?  
          • Why did they put whereof and hereunto together?                                |
| Sam     | • *Advancement of the Christian Faith*—They were spreading Christianity.            |
| Jill    | • I think of the ship “Mayflower.”  
          • *Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith*—What does that supposed to mean?  
          • I don’t understand any of this paragraph.                                      |
| Alexa   | • What does “a civil Body Politick” mean?  
          • *as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony*—I like this part because it says that it’s for the good of the colony, not just benefiting one person. |
| Jade    | • Still loyal to King James … also loyal to god.  
          • Sovereign—a supreme ruler, especially a monarch.  
          • Were they all Protestant or was there Catholics too?  
          • It is interesting how they consider serving their king and country so important, only to put up such a large fight later on to declare freedom. |

*Note.* Italic font denotes the primary source document section on which the student commented.

A glance at either table shows that the reading ability of a student seems to be an early indicator of their potential success or struggle with primary source documents. For
Joe and Mark, who both read at grade level or below grade level, it was evident that a major concern was trying to understand the words they were reading.

Some successes appeared in students’ comments. Table 4.2 shows Jade’s keen observation that everyone living in the colonies, including their children born in the colonies, was considered English. This was a brilliant observation and shows that the student was placing the document in its historical context. Jade correctly extended her thinking to conclude that in 1606, the Magna Carta guaranteed Englishmen certain historical rights. This is a good example of thinking about a primary source document in its historical context, considering the ideas, events, and other forces that affect its full meaning (Wineburg, 2001). Jade also asked, “Were they all Protestants, or were there Catholics too?” Jade’s question shows that she was considering the Reformation and its aftermath.

Alexa’s comment shows the importance of being able to place a document in its proper context. In commenting on the Virginia Charter, she remarked in part “that no matter what race you are, if you were born within the limits, you are considered a citizen and get equal rights.” In fact, the document’s writer did state that all liberties would be awarded to any children born in the colonies. However, in 1606, equality among the races was not something people considered. It was not until 1865 that slavery would be abolished, and another 99 years would pass before there was a measure of equality with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Blackmon 2008). Sam and Jill’s comments on the Virginia Charter reveal a novice mistake in applying historical context. However, Alexa’s mistake clearly shows the importance and impact of historical context on the meanings of the words in primary source documents (Middendorf et al., 2007; Wineburg, 2001).
In addition, Alexa’s misconception shows the pedagogical imperative of providing students with appropriate carefully designed scaffolds. A challenging scaffold could include the question “What people or groups of people were not included in decision making and politics in 1606?” to stimulate students’ contextual thinking. That simple question could remind students to place the values of 1606 on the document, rather than the values of the present; thus, such a reminder could become a powerful contextualization scaffold for primary source documents.

Sourcing—asking questions about the source of a document, the author’s motive and biases, and the audience for the primary source document—can also dramatically affect perceptions of the meaning behind the document (Wineburg, 2001). Sam was on the verge of sourcing when he questioned the motives of the signers of the *Mayflower Compact*. Sam explained that he inferred from the document that the authors “were spreading Christianity.” This was a safe and productive inference; however, students should question more deeply the author, the audience, and the motive as they consider the historical context of the document.

Interviews with the case study students yielded interesting insights into their attitudes and approaches to studying these documents. When asked by the teacher–researcher, “What did you think about the process? What went through your mind as I asked you to read the *Virginia Charter* and the *Mayflower Compact*?” Jade said, “Well, I kind of thought to myself, this is different. So we are going to read the real text and do something with it.” Sam explained that his immediate thought was “This is not what we did last year.” Finally, in a refreshing moment of frankness between student and teacher,
Joe answered, “I was thinking, this is going to be hard and I don’t want to read this stuff. He needs to just tell me what it says.”

Teacher–researcher observations indicated a correlation between reading level, classroom engagement (as measured by students involvement with the task at hand including their on task discussion with peers and completion of the assignments), and performance. Through reflection on the observational field notes of this first encounter with primary source documents, it is clear the students who were below grade level in reading were least engaged with and least willing to attempt engagement with the documents. A continuum of attitudes was evident from the students: Some refused to do anything with the document. Some tried to access the document but became frustrated and seemed to give up. Some enjoyed interrogating a primary source from history.

The second primary source document, *The Autobiography of Olaudah Equiano*, included three parts for students. Figure 4.5 shows the primary source provided through the student textbook, *The South Carolina Journey*.

A brief biographical sketch of Equiano appeared with the primary source excerpt. Accompanying this primary source document, the teacher–researcher projected an image of the slave ship *Brookes* onto the front screen (Figure 4.6). Further, the teacher–researcher placed tape on the walls to form rectangles whose inside dimensions matched those in the *Brookes* slave ship layout. After students completed reading the primary source excerpt, they moved about the classroom to compare their physical sizes to the dimensions taped onto the walls. As students were moving around, the teacher–researcher told them to think about how they would describe the middle passage in their own words. During this time, a video camera operated in the corner of the room to
capture the movement and some of the peer discussions. In addition, the teacher–researcher took field notes of attitudes and overheard comments and conversations between students.

The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon become unfit for resperations [sic], from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died [...] … This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable.

*Figure 4.5. Excerpt from* The autobiography of Olaudah Equiano. *Note. Adapted from “The autobiography of Olaudah Equiano,” by O. Equiano, 1789/2013, p. 57.*

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Figure 4.6. The layout of the slave ship *Brookes*.

Several scaffolds were employed in this primary source document examination: (a) the passage was an excerpt, (b) the projected image provided a visual of the cramped physical space of a slave ship during the middle passage, and (c) the tangible element of tape on the walls helped students experience the space limitations. Field observation notes indicate that all students engaged with the image of the ship and the taped dimensions on the wall. They examined the projected image closely and tried to fit their bodies and their classmates’ bodies into the rectangles. Teacher–researcher field notes of observations showed that student conversations were focused on the conditions of the middle passage. In multiple peer conversations, students discussed and commented on the “necessary tubs” mentioned by Equiano (a typical middle school response). Joe in conversation with a peer exclaimed, “Man, them people must have been really small to fit in that ship like that.” (Joe was approximately six feet tall and weighed 190 pounds). Alexa said, “I can’t believe people forced other people to travel like that.” The conversations between the students remained on the topic of describing the middle passage for the entirety of the case study class period. In fact, the bell rang for the end of the class period, catching the students and teacher–researcher off guard.

**Findings for the autobiography Olaudah Equiano.** This primary source document and the scaffolds employed provided additional insight into the importance of comprehension with primary source documents. Although the words used in the document were unfamiliar and difficult for middle school students, even for those reading above grade level, the accompanying images and tangible manipulative made the meaning of the text accessible to even the lowest-performing readers. Comprehension, as determined by the students’ ability to describe the conditions on a ship during the middle
passage accurately, was successfully achieved through the combined scaffolds. Peer
discussion helped students at the lower reading levels access the ideas. At first, these
students were reluctant participants after reading, but when they started moving around
the room to examine the ship image and when the higher reading-level students began to
discuss the reading, the lower-level readers immediately picked up the meaning of the
passage that had eluded them. The higher-level readers took in the complex unfamiliar
words used by Equiano, decoded them for comprehension, and then restated the meaning
into middle school vernacular as they began their informal discussions. The restatement
by peers into middle school vernacular appeared to be the catalyst by which the lower-
level readers accessed the meaning and became engaged in the primary source
experience.

Although it is impossible to consider every conversation between peers that
occurred throughout the room, teacher–researcher field notes revealed that none of the
students attempted to place the document into its historical context. No students were
observed discussing the biographical sketch of Equiano or any other historical events that
involved the middle passage or the trans-Atlantic slave trade. (Admittedly, the
assignment did not explicitly require students to consider more than the physical horrors
of the middle passage.) During a conversation among the teacher–researcher, Mark, Joe,
and Jill, the students agreed with Mark’s contention that Equiano should not have been
sent to America; however, the biographical sketch students read before reading the
primary source excerpt clearly stated that Equiano ended up in Barbados while others
“were shipped to the American colonies” (Hicks et al., 2013, p. 57). Students displayed
multiple misconceptions about the historical context. Although this is a small oversight,
it warns of students’ tendency to ignore details, even though ignoring the details of the historical context can radically alter the meaning of a text.

The teacher–researcher’s questions about the source to the whole group served as both a scaffold and a model. The teacher–researcher used the opportunity to discuss source credibility and the importance of obtaining historical evidence from credible sources. Alexa pointed out to the larger group, “Equiano is very credible to talk about a slave ship since he spent time on it. He is more credible than the man that wrote our textbook because he was there.” Jade seconded this line of thinking, saying, “The only way we can really know is to read from an eyewitness.”

This exchange showed that even though the students were not considering the historical context, they were considering the credibility of an eyewitness as being similar to a primary source document. This exchange and the students’ experience with this document introduced them to the idea of seeing from another’s perspective, another important historical thinking skill that students must develop (Mandell, 2008).

The newspaper article Charleston Tea Party and the excerpted journals of Oliver Hart made up the final primary sources of the initial stage. These documents were presented as a pair with a timeline and a reading on the historical background (see Appendix C through and Appendix E) to provide preparatory details on context. Students received a copy of the Charleston Tea Party article from the teacher–researcher (without teacher script notes). The Charleston Tea Party article (teacher version with script) was projected onto the screen in the front of the classroom. The teacher–researcher went through the document line by line, stopping at each section to allow students to discuss with their partners how the teacher–researcher was interrogating the document. Once the
review of the *Charleston Tea Party* was completed, students were asked to read an excerpt of the *Journals Oliver of Hart* (Appendix C). Students were asked, “Based on the *Charleston Tea Party* and the *Oliver Hart Journals*, were the views of all South Carolinians in favor of independence in 1775? What evidence supports your claim?” Students were instructed to work with their partners to read, collaborate, and answer the question in writing.

**Findings for Charleston Tea Party and Oliver Hart Journals.** Teacher–researcher field notes on this stage of the case study showed that comprehension of the original text of the *Charleston Tea Party* article and the *Oliver Hart Journals* were challenging for students of all reading levels. Even though the *Charleston Tea Party* article had been discussed piece-by-piece and thinking had been modeled for each section, and even though the *Oliver Hart Journals* consisted of only two days’ worth of journal entries, students sat silently for the first few minutes, not knowing where to begin.

These documents were well beyond the students’ zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), no matter how much the teacher–researcher assisted and encouraged them. The class quickly became a group severely challenged beyond their capacity; engagement and tolerance for trying something difficult waned as the teacher–researcher’s encouragement to “give it a try” increased. Field notes showed “a sense of despair and despondency” among the students. Ultimately, the teacher–researcher abandoned additional attempts to examine the documents.

After abandoning discussion of the documents, the teacher–researcher asked students what they thought or felt when they began to review and read the documents. According to teacher–researcher notes of the conversations, Joe said “he could not wait to
get out of class.” Alexa said she “did not understand why it was so hard.” Mark and Jill both agreed they “did not even know where to start.” Jade said she was “willing to try at first but it was just too much.” Sam agreed with Jade that it was “too much.”

Interestingly, this failed attempt to introduce what the teacher–researcher believed to be an interesting document into the class became the catalyst to refine the scaffolding process and become more attentive to keeping students in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This led to the middle stage of the study, involving the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation.

**Findings for the middle stage.** The middle stage of the case study featured two documents of significant importance to American history, the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation. Students did not receive any detailed intentional preparatory background for this stage or these documents. The teacher-researcher relied on students’ prior knowledge from previous courses of study to set the stage for studying the primary sources in the middle stage, rather than intentionally providing background knowledge or a learning experience where the students created their own background knowledge prior to interacting with the selected primary sources. The background information and timeline provided for the previous documents (the Charleston Tea Party article and Oliver Hart Journals) were directly relevant and useful for background on the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation documents, but there was not intentionally designed learning experience focused on background knowledge.

**Findings for The Declaration of Independence.** Students reading at or above grade level received an original copy of the Declaration of Independence, which included
a source note at the top of the document. The source note provided details about the writing and approval by members of the Second Continental Congress (Appendix F). Students reading below grade level received an adapted version of the document that registered as a Lexile of 1030 or seventh grade level (Newsela Staff, 2016d). Regardless of the version of the Declaration of Independence, all students received a sourcing and contextualization scaffold (Appendix G) for the document. Students completed the scaffold as they read and interrogated the document within homogeneous collaborative reading groups.

Students were instructed to read the document together in their homogeneous reading groups, making annotations as needed directly on the document. The teacher–researcher reminded students they were reading the document to ask questions of the document, not to “find right answers.” The teacher–researcher field notes showed that as students read the document, many of the students with the original text struggled with the vocabulary and structure of the document. For example, Alexa and Jade (both above grade reading level), paired together, asked for and received permission from the teacher–researcher to use a Chrome Book and the Internet to assist them with vocabulary. After the first group began using a Chrome Book to aid in vocabulary, the other group did likewise. Both groups of readers seemed to be challenged by their reading but not exhaustingly so. When the student groups completed their reading of the document, there was a sense of accomplishment in the room, even though there had been struggles with both the original text and the adapted text.

It is notable that the students did not have a routine established for close reading and annotation. Although the teacher–researcher encouraged students to mark up the
document in any way they chose, only four students of the 25 in the case study class made any marks on the paper. An examination of the student copies of the *Declaration of Independence* revealed that even though students struggled with the vocabulary to the extent they were forced to search the Internet for definitions, they did not record the definitions or any other reminders of the meaning of the words on their documents. The teacher–researcher further observed that students looked up the definitions repeatedly as they reread the document since they did not record them initially.

When the student groups had completed the first reading of the document, students began discussing what they already thought it meant before they read the document (discussing the myth of the document (Maier 1997)). For example, Sam (a grade-level reader who received the adapted version) expressed his surprise that “it was more like a list of things King George did bad to us.” Sam continued in conversation with another student, stating that he never really knew “what the big deal was” with the *Declaration of Independence*. The students’ casual conversations immediately after the first reading centered on the fact that they had accomplished the task of reading the document and that it was not “too hard,” as described by Alexa. The students were proud of themselves because they knew the document was important to the United States. (All the students grew up in a small community that could be described as patriotic.)

Generally, field observations of students’ conversation with each other and of their engagement level (their willingness to dig into the document to examine the context and sourcing) provided anecdotal evidence that the students comprehended the text. However, familiarity with the document itself certainly contributed to the comfort level displayed by students.
For the Declaration of Independence, the teacher–researcher decided to use sourcing as a catalyst for students to become engaged in the motives and hidden meanings of the document. This procedure produced an active case-study group as students looked for controversy. The sourcing portion of the sourcing and contextualization scaffold (Appendix G) required students to answer a series of questions designed to force them into deeper thinking about the document and its authors.

Evidence of this deeper thinking was well illustrated by Jade’s experience. While answering the sourcing questions of the scaffold, Jade became fixated on the source note at the top of the page (see Appendix F). The source note indicated that Jefferson wrote the document but the writing committee changed his original version twice prior to approval by the Second Continental Congress. Jade, working with another student (not a part of the six case study students) asked the teacher–researcher, “Why did they change it from what Jefferson wrote?” The teacher–researcher asked Jade, “Why would anyone revise something they wrote?” Jade replied, “Because they wanted something to be different, but that doesn’t give me the answer. I want to know what was changed and why it was changed.” The teacher–researcher encouraged Jade and her partner to dig deeper for an answer to the question through an Internet search for a copy of Jefferson’s unedited version. By the next class, Jade had discovered that delegates from Georgia and South Carolina forced the removal of Jefferson’s negative comments about the King of England being a key supporter the trans-Atlantic slave trade (for more details on the edits made to the early version of the Declaration of Independence, see Maier, 1997). Jade was astonished by what she had found and was telling anyone she could in the class and in the hallways about her discovery. (In fact, a science teacher at the research site
approached the teacher–researcher during lunch the same day to ask if what Jade claimed really was true.) Jade and her partner combined with Alexa and her partner to create what they called a “super group” as they continued to search for answers to the sourcing questions and create more questions on their own. Collaboratively, they began to dig more deeply into the document’s history and Jefferson’s life and beliefs.

As they interrogated the document, the author, and the context of the document, they stumbled upon a story about Jefferson fathering children with Sally Hemmings, one of his slaves. The super group discussed this discovery for a few minutes. Alexa posed a new question to the super group (which had now grown to include three other students) and to the teacher–researcher:

I wonder if the reason Jefferson seemed to be, like, not mean to slaves and maybe want to help them was because he had a relationship with Sally, maybe she was the reason he included that stuff about the slave trade in his original copy of the Declaration?

Although there is no way for a middle school class in 2018 to determine Jefferson’s matters and motives of the heart, this moment in this case study provided evidence of students critically thinking about a primary source document and its source. In a later interview, when asked what she learned most from studying the Declaration of Independence, Jade readily said, “I learned that stuff is not always the way you think it is. Sometimes you have to go deeper than just the surface of what people want you to know.”

The question that all students struggled with from the sourcing portion of the scaffold was, “Are there any groups of people left out (ignored) or targeted (for good or
bad) by this document?” Students struggled with the idea that even though Jefferson wrote, “All men are created equal,” they were being asked which groups were left out. Students were reminded more than once by the teacher–researcher that the date of the document was 1776, that the 13th Amendment did not occur until 1865, women did not win the right to vote until 1919, and the Civil Rights Act did not happen until 1964. It was a great struggle for students to look at events through the value lens of another era.

Students had little problem coming up with 10 events, ideas, or people directly preceding and historically significant to the creation of the Declaration of Independence. In fact, Mark said, “The list of things that caused the Declaration are listed in the Declaration, you just have to look.” Contextualization is more than simply lining up dates on a chart in sequential order (Wineburg 2001). Contextualization involves thinking about cause and effect, considering the cultural values of the era, and determining what is significant and what is not (Wineburg 2001). The evidence provided in student notes on the document, teacher–researcher field observations, and interviews showed that students continued to struggle during this process. One important self-reflection by the teacher–researcher during this stage was that although a sequence of events with descriptions was helpful to gain an understanding of the context of a document, creating the sequence or placing the document in the sequence was not the historical thinking skill of contextualization. Contextualization is deeper, extending from events to the motives, beliefs, and values of the document’s period that affected the author, the creation of the document, and the perception or reception of the document by its intended audience (Wineburg 2001; Stanford History Education Group 2016).
Finally, students were asked to use Google Docs to create a summary explaining what they had discovered through closely reading and examining the document. Students were prompted to include their thoughts on the motives behind the Declaration of Independence. Alexa concluded, “There were many causes for the Declaration of Independence, but they all centered around the guaranteed rights of individuals. Then, Jefferson wrote what he believed needed to be changed in order to give colonists guaranteed rights.”

Alexa pointed out the connection to an idea originating in the Enlightenment—the guaranteed rights of individuals, which was certainly an important contextual connection. Alexa had made a connection to her seventh-grade experience in history class, although she did not realize it until the teacher–researcher pointed it out with a follow-up question. The teacher–researcher asked Alexa what she remembered about the Enlightenment from the previous year. She enthusiastically responded, “I really like studying the Enlightenment. . . . It seemed like that is when people started to get free and have more rights.” She happened to have been a student in one of the two classes that had received some exposure to primary source documents. One of the lessons during her 2016–2017 classes involved John Locke’s ideas on natural rights. In the lesson on Locke, she read a short excerpt from his Second Treatise on Government, focused on his formulation of the Lockean trinity: “life, liberty, and estate” (Locke, 1688/1995, p. 399).

There is no evidence that the scaffolded graphic organizer (Appendix G) aided in the historical thinking skill of contextualization, judging by students’ final product. However, it was evident from the field observations and the conversations among students and the teacher–researcher that a classroom focused on inquiry and intentional
interrogation of the primary source documents from history offered the promise of the deep thinking desired by educators (AHA 1998; National Center for History in the Schools n.d.; South Carolina Department of Education 2011).

*Findings for the Articles of Confederation.* The *Articles of Confederation* were introduced to the students as a means of once again modeling historical thinking to students with a document that helped set up a government structure. This modeling occurred in preparation for the final-stage documents, which included the *United States Constitution.* The teacher–researcher projected the document on the screen in the front of the room and read the document as indicated in the script in Appendix H. Students annotated their own copies of the document and placed them in their interactive student notebooks for use later in the semester. The teacher–researcher reviewed the student annotations. Of the 64 annotations reviewed, 19 showed annotations or notes that closely resembled the script from the teacher modeling, 24 had some annotations or notes that vaguely resembled the modeling that occurred, and 21 had no notes or the notes were in no way connected to the teacher modeling. The majority of the students seemed disengaged in the modeling process of historical thinking.

Students’ successes and struggles in the middle stage provided ample evidence that students needed significantly more scaffolding than they had received thus far. Although comprehension of the *Declaration of Independence* was successful, based on the evidence available, the students’ familiarity with the text that Maier (1997) labeled “American scripture” (p. ix-xxi) tempered any apparent success and dictated that scaffolds for the final stages focus first on comprehension of the document and then on the deeper hidden meanings.
Findings for the final stage. The final stage of the descriptive case study featured a preparatory scaffold for students implemented before they attempted to engage with the primary source documents. The preparatory scaffold consisted of an inquiry-driven mini-project (directions and rubric can been seen in Appendix N) that required students to use their textbooks, Internet resources, and any other resources to create a graphical illustration of the U.S. government (e.g., branches, checks, and balances) as created by the *U.S. Constitution*. Students created their illustrations outside of class; however, the teacher–researcher was available during each class to discuss the project and provide guidance on how to proceed if the students needed assistance. After students completed their illustrations, the teacher–researcher graded their work based on the rubric in Appendix N) and requested that students revise their submissions based on feedback and then resubmit. Several students, including Jade and Alexa, took advantage of having the teacher–researcher examine their drafts prior to the due date. Only one student revised and resubmitted. Even though students were given three weeks to complete the project, and it was a major assessment for the quarter, eight of 25 students did not turn in anything.

Students were presented with scaffolded primary source documents leveled to grade level and below grade level. During the previous two weeks, the teacher–researcher introduced students to a close reading routine and a set of annotation tools. The steps in the routine required that students approach each document with a pencil in hand. Students read to find surprises, pose questions, and make connections in the document. Students annotated surprises with an exclamation mark near the surprise and explanatory notes in the margin to document what surprised them. Students placed
question marks in the margin to indicate items they had questions about or things that confused them. Students found ways to connect what they were reading to previous knowledge or to their current lives and recorded these connections in the margin. After the students completed their first close reading and annotation of the document, they systematically discussed with a peer their surprises, questions, and connections. After this task was completed, students took time to think and write what changed, challenged, or confirmed their thinking when they read the document. After writing, the students once again collaboratively discussed what changed, challenged, and confirmed their thinking. This routine was created using the guidance and established research from Beers and Probst (2015) and Fisher and Frey (2015). The classroom had four anchor charts posted on the four walls, reminding them of the routine (see Appendix I).

Prior to introducing the primary source documents for the final stage, students received small group and individual practice with the close reading routine and annotation tools on seven leveled articles that provided background information on the documents and the era in which they were authored. Finally, a set of guided questions designed to guide comprehension, promote deeper understanding, and help students place the primary source document in its historical context were provided for each document. The documents for this stage were adapted versions of the United States Constitution (Newela Staff, 2016a), the Bill of Rights (Newsela Staff, 2016c), and George Washington’s First Inaugural Address (Newsela Staff, 2016b).

**Findings for the United States Constitution.** Close reading and annotation is a skill or strategy that must be taught (Beers & Probst 2015; Fisher & Frey 2015). A close reading routine that includes clear student directions, built-in opportunities for purposeful
peer discussion, and intentional rereading of complex texts can become a powerful self-regulating reading comprehension scaffold if it becomes an established classroom expectation and practice (Beers & Probst 2015; Fisher & Frey 2015). In fact, even a simple anchor chart of the routine can become a powerful self-regulating reading comprehension scaffold (see Appendix I). In anticipation of the final stage, and based on the lessons of the previous two stages, the teacher–researcher adopted the close reading and annotation routine described earlier and combined it with the scaffold of leveled primary source documents and the scaffold of guided questions for students as they engaged with the Constitution text.

Close reading and annotation of the leveled text and guided questions’ impact on comprehension. Students followed the routine established of surprises, questions, and connections followed by peer discussion of their close reading and annotation. The tables that follow provide windows into students’ thinking as they closely read and annotated the text and answered guided questions. (All comments were taken directly from student work; if necessary, teacher–researcher notes were added for clarity and explanation.) Tables are arranged by student name. First, descriptive analytics and student-produced content appear in relation to the students’ close readings and annotations. Next, student answers to specific guided questions are presented. The final table shows students’ ability to practice contextualization with the U.S. Constitution.

The two teachers, James and Sonya, and the teacher–researcher agreed on the questions whose responses were chosen and are displayed as evidence in the following tables. These questions were viewed as demanding comprehension. (Question 17 was a recall type question, but served as a gauge for the students’ ability to answer a question
The data for the *U.S. Constitution* are presented in tabular format for the six students selected for the case study group.

Table 4.4

*Close Reading and Annotation of the U.S. Constitution—Mark*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>About census and 3/5ths count of slave population, get new slaves to increase count for more reps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Why do senators have to be old people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Constitution is like my house rules.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, Tables 4.4 through 4.16 showed that the students of the case study group comprehended their reading of the adapted versions of the *Constitution of the United States*. Further, the responses chosen as data were responses to questions to which many adults would not know the answers without examining the text or some other source. Given that context, students completed the questions with pencil and paper to eliminate web searches for the answers. Students were not allowed access to computers or other smart devices while they were answering the guided questions.
### Table 4.5

**Guided Question Answers Regarding the U.S. Constitution—Mark**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 8: What is the role of the House or Representatives and the Senate in the impeachment process?</td>
<td>A 8: The role of the House of Representation [sic] and the impeachment process is House of Repre- should choose their leader and other officers. The impeachment decides if a leader can stay in power. “The senate shall be the only group to have an impeachment trial.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: Where must all laws that call for changes in taxes originate?</td>
<td>A 10: All the laws call for changes into original in the house of Representatives is all bills to lower or raise taxes. The preamble states the constitution says “All bills to lower or raise taxes shall begins [sic] in the House of Reps.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 17: According to the Oath of Office for the executive, what must all members of the executive swear to protect?</td>
<td>A 17: The Oath of Office all members have to protect and defend the constitution the United States. The preamble state that the constitution says [sic] “will to the [best] of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the US.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19: In Article 2, Section 3 what does the Constitution explicitly say is the President’s role regarding laws? What does this mean?</td>
<td>A 19: The Article 2 section 3, the president’s role is that he can make them end their work and start again, make sure laws are followed. The evidence is “when both house can’t agree one way he can make them end their work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 23: What is the main focus of Article 4, sections 1 and 2? Why is this important to you in 2018?</td>
<td>A 23: The main focus of Article 4 sections 1-2 is telling what is legal person can be charged with treason. The evidence is “a person can be charged with treason.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.6

*Close Reading and Annotation of the U.S. Constitution—Joe*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>They had a president, and we have one named Trump.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8

*Close Reading and Annotation of the U.S. Constitution—Sam*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Congress does a lot … Surprised president has to take an oath … Surprised that all states had someone there to sign it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>How is this fair?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Like when the Britain tried to control the colonies after F&amp;I war but it failed, this is a solution to it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[Researcher’s note: Student is referencing fugitive slave law in Article 4, Section 2.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[Researcher’s note: This connection comment references the phrase “The United States shall guarantee to every state the right to set up a government run by the people” (NewseLA Staff, 2016a, p. 9).]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students made several important observations as they closely read the *Constitution*. Several students offered various reactions to the document that showed they were thinking about groups that were left out. As shown in Table 4.8, while closely reading and annotating the text, Sam reacted to the fugitive slave clause (Article 4, Section 2) with “how is that fair?” Alexa pointedly asked, “Why are Indians not counted in census?” (Table 4.12). As shown in Table 4.14, in reference to the Preamble, Jade reacted with “wasn’t all fair!” These reactions show that the students were thinking
about other viewpoints and perspectives. This is one of the cognitive skills at the heart of historical thinking (Mandell, 2008).

Table 4.9

*Guided Question Answers Regarding the U.S. Constitution—Sam*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 8: What is the role of the House or Representatives and the Senate in the impeachment process?</td>
<td>A 8: The role of the House of Representatives and the Senate is to pass bills. The impeachment process is simple, they just have to have a majority of the votes. “The Senate shall be the only group to have an impeachment trial.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: Where must all laws that call for changes in taxes originate?</td>
<td>A 10: All laws that call for changes in taxes originate in the House of Representatives. The text says, “all bills to lower or raise taxes shall begin in the House of Representatives.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 17: According to the Oath of Office for the executive, what must all members of the executive swear to protect?</td>
<td>A 17: According to the Oath of Office for the executive they must swear to “protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19: In Article 2, Section 3 what does the Constitution explicitly say is the President’s role regarding laws? What does this mean?</td>
<td>A 19: In Article 2, Section 3 the constitution explicitly says the President’s role regarding laws is “he must make sure all the laws are followed, even if he doesn’t agree.” This keeps order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 23: What is the main focus of Article 4, sections 1 and 2? Why is this important to you in 2018?</td>
<td>A 23: The main focus of Article 4, sections 1 and 2 is that “citizens in one state shall be treated the same in other states.” It matters now because it keeps everyone equal and fairly treated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the Table 4.8, Sam made a connection to the problems between England and its colonies during the French and Indian War and the American Revolution.
He identified the federal system established through the Constitution as a potential solution. This interesting and deep connection shows serious thinking about the document in question and connecting it to the preceding events in history. Alexa connected this reading of the *Constitution* to her earlier project that served as a preparatory scaffold for reading the primary source document. Likewise, as shown in Table 4.14, Jade connected her reading of the *Constitution* to her present life through a television show. Both Jill and Alexa showed they were considering continuity and change of the government as they processed the primary source document (Mandell, 2008).

Table 4.10

*Close Reading and Annotation of the U.S. Constitution—Jill*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wow, they have age limits for office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Why does the President have to be so old?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The executive is connected to today cause we hear about Trump all the time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.11

*Guided Question Answers Regarding the U.S. Constitution—Jill*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 8: What is the role of the House or Representatives and the Senate in</td>
<td>A 8: The House of Representatives are the very group that can impeach a leader, but the Senate had the trial to impeach the leader. “The senate shall be the only group to have an impeachment trial to decide if a leader can stay in power.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the impeachment process?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: Where must all laws that call for changes in taxes originate?</td>
<td>A 10: All bills and laws to call for changes in taxes must start in the House or Representatives. The Article states, “All bills to raise and lower taxes shall begin in the House of Representatives.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 17: According to the Oath of Office for the executive, what must all</td>
<td>A 17: The Constitution of the United States. The article states “… and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>members of the executive swear to protect?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19: In Article 2, Section 3 what does the Constitution explicitly say</td>
<td>A 19: He shall make sure all laws are followed no matter he likes them or not and he shall chose and be in charge of everything for the U.S. This means he isn’t over making the laws, but he governs them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is the President’s role regarding laws? What does this mean?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 23: What is the main focus of Article 4, sections 1 and 2? Why is this</td>
<td>A 23: It tells how legal issues will be handled in the U.S. It is important to me because I live in the U.S. and not knowing this will hurt me in living my daily life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important to you in 2018?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case study group of students appeared to have struggled with Question 6 (see Appendix J). Question 6 was designed to encourage students to dig deeply into the defining characteristics of the very different states coming together to form the new republic. The intent was for students to ask themselves a series of problem-solving
questions—for example, “What made a state a southern state?” Based on teacher–researcher field notes of observations made during the case study, students showed they lacked experience with multistep problems. Some students did not know where to start. In fact, many of the students were upset at being asked to do math in social studies. One student said, “I only do math in math class.” The responses to Question 6 showed that math skills seriously betrayed many. Jade, on the other hand, provided an excellent response that illustrated a strong contextual understanding of the inner workings of the Constitution as well as ability to problem solve.

Table 4.12

*Close Reading and Annotation of the U.S. Constitution—Alexa*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Did not know president can let people out of jail for crimes… if a law is broken before it becomes a law no punishment … only Congress can form new states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Why are Indians not counted in Census?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>How do they choose?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[Researcher’s note: The question is about the phrase “If the president must be replaced, the job or President goes to the Vice President. If both … must be replaced, Congress will choose” (Newsela Staff, 2016a, p. 6).]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connection to separation of powers-electoral college, previous unit, poster I created.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Guided Question Answers Regarding the U.S. Constitution—Alexa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 8: What is the role of the House or Representatives and the Senate in the impeachment process?</td>
<td>A 8: In the impeachment process, the Senate’s role is “the Senate shall be the only group to have an impeachment trial to decide if a leader can stay in power.” This shows that the Senate is the only house capable of holding a trial, so the House of Representatives has no part in the impeachment process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: Where must all laws that call for changes in taxes originate?</td>
<td>A 10: All laws that call for changes in taxes originate in the House of Representatives. This is provided in the document, “all bills to lower or raise taxes shall begin in the House of Representatives.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 17: According to the Oath of Office for the executive, what must all members of the executive swear to protect?</td>
<td>A 17: According to the Oath of office, all members must swear to protect the Constitution of the United States. In the Oath it states, “…my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19: In Article 2, Section 3 what does the Constitution explicitly say is the President’s role regarding laws? What does this mean?</td>
<td>A 19: In Article 2, Section 3, the Constitution says the President’s role regarding laws is; as said in the document, “He must make sure all the laws are followed even if he doesn’t agree with them.” This means the President has no real control over the laws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 23: What is the main focus of Article 4, sections 1 and 2? Why is this important to you in 2018?</td>
<td>A 23: The main focus of Article 4, Sections 1 and 2 are ensuring there are law as that create legal marriages, and laws that ensure the capture of criminals. As said in the document, “Congress shall make laws to make sure this happens.” This is important in 2018 because it establishes a safe environment from runaway criminals. It also eliminates issues with legal marriages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.14

*Close Reading and Annotation of the U.S. Constitution—Jade*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Wasn’t all fair!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Researcher’s note: Comment in reference to phrase in preamble “establish justice” (Newsela Staff, 2016a, p. 1).]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>States can’t hire soldiers from another country to fight for them … if presidential vote is a tie the House of Representatives will pick, IDK that … House keep power to common people …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Why only two years for House of Representatives? Why does Congress have so much power?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text to indicate a question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>House and Senate still active today …3/5ths compromise from earlier this unit … it is still the original 13 colonies …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[Researcher’s note: References the phrase, “the senate may offer changes as on other bills” (Newsela Staff, 2016a, p. 3).]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Separation of power and checks and balances … some TV show call the President the “commander in chief.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Guided Question Answers Regarding the U.S. Constitution—Jade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 8: What is the role of the House or Representatives and the Senate in the impeachment process?</td>
<td>A 8: The Senate holds an impeachment trial to decide if the leader can stay in power, “the Chief Justice and Supreme Court shall be in charge.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: Where must all laws that call for changes in taxes originate?</td>
<td>A 10: All bills to change taxes “shall begin in the House of Representatives.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 17: According to the Oath of Office for the executive, what must all members of the executive swear to protect?</td>
<td>A 17: Executive members must swear to protect the Constitution, “and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19: In Article 2, Section 3 what does the Constitution explicitly say is the President’s role regarding laws? What does this mean?</td>
<td>A 19: The President can request improvements for laws, and if the matter is important, ask for a vote. The president must enforce all laws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 23: What is the main focus of Article 4, sections 1 and 2? Why is this important to you in 2018?</td>
<td>A 23: Article 4, sections 1 and 2 establishes that decisions made in one state, legally speaking, do not change things in another state. Today this prevents people from signing contracts for things like land and then moving to another state and claiming that it has changed. “The citizens of one state will be treated the same in all states.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.16

**Contextualization of the U.S. Constitution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Question 6: Of the original representatives in the House of Representatives, what percentage of the total were from Southern states? What affected this percentage? How?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher commentary on the historical context</td>
<td>Membership in the first House of Representatives as established by the Constitution consisted of 45% (46% if Delaware was included) of the members coming from five states that were Southern slave-holding states. This large number of representatives coming from a small number of states was affected by the 3/5ths compromise measure in the Constitution. Because the Southern states had a large number of slaves, and they were counted for representation but had no rights, the South wielded more political power than it should have. Further, with each passing census, more slaves were imported until 1808, further increasing Southern power (for more on this topic see Amar, 2005.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Of the original representatives in the House of Representatives, 69% are southern states.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>The percentages would be 50-50 but with the vice president vote it would equal 51 whoever he votes for, which equals 29/66 which then equals 44% which goes up to the 3/5ths complement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>The southern states held 64% of the senate. This percentage was imparted by the population in each region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Of the original representatives in the House of Representative, 69% are southern states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexa</td>
<td>From the original representatives in the House of Representatives, 67.4% of the total were from southern states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>45% the southern states had less control of the government because they had less votes. The slaves were counted under 3/5ths giving them more than if they were not counted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Findings for The Bill of Rights.** The close reading and annotation routine continued with students receiving a leveled copy of the *Bill of Rights* and a set of guided reading questions. The tables that follow are arranged by student name. Students’ close reading and annotations appear first, followed by their answers to selected guided questions that best demonstrate comprehension. The final table shows evidence of the students’ ability to contextualize the *Bill of Rights*.

Table 4.17

*Close Reading and Annotation of the Bill of Rights—Mark*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Congress can’t make religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data presented in Tables 4.17 through 4.29 showed the students were able to process the *Bill of Rights* successfully and comprehend the main ideas presented to them. The guided questions were valuable in helping them produce an advanced understanding of the individual rights guaranteed by the amendments. Although the document was
shorter and not as complex as the *Constitution*, students did not derive connections and insights like they did with the *Constitution* text.

Table 4.18

*Guided Reading Question Answers the Bill of Rights—Mark*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Describe three specific rights that are guaranteed in Amendment 1 of the Constitution. (Note: The teacher–researcher used the right to practice any religion as an example. Students were not allowed to use that right.)</td>
<td>A 2: <em>Student did not answer.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 6: What rights are guaranteed in Amendment 5? Provide at least two examples of how this is important in 2018.</td>
<td>A 6: No person shall be put in jail for crimes of murder, crimes against the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 9: What surprises you about Amendments 8, 9, and 10?</td>
<td>A 9: If a person is found guilty, he must pay a fair amount of money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: What does Amendment 10 infer about power between the states and the federal government?</td>
<td>A 10: The powers not given to the United States by the Constitution are given to each of the states and the people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, although the close reading and annotation process was identical, and the guided question protocols were the same, there was no preparatory project requiring students to produce and create meaning about the *Bill of Rights* prior to receiving the document. The teacher–researcher surmised that because of the lack of a deep background project, only Jade made the connection of historical context in Question 4.
Table 4.19

Close Reading and Annotation of the Bill of Rights—Joe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>No comments recorded.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>No comments recorded.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>My gun.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.20

Guided Reading Answers of the Bill of Rights—Joe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Describe three specific rights that are guaranteed in Amendment 1 of the Constitution. <em>(Note: The teacher–researcher used the right to practice any religion as an example. Students were not allowed to use that right.)</em></td>
<td>A 2: Regarding three specific rights that are guaranteed in amendments to the constitution. The first right guaranteed by the first amendment to the constitution includes the right to practice any religion. The amendment states that “Congress shall make no law setting up one national or state religion.” It cannot stop anyone from being part of it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 4.20 - Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 6: What rights are guaranteed in Amendment 5? Provide at least two examples of how this is important in 2018.</td>
<td>A 6: The rights guaranteed in Amendment 5 are no person shall be put in jail for crimes of murder, crimes against the government, stealing a lot of money, or badly hurting someone unless given a written copy of what the crime was. “Never shall a person on trial be forced in any criminal case to be a witness against himself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 9: What surprises you about Amendments 8, 9, and 10?</td>
<td>A 9: There are two things that surprised me about amendments 8, 9, and 10. The first that surprised me is “other punishments cannot be too cruel.” The other thing that surprised me is that when it says “The power not given to the United States by the Constitution are given to each of the states and to the people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: What does Amendment 10 infer about power between the states and the federal government?</td>
<td>A 10: In amendment 10 it says, “Roman numerals were used to number the amendments.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.21

*Close Reading and Annotation of the Bill of Rights—Sam*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>You have to pay to get out of jail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

119
Table 4.22

Guided Question Answers of the Bill of Rights—Sam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Describe three specific rights that are guaranteed in Amendment 1 of</td>
<td>A 2: The first right guaranteed is that the government can’t stop freedom of speech. The next is that no law can stop the right of the people to meet and peacefully talk. Last, it states that the people have a right to send complaints to the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Constitution. (Note: The teacher–researcher used the right to practice any religion as an example. Students were not allowed to use that right.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 6: What rights are guaranteed in Amendment 5? Provide at least two</td>
<td>A 6: This guarantees that land and things are taken for fair payment given to the owners. In today this is important because this ensures that if someone’s stuff is taken they ought to get it replaced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>examples of how this is important in 2018.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 9: What surprises you about Amendments 8, 9, and 10?</td>
<td>A 9: It surprises me that people in jails has to pay to get out of jail and they must pay again if proven guilty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: What does Amendment 10 infer about power between the states and the</td>
<td>A 10: It shows that the United States is over everything as a whole. However, it makes the balance of power between the U.S. and the states under it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>federal government?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.23

Close Reading and Annotation of the Bill of Rights—Jill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surprise)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 4.24**

*Guided Question Answers of the Bill of Rights—Jill*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Describe three specific rights that are guaranteed in Amendment 1 of the Constitution. <em>(Note: The teacher–researcher used the right to practice any religion as an example. Students were not allowed to use that right.)</em></td>
<td>A 2: The first right in Amendment 1 is when the document says “Congress shall make no law setting up one national or state religion.” A second right in Amendment 1 was “no law can stop or get in the way of freedom of speech.” The last right is “the people have a right to send complaints to the government.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 6: What rights are guaranteed in Amendment 5? Provide at least two examples of how this is important in 2018.</td>
<td>A 6: Some of the right is Amendment 5 is that a person has to have a written copy of what they did and there has to be proof. The text says “… unless given a written of what the crime was … evidence that supports the arrest …” Two reasons this is important is because the police need proof that they hold the suspect and the person can’t be trialed with no evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 9: What surprises you about Amendments 8, 9, and 10?</td>
<td>A 9: Something that surprised me is that certain rights are to not be seen as the only rights. Amendment 9 says, “certain rights in the constitution shall not be seen to be the only rights.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: What does Amendment 10 infer about power between the states and the federal government?</td>
<td>A 10: Amendment 10 infers that the people and states have more power than the Constitution. Amendment 10 says, “the powers not given to the United States by the Constitution are given to each of the states and to the people.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.25

Close Reading and Annotation of the Bill of Rights—Alexa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Knew this… connect to law and order [Teacher–researcher note: The student comment is connected to the phrase “No person shall lose his life, freedom, money, land, or things without a chance to have a judge or jury decide the result” (Newsela Staff, 2016c, p. 2).]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Aren’t executions cruel and unusual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I knew about bail because of L&amp;O. [Teacher–researcher note: L&amp;O is a local bail and bond agency].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.26

Guided Question Answers of the Bill of Rights—Alexa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Describe three specific rights that are guaranteed in Amendment 1 of the Constitution. (Note: The teacher–researcher used the right to practice any religion as an example. Students were not allowed to use that right.)</td>
<td>A 2: The first right guaranteed by the first amendment to the constitution is that no law can stop or get in the way of freedom of speech. Another right created by the first amendment is to the Constitution is that “no law can stop the right of the people to peacefully meet and talk.” This states that people have freedom of speech. One final right created by the first amendment to the constitution is “Congress shall make no law setting up one national or state religion.” This states that the government cannot control a state’s religion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 4.26 – Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 6: What rights are guaranteed in Amendment 5? Provide at least two examples of how this is important in 2018.</td>
<td>A 6: One of the rights guaranteed by Amendment 5 is from the text, “No person shall be put in jail for crimes of murder, crimes against the government, stealing a lot of money or badly hurting somebody unless given a written copy of what the crime was.” Another right guaranteed was that no one person can be arrested for the same crime more than once. The last right guaranteed is “no person shall lose his life, freedom, money, land or things with[out] a chance to have a judge or jury decide the result.” This is important in 2018 because nowadays, people are falsely accused all the time, even though they are innocent. Another reason this is important today is that everybody gets a fair trial until found innocent or guilty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 9: What surprises you about Amendments 8, 9, and 10?</td>
<td>A 9: Something that surprised me in Amendment 8 was when it stated “if the person is found guilty, punishments cannot be too cruel.” Because I was shocked that guilty people don’t get too bad of punishments. In Amendment 9 it says, “certain rights in the Constitution shall not be seen to be the only rights.” Finally to me there wasn’t anything surprising in Amendment 10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: What does Amendment 10 infer about power between the states and the federal government?</td>
<td>A 10: Amendment 10 infers that “powers not given to the [U.S.] by the Constitution are given to each of the states and to the people.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Findings for George Washington’s First Inaugural Address.* The close reading and annotation routine continued with students receiving a leveled copy of *George Washington’s First Inaugural Address* and a set of guided reading questions. The tables that follow are arranged by student name. Students’ close reading and annotations are displayed first, followed by their answers to selected guided question that best demonstrate comprehension. The final question in each table explicitly required the
students to provide the historical context, including evidence. This was a more explicit method of discerning evidence of the students’ ability to contextualize Washington’s speech. Tables 4.30 through 4.41 showed that students were able to comprehend the complexity of a primary source document from history under certain conditions— namely, if the text had been leveled, if they had received tools to read the document closely, and if they had received questions to guide their inquiry.

Table 4.27

_Close Reading and Annotation of the Bill of Rights—Jade_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Most legal documents are hard to understand … the Declaration of Independence was hard to understand. [Teacher–researcher note: This student received the original text of the Declaration of Independence. The comments were in reference to the editor’s note that stated that The Congress “wanted to make the Constitution easier to understand” (Newsela Staff, 2016c, p. 1).]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclamation mark on the text to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indicate a surprise)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>How many amendments were approved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question mark on the text to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indicate a question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>already know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guided Question Answers of the Bill of Rights—Jade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Describe three specific rights that are guaranteed in Amendment 1 of the Constitution. (Note: The teacher–researcher used the right to practice any religion as an example. Students were not allowed to use that right.)</td>
<td>A 2: In the first Amendment one guaranteed right is freedom of speech, “no law can stop or get in the way of freedom of speech.” The next right is freedom of the press to write and print. “No law can stop the freedom of the press.” The last right is the right to peacefully meet. “No laws can stop the right of the people to peacefully meet and talk.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 6: What rights are guaranteed in Amendment 5? Provide at least two examples of how this is important in 2018.</td>
<td>A 6: Amendment 5 gives rights to people who are under arrest so their property is not taken and they are not charged unfairly. Now this is important so that people are not treated unfairly because of bias or a personal vendetta against them. “There must be evidence that supports arrest.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 9: What surprises you about Amendments 8, 9, and 10?</td>
<td>A 9: It surprises me that in Amendments 8, 9, and 10 they directly target the Constitution and they state the Constitution does not hold all the power. Amendment 9 says, “certain rights in the Constitution shall not be seen to be the only rights.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 10: What does Amendment 10 infer about power between the states and the federal government?</td>
<td>A 10: Amendment 10 infers that the government’s power is held by the people. “The powers not given to the United States by the Constitution belong to the states and the people.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data collected on students’ interaction with Washington’s speech seemed to confirm the teacher–researcher’s concerns about the lack of a preparatory project.

Students knew Washington from their American mythology, but that did not help them connect to George Washington, the first American president. The amount of thinking required to analyze this primary source document was significantly less than the thinking required to analyze the Constitution text.
### Contextualization of the Bill of Rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Question 4: What does Amendment 3 guarantee? Why was that important to people in 1789?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher commentary on the historical context</td>
<td>Amendment 3 guarantees that soldiers will not use civilian homes without consent and payment. The concerns surrounding this amendment date to the 1770 Boston Massacre. In short, since 1688 and the Glorious Revolution, the English had a suspicion of standing armies. They did not want them housed in large barracks, as they feared this could lead to a threat to the people’s liberty. They preferred the troops be scattered among the population in hotels (inns), boarding houses, and in other available lodging. Once the French and Indian War ended with the treaty of Paris in 1763, the British believed they needed large numbers of professional troops in North American to protect their newly gained territory. The colonists on the other hand had inherited a suspicion of large armies. They preferred to rely upon neighbor standing with neighbor through local militias. Ultimately, a large number of British soldiers were deployed to the Boston area in the late 1760s to maintain peace and order in the growing independence movement. The 3rd Amendment was to help prevent the issue from reoccurring and threatening people’s liberty (for details, see Amar, 2005; Monk, 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Soldiers have no right to eat or sleep in someone’s home without permission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Amendment 3 guarantees that “no soldier shall, in time of peace, live, eat, or sleep in any house without the approval of the owner.” It is important to the people because it is their space and their house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Amendment 3 guarantees that no one has to let a soldier live with them. This was important to people in 1789 because they were forced by British soldiers to house them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Amendment 3 guarantees that “no soldier shall in time of peace, live, eat, or sleep in any house, without the approval of the owner.” This was important because soldiers would abuse their power when this was legal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexa</td>
<td>Amendment 3 guarantees, as said in the document, “no soldier shall in time of peace, live, eat, or sleep in any house, without the approval of the owner.” This was important for people in 1789 because it would be safer for soldiers as well as the house owners. Neither would want strangers in their house giving sanctuary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>Amendment 3 states that soldiers are not allowed to live at a residence without owner approval. In 1789, that had recently gone through the Revolutionary War, where soldiers were able to raid people’s homes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.30

Close Reading and Annotations of George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Mark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.31

Guided Question Answers George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Mark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Sourcing: Who is the author? Who is the audience? What kind of document is it? What is the date of the original document?</td>
<td>A 2: The author is George Washington because he is the one who was telling it. The audience is “fellow citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives.” The document is an inaugural address. The date is April 30, 1789.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 5: When writing about the revolution, why does the author use the phrase “…it cannot be compared with the way in which most governments have been created?” (Newsela Staff, 2016b).</td>
<td>A 5: He says this because the use went …[section of text where five words are unreadable] …when he said “it cannot be compared with [unreadable] the government had been created.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 11: Summarize this primary source document and explain the historical context of the document using at least one direct quote from the document (no more than 15 words quoted.)</td>
<td>A 11: I shall put my confidences in your decision making abilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.32

*Close Reading and Annotations of George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Joe*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.33

*Guided Question Answers George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Joe*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Sourcing: Who is the author? Who is the audience? What kind of document is it? What is the date of the original document?</td>
<td>A 2: “On April 30, 1789, George Washington took the oath of office as the first president of the United States,” on the same day he gave his inaugural address. The audience is the citizens of the United States of America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 5: When writing about the revolution, why does the author use the phrase “…it cannot be compared with the way in which most governments have been created?” (Newsela Staff, 2016b).</td>
<td>A 5: Washington uses the phrase “…it cannot be compared with the way in which most governments have been created,” because it is going to be better and more efficient than other governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 11: Summarize this primary source document and explain the historical context of the document using at least one direct quote from the document (no more than</td>
<td>A 11: Washington’s first inaugural address was an important historical moment. It was big because he wasn’t only the president but was the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army in the Revolutionary War and he was the first</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.34

*Close Reading and Annotations of George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Sam*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Humble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Why did he not think he was qualified? Sick?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><em>No comments.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.35

*Guided Question Answers George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Sam*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Sourcing: Who is the author? Who is the audience? What kind of document is it? What is the date of the original document?</td>
<td>A 2: The author is George Washington because it is his inaugural speech. The audience is his “fellow citizens of the senate and the House of Representatives.” The type of document is an inaugural address, and the date is April 30, 1789.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 5: When writing about the revolution, why does the author use the phrase “…it cannot be compared with the way in which most governments have been created?” (Newsela Staff, 2016b).</td>
<td>A 5: He says this because the U.S. went from a weak government to a strong central government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 11: Summarize this primary source document and explain the historical context of the document using at least one direct quote from the document (no</td>
<td>A 11: This primary source document was about how Washington was commander in Chief of the Army and our first President.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.36

*Close Reading and Annotations of George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Jill*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><em>No comments.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Why does he not think he is qualified?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td><em>No comments.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.37

*Guided Question Answers George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Jill*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Sourcing: Who is the author? Who is the audience? What kind of document is it? What is the date of the original document?</td>
<td>A 2: George Washington wrote the speech and his audience was the people. This would be considered a historical speech and was released on April 30, 1789.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 5: When writing about the revolution, why does the author use the phrase “…it cannot be compared with the way in which most governments have been created?” (Newsela Staff, 2016b).</td>
<td>A 5: The reason the author used the phrase is because it was calm and unique. The text says “the calm decision … which led to that event is unique.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 11: Summarize this primary source document and explain the historical context of the document using at least one direct quote from the document (no more than 15 words)</td>
<td>A 11: <em>No answer provided.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.38

*Close Reading and Annotations of George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Alexa*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>What a man! Great Morals! WOW! YASS! Amen GW!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Why was he sick? What shortcomings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to something you already know</td>
<td></td>
<td>Connect: American Revolution … connecting to the constitution and what we just learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[<em>Teacher–researcher note:</em> The comment is a reaction to the phrase “Executive Department.” Comment is referencing the phrase “I was first honored with a call into service of my country, on the eve of our difficult struggle for freedom” (Newsela, 2016b, p. 3)].]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.39

*Guided Question Answers George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Alexa*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q 2: Sourcing: Who is the author? Who is the audience? What kind of document is it? What is the date of the original document?

A 2: The author of the document is George Washington because he’s giving the speech. The audience is his citizens, the United States people. The type of document this would be is a letter, or an address. The original date of the document is April 30, 1789.

Continued

Table 4.39 – Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 5: When writing about the revolution, why does the author use the phrase “…it cannot be compared with the way in which most governments have been created?” (Newsela Staff, 2016b).</td>
<td>A 5: The author states that, “It cannot be compared with the way in which most governments have been created.” He uses this phrase when writing about the revolution because he was saying that the U.S. government was like no other. In the speech Washington says, “voluntary agreement by so many different communities …” the agreement made in creating the government was unique to all others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 11: Summarize this primary source document and explain the historical context of the document using at least one direct quote from the document (no more than 15 words quoted.)</td>
<td>A 11: In conclusion of the document, Washington is giving his first speech as president to his people. He speaks about how highly he thinks of his people, talks about religion, says what he expects of Congress, his expectations of himself, he speaks of the Constitution, and used a rhetorical device of pathos to close his speech. The historical context of the address is the French Revolution is beginning, the Constitution was written and signed, which replaced the Articles of Confederation and George Washington was elected as the first president. As said in the document, “Hopefully my country shares some of the same affections that helped me make my decision. “This shows the authors expectations from the people of the United States.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alexa shared a well-considered narrative on context in Table 4.38, pointing out the French Revolution was occurring and that the United States had just replaced the
Articles of Confederation. This well-considered comment revealed the context of events. However, Alexa and the other students did not offer any consideration of motives, belief systems, or values. Their analyses of Washington were shallow, with little direct tangible connection to historical thinking when compared to student performance on the Constitution text.

Table 4.40

Close Reading and Annotations of George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—Jade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total marks for category</th>
<th>Notable margin comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprises (students placed an exclamation mark on the text to indicate a surprise)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>[Researcher Note: The student recorded only an exclamation mark in the margin of the document with no clear connection to any item in the text] No comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (students placed a question mark on the text to indicate a question)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of the optional contextualization chart (Appendix M) showed that only Jade and Alexa had provided entries into their charts. The entries were identical and included the French and Indian War, the Declaration of Independence, Washington being General of the Continental Army, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Washington elected by Electoral College. Based on field notes of the teacher-researcher and student
conversation, when asked about the usefulness of the chart Alexa indicated “Jade and I did it together over the weekend … it helped me think about Washington but it did not really help figure out what he was thinking or the other people were thinking that elected him.”

Table 4.41

*Guided Question Answers* George Washington’s First Inaugural Address—*Jade*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 2: Sourcing: Who is the author? Who is the audience? What kind of document is it? What is the date of the original document?</td>
<td>A 2: The author of this is George Washington. The audience is the lawmakers of the United States. This is a historical speech made on April 30, 1789.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 5: When writing about the revolution, why does the author use the phrase “…it cannot be compared with the way in which most governments have been created?”</td>
<td>A 5: Washington believes that the United States transition was more peaceful and laws were agreed on more fluidly than other nations. “The calm decisions making and voluntary agreement on things by so many different communities.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 11: Summarize this primary source document and explain the historical context of the document using at least one direct quote from the document (no more than 15 words quoted.)</td>
<td>A 11: During this time the Constitution has just been created and America had just become a free nation. The context is important because this is the first-ever inaugural address and it would set a precedent for all the others. “George Washington took the oath as the first President of the United States.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final stage findings from field notes.** The students seemed interested throughout the final stage of the case study. No students appeared visibly frustrated by an inability to enter the learning process because the material was beyond their cognitive abilities.
The teacher–researcher observed a direct correlation between actively engaging in critical thinking and student reading levels. Three students (with grade level or above Lexile levels) who reported during the study their dislike of history, social studies, or geography engaged in the processes that the teacher–researcher requested with no complaints or reluctance. In fact, some of these students led the conversations in their peer discussions. In contrast, some students with below-grade Lexile levels who self-reported loving history seemed to complain constantly about “having to do work … having to read too much” and “having to work too hard.” The teacher–researcher redirected them repeatedly.

**Final stage findings on student engagement.** Although student engagement was ancillary to this study, it is an important aspect of the teacher–researcher’s professional practice. With that in mind, after the final stage of the study was completed, the teacher–researcher asked the students to respond to the following question in writing:

Did you learn more about the Constitution and Bill of Rights by reading them closely, discussing what you read, and then answering guided questions, or do you think you would have learned more if your teacher simply told you what you needed to know about the documents for the test and you never read them?

A few days after students responded in writing, the teacher–researcher individually interviewed each of the six case study students. The students were asked if they had any additional comments on their experiences with primary source documents. Those additional comments appear in Table 4.42. (Appendix O provides a broader view of answers to this question for all the students in the study who agreed to answer the question.)
Interpretation of Results

The results of this action research descriptive case study provides ample evidence that the bottlenecks to learning in the discipline of history, including comprehension and contextualization of primary source documents, can be mitigated or eliminated through the use of properly designed scaffolds.

Table 4.42

Student Comments on Reading Primary Source Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Comment</th>
<th>Follow-up Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark: I think I would learn better if the teacher told me what I needed to know. Too much reading.</td>
<td>It is too much work to read that much. I would rather you just tell me what to remember for the test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe: I would need my teacher to talk more about it and give us less to read.</td>
<td>I remember it more when you are in the front of the class joking around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam: It was a lot of reading but I got more by reading and discussing them because I got multiple viewpoints and interactions.</td>
<td>I think I learned more reading it and discussing with partner, because you made us dig deeper into it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill: I learned more by reading them. It gave me a better experience with them and helped me understand.</td>
<td>I think having a chance to discuss them with a partner and then reread several times to answer questions and talk about them with the teacher helped me understand tons more than just listening to a teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexa: I learned more from close reading and answering questions. I think that not reading the documents and just having the teacher talk and tell me what is needed is boring and wouldn’t help my learning.</td>
<td>I learned more about the Constitution and Bill of Rights by reading them the way we did. It also really helped me understand the Constitution since we did a project on it before reading it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade: I believe that I personally learned more from the reading the documents myself. I am a “believe it when I see” kind of person.</td>
<td>Working with the documents lets me think for myself instead of my teacher telling me what to think. It</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
see it” type of person, so I appreciate being able to read the documents myself rather than a teacher’s bullet points. I also like how if I have a question about something, I have the tools to figure it out. I like reading and discussing the documents a lot more than just getting the information on a PowerPoint just typed up. Also allows me and a partner go deeper into the ideas and topics than we could as a whole class. Some of these people don’t care if they learn or not.

Once these bottlenecks are removed, students can successfully engage in historical thinking. All case study participants were able to comprehend the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Washington’s First Inaugural Address successfully. Jade, Alexa, Sam, and Jill were most successful at placing the primary source documents into the proper historical context, including identifying the impacts of motives, values, and beliefs that influenced the documents. Alexa and Jade were able to make some complex connections through historical thinking, including in the areas of point of view, perspective, continuity, and change. The results clearly showed that the combinations of scaffolds applied as students studied the United States Constitution represent the best practice that should be routine in middle level history classrooms.

Conclusion

Scaffolding positively affects students’ success with understanding primary source documents from history by eliminating or mitigating students’ struggles to read complex texts and their inability to contextualize historical documents. However, some requirements are needed for the scaffolds to be effective. First, teachers must prepare a preliminary scaffold requiring students to dive deep into background and create their own
knowledge about the topic, thereby gaining a true understanding of the topic before engaging with the source documents (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Second, the scaffold of a routine consisting of close reading and annotation must focus students’ thinking as they interact with the document (Beers & Probst, 2015). Third, student collaborative discussions must be part of the reading process (Beers & Probst, 2015; Fisher & Frey, 2015). Finally, students must have a set of well-designed, guided, text-dependent questions that require textual evidence and elicit deep thinking about the document and its place in history (Fisher & Frey, 2015). These four components must become a part of history teachers’ best practices in the classroom.
Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

This action research descriptive case study focused on middle-level students’ interactions with primary source documents from history. Based on their own qualitative research, Middendorf et al. (2007) theorized there were “bottlenecks” to learning in the discipline of history. Two of the “bottlenecks” to learning directly relate to this study— the inability of students to comprehend the meaning of the text and the inability of students to place the primary source document into its correct historical context. The presence of either condition prevents the student from developing a critical understanding of the document they are studying. This problem becomes overwhelming to teachers and students as they approach primary source documents.

Wineburg (2001) argued that professional historians approach primary source documents with particular skill. He observed that historians interact with primary source documents by first wondering what they do not know about the document, author, or era. Wineburg (2001) claimed that the historian’s craft involves a vigorous interrogation of primary source documents. Further, like Middendorf et al. (2007), Wineburg (2001) postulated that placing a primary source document in its historical context was vital to a deep understanding.

This action research descriptive case study focused on the impact of scaffolding on group of middle-level students as they interacted with primary source documents from history. The scaffolds were designed to break down the “bottlenecks” to learning from historical primary source documents and stimulate historical thinking. The case study
proceeded through three distinct stages: initial, middle, and final. During each stage, students were assigned primary source documents and provided accompanying scaffolds. As the study progressed through the stages, scaffolds changed based on results from the previous stage.

**Research Question**

The primary research question of this study was “What combination of scaffolds allow 8th grade social studies students to successfully interact with primary source historical documents?”

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this action research case study was to examine and describe the impact of scaffolding tools and techniques on eighth-grade social studies students’ abilities to access and interact with primary historical source documents successfully, thereby allowing them to think historically. The students’ ability to handle primary source documents skillfully as historians is paramount to their ability to achieve a measure of historical thinking. The pedagogical technique of scaffolding was employed as a treatment to solve the problem of practice. The researcher examined the effectiveness of multiple scaffolds with primary source documents among the study population. Applying scaffolding tools and techniques in the areas of reading primary source documents gave students an opportunity to understand primary sources and establish the historical context in which the sources occurred. This action research case study used descriptive qualitative data, including student documents and artifacts, student interviews, student discussion, and teacher–researcher field notes to describe the
operation of scaffolding as students interacted with various primary source documents from history.

**Overview/Summary of the Study**

**Major points of the study.** In the initial stage of this action research descriptive case study, the teacher–researcher presented students with excerpts of the *Virginia Charter* and the *Mayflower Compact.* (Table 4.1 can be used for a quick reference to the various stages and scaffolds employed.) During this stage, students were asked to make their thinking explicit by commenting as they read the primary sources. The findings of this stage confirmed that Middendorf et al.’s (2007) first bottleneck to learning, reading comprehension of primary source documents, was indeed a barrier to student learning among the study population. Interestingly, as students were making their thinking explicit through comments, over one third of the comments concerned vocabulary or other simple comprehension issues. Only one student in the study offered a critical question regarding the document; several other students showed obvious misconceptions caused by their inability to place the document in a correct historical context. The most glaring misconception was one student’s inference that because the *Virginia Charter* called for all liberties to be extended to those who inhabited the English colonies that “no matter what [their] race,” if they were born there, citizens “get equal rights.” The misconception of equality in 1606 underscored the importance of curricula and instruction leaders addressing the hidden and missing curricula in schools. Further, it is imperative that teachers begin asking the simple question, “Who or what groups are left out?”
During this initial stage, students received excerpts from the *Autobiography of Olaudah Equiano*, a firsthand account of the middle-passage. This primary source document was accompanied by a lesson that featured a drawing of the interior layout of a slave ship and taped rectangles placed on the classroom walls that mimicked the dimensions allotted for slaves in the bowels of the ship. Although the excerpts from *Equiano* contained difficult and troubling vocabulary and caused massive comprehension problems for the lower-level readers in the class, the lesson design allowed student to move about the room as they thought about how they would describe the middle passage in their own words. The researcher observed higher-level students translating the text into middle-school vernacular as they informally milled about the room looking at the image of the interior of a slave ship and comparing their body mass to the dimension taped to the wall. The lower-level reading students who had been clearly troubled in the beginning noticed the higher-level students’ translation, and comprehension was achieved across all study participants.

Finally, the last two documents presented to students in the initial stage, the *Charleston Tea Party* article and the *Journals of Oliver Hart*, were abandoned after the teacher–researcher learned valuable lessons about students’ zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This set of documents proved challenging for students. The students—even the higher-level readers—struggled with the mechanics of reading and comprehending the documents. In addition, the students had no prior knowledge to which to connect anything they were reading. This particular set of documents could be best described as a failure; teacher–researcher field notes indicated the room was filled with “a sense of despair and despondence.” This experience, although a failure,
dramatically informed the middle and final stages of the study by prompting the
development of scaffolds that aided students in the skills of close reading, annotation, and
deeper thinking about historical context.

In the middle stage of the study, the teacher–researcher presented students with the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation. With the Declaration of Independence, students received a set of graphic organizers designed to direct student thinking. The teacher–researcher reminded students to look for questions about the document, not just answers. The major focus was on the source and context of the document. At this point in the study, leveled primary sources were introduced. One group (those at or above grade reading level) received the original text. Those reading below grade level received a text that had been leveled to a Lexile of 1030. Throughout this stage of the study, students did not have an established routine of close reading or annotation. (Based on personal interviews with the teaching staff, the teacher–researcher had determined there was no explicit routine for close reading and annotation in any class across three grade levels in the school. Teachers in the English Language Arts department had suggested some strategies but nothing was explicitly taught prior to the development of a routine for this case study.) Students of both groups identified the Declaration of Independence as difficult to read.

As students examined the Declaration of Independence, several students in the case study group critically questioned the implied meaning of the document and the motives of Jefferson, including posing questions about the values and biases of 1776. For example, while considering the sourcing questions from the document, study participant Jade became almost obsessed with finding out why Jefferson’s work had been edited and
changed by the Second Continental Congress. The teacher–researcher encouraged Jade and her partner to dig deeper into the circumstances and determine what was changed. On her own time at home, Jade researched her question, returned to school the next day, and explained to anyone who would listen about her discovery that representatives from Georgia and South Carolina had forced the removal of negative comments about King George spreading slavery. This discovery led to students creating what they called a super group to extend their inquiry. At one point during their critical inquiry as a super group, they came across a story about Jefferson’s relationship with Sally Hemmings. This prompted Alexa to offer,

I wonder if the reason Jefferson seemed to be, like, not mean to slaves and maybe want to help them was because of his relationship with Sally, maybe that was the reason he included stuff about the slave trade in his original copy of the Declaration?

Student interaction with the Declaration of Independence showed that students could offer critical inquiry when interacting with a primary source document. Students continued to struggle with historical context as it applied to biases and values. They generally struggled with determining what groups of people had been left out of the document. It was visibly difficult for them to reconcile Jefferson’s statement that “all men are created equal” with the reality that slavery was thriving and women had few if any rights. Interestingly though, one student summarized her feelings about this stage, stating, “I learned that stuff is not always the way you think it is. Sometimes you have to go deeper than just the surface of what people want you to know.”
The success and failures experienced in the initial and middle stages of the study prompted several scaffolding modifications for the final stage, which focused on the United States Constitution and the new government it created. First, students needed to develop a base knowledge level on the topic (preparatory scaffold). Second, a close reading and annotation routine was established (scaffolded reading comprehension skills). Third, text-dependent questions requiring the use of textual evidence were developed to focus comprehension and student thinking on the deeper issues of sourcing and contextualization as they were reading the primary sources (reading comprehension and historical thinking scaffold). Finally, leveled texts were used to aid student comprehension (reading comprehension scaffold). With these four scaffolds addressed, the case study entered its final stage.

Evidence of student comprehension during the final stage was abundant. All students in the study demonstrated adequate comprehension of the explicit meaning of all three texts used in the final stage. The work students completed on the United States Constitution offered evidence of serious critical inquiry and historical thinking for this group of students. Among the six case study participants were multiple indications that students had considered different points of view or perspectives. One student connected the idea of a new federal system as a solution to the power struggles between the colonial governments and the English King and Parliament, demonstrating a deep understanding of the material and displaying skills of cause and effect. Another student connected a section of the Constitution to the preparatory project completed as a scaffold. Finally, several students noted through their close reading and annotation routine connections between the offices created in the Constitution and the offices remaining in the
government today, demonstrating an ability to employ the skill of identifying continuity and change in history.

At the close of the final stage, students worked with the Bill of Rights and George Washington’s First Inaugural Address. The analyses of these two documents followed the same process as the analysis used for the Constitution with the exception of a preparatory scaffold. Students’ work on these two documents provided clear evidence of understanding but far fewer instances of deep critical historical thinking. Only one student displayed any advanced thinking with the last two documents. That student connected Washington’s speech within the greater historical context by noting that the Articles of Confederation had been abandoned and that the French Revolution was dominating the world at the time. Although the Bill of Rights and Washington’s Inaugural Address were far less complex, compared to the Constitution, the evidence indicated a correlation between assigning a preparatory project wherein students make meaning of the era or topic and the complexity of their thought processes when examining a primary source document of the same topic or era.

Students in the study were divided about the use of primary source documents in history. The majority of the students thought the teacher–researcher required too much reading; they preferred the teacher–researcher tell them what they should know. This was indicative of a population of students who self-reported the top three things they did in class were (a) listen to the teacher, (b) do worksheets, and (c) take tests (AdvanceED, 2017). Meanwhile, more than a few students enjoyed the process and appreciated the opportunity to look for themselves at the documents rather than being told what to think.
Action plan: Implications. Based on the findings of this study, the teacher–researcher will implement multiple modifications to curricula and instruction in the classroom, to the school’s social studies department, and to the entire curriculum team.

Classroom. In an effort to provide an adequate preparatory scaffold, content units will be organized around meaning-making performance tasks, as described by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). In addition, a set of leveled primary source documents will be selected for each unit with text-dependent guided questions that require students to answer using textual evidence. At the beginning of the school year, students will be explicitly instructed on primary source documents and historical thinking skills so their skills can be honed throughout the year. Students will be explicitly taught the skills associated with close reading and annotation described in this study and receive routine practice using these skills and tools.

Social studies department. During the course of this study, the teacher–researcher was named the new department chair for the research site’s social studies department. Working with the building supervisor and the curriculum specialist as department chair, the teacher–researcher will provide professional development, planning assistance, and mentoring to the teachers in the department. In addition, with the support of administrators, primary source documents will become the focus of the social studies curriculum as the school transitions to the new 2020 standards that require historical thinking skills.

School-wide curriculum team. With the enthusiastic support of the administration, the close reading and annotation routine developed in this study will be implemented across all grades and subjects. At the time of this study, the teacher–
researcher and the English Language Arts eighth-grade teachers were in the beginning stages of designing a cross-curricula unit focused on the fight for freedom. The unit will examine multiple primary source documents using the scaffolds from this study in social studies and English classes. The final product will be a cross-curricula performance task using textual evidence from primary sources and promoting the historical thinking skills of evaluating continuity, change, and perspective. The essential question of the unit—“What is the sin and shame of our society?”—will prompt students to consider the fight for freedom today and compare it to the past.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The scholarship of teaching and learning in the discipline of K-12 history instruction must address the current shift from coverage pedagogy (South Carolina Department of Education 2011) to a pedagogy built on historical thinking skills (Calder 2006; Mandell 2008; Wineburg 2001; South Carolina Department of Education 2017). Further research is needed to identify the best instructional practices specific to these skills and to the use of primary sources. Although the findings of this action research descriptive case study indicate a set of scaffolds that have promise as best practices for the study participants, the results cannot be generalized. It is also imperative that proactive action be taken by curriculum and instruction leaders to integrate literacy instruction into all classrooms. Albeit, Read 2 Succeed is a required endorsement for all teachers, there is little practical application or classroom instruction provided to teachers in the field. Literacy in the middle-level must become a great priority across all curriculums.
Future research should examine the effectiveness of social studies methods courses being taught in schools of education. In conversations with colleagues who have attended schools of education for training to teach social studies, the teacher–researcher found they perceived themselves as unprepared to tackle primary sources or historical thinking skills. A survey of South Carolina’s secondary teachers’ self-described readiness to teach the proposed 2020 should be conducted to determine what training is potentially needed. Finally, a quantitative methodology of successfully assessing historical thinking skills would assist teachers who are preparing for the transition to the new standards.

**Conclusion**

Primary sources are the main ingredients of the historian; secondary sources serve as a needed seasoning. But primary sources presence in the history classroom affords an opportunity for students to fulfill the higher level thinking of summarizing, comparing, explaining and analyzing events, cultures, and ideas from the past (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011). Students deserve to learn how to inquire critically into primary source documents. In this era of fake news and social media dominance, U.S. society desperately needs students who can think critically about issues through an examination of sources, including authors and contexts. History instruction provides students an opportunity to learn and hone the timelessly and “invaluable mental power which we call judgment” (Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies, as cited in Wineburg, 2001, p. 5). Educators should be preparing students and citizens to create knowledge through critical inquiry, not simply recall and repeat a set of arbitrary facts provided to satisfy an achievement exam (Dewey, 1916; Eisner, 2001). Historians of the
modern era do much more than just recite facts. They actively seek to critically examine
the past to better understand it and create a better society for the future (Pace, 2004b).
The development of the critical inquiry skills of a historian by students allowing them to
examine and understand sources, place them in their proper context and consider their
authorship is teaching students how to “do history” and preparing them to live as an
informed citizenry (Bain, 2000; Calder, 2006; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Lowenthal, 2000;
Pace, 2004b; Wineburg, 2001).

The case study groups’ work with the Constitution provided the best evidence of
scaffolding’s impact on middle-level students’ ability to interact (think historically) with
primary source documents. By preparing students with an adequate performance task in
the initial stage, by teaching and reinforcing the skills of close reading and annotation, by
providing students with a leveled primary source document, and by creating text-
dependent questions requiring textual evidence to answer, teachers can radically affect
students’ ability to interact successfully with primary source documents from history.
Further, by providing the tools to experience critical inquiry, teachers are preparing
students for life. Case-study student Jade’s interview and questionnaire comments best
exemplify the primary source pedagogical experience and purpose:

I believe that I personally learned more from reading the documents myself. I am
a “believe it when I see it” type of person, so I appreciate being able to read the
documents myself rather than a teacher’s bullet points. I also like how if I have a
question about something, I have the tools to figure it out. I like reading and
discussing the documents a lot more than just getting the information on a
PowerPoint just typed up. …Working with the documents lets me think for myself instead of my teacher telling me what to think.

The job of social studies teachers is to teach students how to think, not what to think. Social studies curricula and instruction must use pedagogical tools like scaffolding to give all students an opportunity to practice thinking for themselves. Reading primary sources from history gives students the opportunity to learn and practice critical thinking and inquiry, preparing them for their future in society.
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Columbus, OH: McGraw Hill Education.

McGraw Hill.


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Appendix A: The Virginia Charter

The Virginia Charter (King James, I, 1606) was posted in a Google document and posted on Google Classroom for all students as follows. Each student received a copy of the document.

**Directions:** Using the comment button on this screen, record your thoughts on the document as you are reading. Remember you are closely reading the document you can add comments that are thoughts you have, questions you have, wow/aha moments, or something simple like one word comments. The most important thing is you tell me what you are thinking. There is not a wrong or invalid comment.

**Virginia Charter:**

“Also we do, for Us, our Heirs, and Successors, DECLARE, by these Presents, that all and every the Persons being our Subjects, which shall dwell and inhabit within every or any of the said several Colonies and Plantations, and every of their children, which shall happen to be born within any of the Limits and Precincts of the said several Colonies and Plantations, shall HAVE and enjoy all Liberties, Franchises, and Immunities, within any of our other Dominions, to all Intents and Purposes, as if they had been abiding and born, within this our Realm of England, or any other of our said Dominions.”

April 10, 1606
Appendix B: Mayflower Compact

The Mayflower Compact (Settlers at New Plymouth, 1620) was posted in a Google document and posted on Google Classroom for all students as follows. Each student received a copy of the following document.

Directions: Using the comment button on this screen, record your thoughts on the document as you are reading. Remember you are closely reading the document you can add comments that are thoughts you have, questions you have, wow/aha moments, or something simple like one word comments. The most important thing is you tell me what you are thinking. There is not a wrong or invalid comment.

Mayflower Compact:

“In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, e&.

Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini, 1620.”
Appendix C: Charleston Tea Party

(Teacher Modeling Historical Thinking Script) and Oliver Hart Journals

The following document/script was created by the researcher and has been published by the South Carolina Department of Education as an aide for middle school teachers. This project was completed in the summer of 2017 and represents collaboration with the University of South Carolina’s Thomas Cooper Library: Digital Collections Division and the South Carolina Department of Education (Cox, 2017). The National Historic Records Administration funded the project.

As you read through this document aloud with the students, make comments to the students as to what comes to your mind. You should explicitly model close reading and historical thinking for the students. Suggested comments are [in brackets and italicized] below each section. Students should be annotating their documents as they follow along. Solicit student suggestions or comments once you finish the first section.

Document A:
The “Charleston Tea Party” is an article that appeared in the South Carolina Gazette in November of 1774. The article was written to inform readers about a new shipment of Tea (South Carolina Gazette, 1774).

[Let’s examine the origin of the source. First it appears that this is an article in a newspaper writing in November of 1774. It is specific to South Carolina and is written to inform the readers of the newspaper.]

CHARLES-TOWN, November 7.

[We know the setting is Charles Town and the date is November 7, 1774. I wonder how far removed this is from the Tea Act and from the Boston Tea Party. I should turn to my timeline to answer this question and provide myself with better context before I start reading … this is November 1774 and the first Charles Town Tea Party was Dec. 3 1773 and Boston Tea Party was Dec. 6 1773. This was a year later.]

…The same Day arrived here, in the Ship Britannia, Capt. Samuel Ball, jun. from London (amongst a Number of other Passengers) … Before Captain Ball had been many Hours in Port, the Committee of Observation were informed, that he had Seven Chests of Tea on board, subject to that Duty which all America have denied to be constitutionally imposed; and the Minds of the People appeared to be very much agitated.

[The Captain is from London, can we assume that his is more “English” than “American.” Interesting that the Committee of Observation was informed and that there were 7 chests of tea. I wonder who ratified out the ship? I wonder what other powers the Committee of Observation had? It seems that 7 chests of tea is not that much since the Boston Tea Party was 300. The newspaper clearly aggress that taxation by Parliament is NOT constitutional and also that the people of Charles Town were upset.]

To allay the Ferment which there seemed reason to apprehend, that Committee met early on Wednesday Morning, sent for Captain Ball, who readily attended, and, after expressing to him their Concerns and Astonishment at his Conduct, acquainted him, it was expected the said Teas should not be landed here… But
declared, that he was an entire Stranger to their being on board his Ship, ‘till he was ready to clear out, when he discovered that his Mate had received them in his Absence: --- That, as seen as he made the Discovery … he entered [a]
… Protest; which he hoped would acquit him from the Suspicion of having any Design to act contrary to the Sense of the People here, or the Voice of all America.

[The Committee met and called in the captain to give an explanation of himself and explain how the tea ended up on his ship. Interesting that they reference the Tea as a Drug. Captain explains that it was not his fault … the mate allowed the tea on board without the captains knowledge. Apparently when he discovered it he was not happy and formally protested it hoping to not get into trouble when he landed in SC or any other part of America.]

On Thursday at Noon, an Oblation was made to Neptune, of the said seven chests of Tea, by Messrs. Lindsay, Kinsley and Mackenzie themselves; who going on board the Ship in the Stream, with their own Hands respectively stoved the Chests belong to each, and emptied their Contents into the River, in the Presence of the Committee of Observation, who likewise went on board, and in View of the whole General Committee on the Shore besides numerous Concours of People, who gave three hearty Cheers after the emptying of each Chest, and immediately after separated as if nothing had happened.

[It appears that the committee wasted no time since they do not reference a time span but Thursday … we can infer that action was taken that same week. What is this word Oblation? It appears by context that it means sacrifice but we should look that up to make sure we understand—(a thing offered or presented to God or gods). They outline that specific people are there to dump the tea into the river. Interesting that the Committee of Observation was there on board and the whole General Committee was there as well. I wonder what was the Committee of Observation? What was the General Committee? Some research is in order on that … Lets do a google search on each.
Results … General Committee in SC 1775 this was the government of the colony at the time … Committees of Observation were local committees that had been voted into office by citizens and were tasked with monitoring the importation and exportation embargos or restrictions all had agree to.]
The following excerpts are from the Journals of Oliver Hart. The Hart journals are housed at the University of South Carolina in the Caroliniana Library Manuscripts Collection. Digitized versions are also available through the Digital Collections of the Thomas Cooper Library (http://library.sc.edu/p/Collections/Digital/Browse/ohart). Hart coded many of the entries out of fear they fall into the hands of loyalists. The journal entries range from July 31, 1775 to September 6, 1775. They were decoded and published in The Journal of the Southern Baptist Historical Society Clayton by editors J. Glenwood and Loulie Latimer Owens in 1975 (Hart, 1775/1975).

“Augt. 10. Crossed Enoree, and rode about a mile or little better & breakfasted with one Mr: Waddleton where we had some Coffee; set off from thence and missed out Way twice; once before and once after we crossed Pagets Creek, came down to one Mr: Pott’s on Tyger River, we took up this River to Finchers Ford where we crossed the Rive, and then traveled on to the Revd. Mr. Mulkey’s; were kindly received; Mrs. Mulkey was ill, the rest of the Family well. Found myself a good deal fatigued, but sat up till after Midnight, and then lay down to rest. Upon discoursing with Mr. Mulkey, found that He rather sides with ministerial Measures, and is agt. those adopted by the Country. Atho’ He profess Himself difficulted about these Things; The People, in general, are certainly (as they say) for the Kings …”

“Friday Augt. Ye 11th: Rose in Health, but somewhat fatigued; Some of the Neighbors came to see us, with whom we had much Conversation about the present States of the Times; found them so fixed on the Side of the Ministry, that no argument on the contrary side seemed to have any Weight with them; they generally acknowledge that they know but little about the Matter, and yet are fixed – generally they have signed Col: Fletchal’s Association …A meeting was appointed for sermon this Evening, 20 or 30 came together … after Sermon, Mr. Rees conversed with several abt: ye State of our national Concerns, who seemed to be extremely obstinate, on the Ministers Side; one of them wis’d 1000 Bonstonians might be kill’d in battle … On the whole they appear to be obstinate and irritated to an Extreme.”
Appendix D: Historical Context for Independence in South Carolina

Historical Context (Background Information):
During the 1750’s and 1760’s, South Carolina and the other American colonies became involved in the military and economic rivalry between the French and the English. The rivalry with the French was rooted in longstanding animosities (dislike). This rivalry led to a series of wars. In North America the military conflict became known as the French and Indian War and began when the French moved into the Ohio River Valley. The French and Indian War ended with British victory. France lost her possessions in North America and Spain lost control of Florida to the British. The war changed the relationship of the colonies with the mother country, Great Britain. In an effort to pay off the 140 million pound national debt, the British began to enforce their mercantilist policies (Kennedy & Cohen, 2016)(South Carolina Department of Education, 2011).

Events leading to the American Revolutionary War were largely the result of the attempt by the British crown and Parliament to impose taxes on the colonies in order to pay for the French and Indian War. Colonists believed it was the right of their colonial assemblies to impose taxes, not the prerogative of the King or Parliament (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011). The most important tax imposed by Parliament was authorized by the Stamp Act. This act placed a tax on paper. Taxes prior to this were indirect taxes, paid by the merchants. Incensed (extremely angry) colonists protested “No taxation without representation” because colonists did not have their own representative in Parliament and therefore believed that they had no colonial voice in Parliament. Colonists wanted the rights of their own colonial assemblies to impose taxes. Colonists organized a Stamp Act Congress and a boycott on British goods that led to the repeal of the Stamp Act. They also organized the Sons and Daughters of Liberty in order to protest British taxes and enforce the boycotts through persuasion and intimidation. The British then imposed another indirect tax through the Townshend duties (taxes on paint, paper, tea, and a variety of other goods). The colonists at this point were unwilling even to accept an import tax because it was designed to collect revenue, not to regulate trade. Again the colonists used a boycott. As a result of the boycott, the Townshend duties were repealed except for the tax on tea(South Carolina Department of Education, 2011).

The Tea Act was not a tax. This act gave the British East India Company exclusive rights to sell tea in the colonies because the East India Tea Company had financial problems and Parliament wanted to help the company. In Boston the Sons of Liberty coordinated protests and threw the tea overboard (Boston Tea Party). Georgetown and Charles Town had small “tea parties” that were not as large as the Boston protest, but did not allow the tea to be sold. The Boston Tea Party resulted in Parliament’s passage of what the colonists called the Intolerable Acts (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011). In 1774, British Parliament passes the Intolerable Acts to punish the colonist for the Boston Tea Party (Kennedy & Cohen, 2016).

In 1774, representatives from across the South Carolina colony met in Charles Town to elect representatives to the Continental Congress to be held in Philadelphia. They also established a General Committee of 99 to govern the colony instead of the royal governor. Political power in this new Provincial S.C. Congress was centered on the planter class of the South Carolina Low Country. The low country (the area around Charles Town along the coast) held only 1/3rd of the population but sent 2/3rds of the representatives to the 1775 Provincial S.C. Congress (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011).
# Appendix E: Timeline of Events Leading to Independence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1763</td>
<td>End of the French and Indian War</td>
<td>France loses North America to Great Britain (GB has 140 million pound debt).</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Proclamation of 1763</td>
<td>King George, III forbids colonist from settling West of the mountains.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>British Parliament enacts Sugar Act</td>
<td>-Sugar Act attempts to enforce mercantilist policies by attempting to control the empire and increase revenues through indirect tax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1765</td>
<td>British Parliament enacts the Stamp Act</td>
<td>-Tax on all printed-paper documents in North America, first attempt to directly tax colonists; colonists protested “no taxation without representation.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Organized protests via boycott of British imports, development of Son’s and Daughters of Liberty to enforce boycott.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1766</td>
<td>British Parliament passes the Declaratory Act</td>
<td>-Repealed the Stamp Tax due to protests. Passed Declaratory Act: British Parliament had final right of taxation and legislation in colonies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1767</td>
<td>British Parliament passes Townshend Acts</td>
<td>-Imposed direct taxes on glass, paint, paper and tea. Reorganized colonial courts to try and prevent smuggling. Vigorous protest in colonies let to Parliament removing all taxes except on tea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>Boston Massacre</td>
<td>-4,000 British troops had been sent to Boston to stop violent protests -In March, a group of colonist taunted a detachment of Redcoats. Shots were fired resulting in 11 wounded and 5 killed colonists.</td>
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<td>-Committees of Correspondence emerged between the colonies in order to exchange information and coordinate opposition to British policies (all colonies except Pennsylvania participated by 1774).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1773</td>
<td>Parliament Approves Tea Act of 1773</td>
<td>-Attempted to give the struggling British East India Tea Company a monopoly on tea in North America. Would have allowed cheap tea to flood the market in North America, hurting local merchants and colonial tea dealers.</td>
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<td>-Angry crowds met tea ships in harbors across the colonies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Charles Town Tea Party (December 13)</td>
<td>-Tea was discovered on a ship in the harbor. Residents of Charles Town called a meeting to decide on what to do with the tea, group decision was made to not purchase the tea, remove it from the ship and store it in the exchange building. Set the precedent of future ships with tea that arrived in Charles Town.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boston Tea Party (3 days after Charles Town Tea Party)</td>
<td>-Sons of Liberty dumped over 300 chests of tea into harbor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1774</td>
<td>First Continental Congress</td>
<td>-Agrees to boycott all British goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>Lexington and Concord-April</td>
<td>-British troops sent to seize colonial militia supplies and leaders; 8 colonists dead approximately 300 British casualties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix F: The Declaration of Independence

Source Notes: The Declaration of Independence, as approved by the Second Continental Congress, was drafted by Thomas Jefferson and revised by a small committee of delegates to the Congress before it was presented to the entire Continental Congress for further revision and approval. This document officially announced the colonies’ independence and outlined the colonists’ justification for this dramatic action.

The Declaration of Independence
Action of Second Continental Congress, July 4, 1776
The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America

When in the Course of human Events it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them; a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shewn, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security. Such has been the patient Sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the Necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great-Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good.
He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing Importance, unless suspended in their Operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. He has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a Right inestimable to them, and formidable to Tyrants only.
He has called together Legislative Bodies at Places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their public Records, for the sole Purpose of fatiguing them into Compliance with his Measures.
He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness his Invasions on the Rights of the People.
He has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of the Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the Dangers of Invasion from without, and Convulsions within.
He has endeavoured to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their Migrations hither, and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judicial Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the Tenure of their Offices, and the Amount and Payment of their Salaries.

He has erected a Multitude of new Offices, and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harrass our People, and eat out their Substance.

He has kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies, without the consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large Bodies of Armed Troops among us;

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States;

For cutting off our Trade with all Parts of the World;

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent;

For depriving us, in many Cases, of the Benefits of Trial by Jury;

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended Offences;

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an arbitrary Government, and enlarging its Boundaries, so as to render it at once an Example and fit Instrument for introducing the same absolute Rules into these Colonies;

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments;

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all Cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our Seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our Towns, and destroyed the Lives of our People.

He is, at this Time, transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the Works of Death, Desolation, and Tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and Perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous Ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the Executioners of their Friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic Insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the Inhabitants of our Frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known Rule of Warfare, is an undistinguished Destruction, of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble Terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated Injury. A Prince, whose Character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the Ruler of a free People.

Nor have we been wanting in Attentions to our British Brethren. We have warned them from Time to Time of Attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here. We have appealed to their native Justice and Magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the Ties of our common Kindred to disavow these Usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our Connections and Correspondence. They too have been deaf to the Voice of Justice and of Consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the Necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of Mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace, Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in GENERAL CONGRESS, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly Publish and Declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political Connection between them and the State of Great-Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as FREE AND INDEPENDENT
STATES, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which INDEPENDENT STATES may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

JOHN HANCOCK
Appendix G: Sourcing and Contextualization Scaffold

for Declaration of Independence

**Step 1—Sourcing:**

**Directions:** Answer the questions below using the document, your notes from class, your textbook, other print resources in class, and any other research that you complete. Provide evidence for your answers by quoting and or paraphrasing your research or the document (You must cite the sources).

Who wrote the document?
(Was the individual writing for self or individual writing for a group?)

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<th>Answer:</th>
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<td>Source of Answer (how do you know):</td>
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Does the author have something to gain or lose by writing the document (motives)?

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<td>Source of Answer (how do you know):</td>
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Who is the audience for the document?

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What type of document is it?

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<td>Source of Answer (how do you know):</td>
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When was it written?

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<th>Answer:</th>
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<td>Source of Answer (how do you know):</td>
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What is the main idea of the document?

| Answer: |
Source of Answer (how do you know):

Does the author use any absolute or extreme language (words like: every, all, always, indisputable, never, none, perfectly, hardest, least, most, absolutely, entirely)? Why do you think he/she uses this language? Does this language reveal anything about the author’s bias or purpose?

Answer:

Source of Answer (how do you know-examples):

Are there any groups of people left out (ignored) or targeted (for good or bad) by this document?

Answer:

Source of Answer (how do you know):

What other questions come to mind about the document?

Answer:

How can you find the answer?

Step 2—Context:
**Directions:** Using the questions below to guide you, determine what 5-10 events and or people most influenced the document you are studying. Fill out the graphic organizer chronologically then include a paragraph for each event that summarizes its connection to the Primary Source Document.

Based on the information gathered on the “Source,” determine what was happening when this document was created?

- What 5-10 events lead to and influenced the creation of the document?
- What 5-10 events immediately followed the document and were influenced by the document?
- Were there any specific leaders that dramatically influenced this document or caused this document to be created?
- In each of these events, identify who, what, when, where, and why. You should also identify the different perspectives (each side of the event).
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### Leader or Event 9 (Type event name):

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### Leader or Event 10 (Type event name):

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Appendix H: Historical Thinking Script and Excerpt of the *Articles of Confederation*

The following is an excerpt from the *Articles of Confederation*. The teacher used this excerpt to model historical thinking of sourcing and contextualization. Teacher comments are italicized and in brackets below.

**Articles of Confederation: March 1, 1781**

[Ok, great we know the date this is effective or written straight away. 1776 was Declaration of Independence and the Treaty of Paris of 1783 ended the American Revolution, so this is effective in the middle of the American Revolutionary War.]

To all to whom these Presents shall come, we the undersigned Delegates of the States affixed to our Names send greeting.

Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union between the states of New Hampshire, Massachusetts-bay Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

[So it is clear that this is written to anyone who wants to read it and it is also clear that people from all this different states are the ones who wrote it…so it is a statement of some kind that all these white men (since there would not have been any women or people of color there, I bet they were all pretty rich too since they had to have been big shots to go to this meeting. But that may need some more research into, “Who the actual men were and how were they chosen?” I also wonder what the Loyalist thought.) It is interesting that they describe it is Articles of Confederation and “perpetual” Union. Perpetual implies forever… but it says Articles “and” Perpetual implying that the Articles are not perpetual and do not create a perpetual union.]

I.

The Stile of this Confederacy shall be

"The United States of America".

[Ok so here is the naming of the country …]

II.

Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

[“Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom etc…” unless it is given the US Congress. That is interesting since sovereignty is ultimate power… this implies if it is not a listed item/power or whatever in the coming paragraphs then the state keeps it.]

III.

The said States hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other, for their common defense, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, binding themselves to assist each other, against all force offered to, or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of religion, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretense whatever.

[States enter into a “firm league of friendship” for very specific reasons of defense. So this certainly does not seem to indicate anything like the relationship that states have with each other today. A friendship seems very loose … like you could walk away at anytime. I know there were some serious issues with the country once the war was over in 1783 and the Constitution replaced this … I wonder what the problems were and why it required replacing a government.]
## Appendix I: Close Reading and Annotation Procedures

### History Class: Close Reading and Annotation Routine

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pencil</th>
<th>You MUST read with a pencil or pen in hand!</th>
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<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>Surprises or things that are interesting include MUST FIND @ LEAST 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Questions I have or things that confused me MUST FIND @ LEAST 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Make connections—at least 1 per page Connect what you are reading to something you already know or your life today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share</td>
<td>When you both finish, turn to peer and share surprises, questions, and connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think</td>
<td>In your reading, thinking and discussion: What changed, challenged or confirmed your thinking?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Re-Read        | Questions, Questions, Questions  
• Answer the guided questions in writing with text evidence.  
• Discuss answers with peer.  
• Who is correct? Can both be correct? Why? Why not? |

This chart is posted on the researcher’s classroom wall. This procedure is used for all primary and secondary source documents presented post middle stages of this case study. The chart has been adapted based on the work of Beers and Probst (2016) and Fisher and Frey (2015).
Appendix J: Guided Questions: The *United States Constitution*

**Guided Questions:** *The United States Constitution*

**Directions:** Working collaboratively with a peer of your choice, on a separate sheet of notebook paper (MLA Heading), use your close reading and annotation of the U.S. Constitution to answer the following questions. **Each person MUST individually complete assignment and turn in their own work—DO NOT COPY EACH OTHERS WRITING! (Collaboration is for discussion of the topic.)** You must TAG the question and supply text evidence for your answer in the form of a quote (follow the example). (Use the sentence stems provided or create your own.) Find the answers to questions 1-3 in the text and answer the questions. It does not have to be identical to the examples. Classwork Grade.

1. Who created the U.S. Constitution?

**Answer Example:** *The people of the United States created the U.S. Constitution. The beginning of the document states “We the people of the United States ... do establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”*

2. Why was the Constitution created?

**Answer Example:** The Constitution was written to create a better government among the various states, “to form a more perfect Union.”

3. What were the overarching purpose of the new government?

**Answer Example (notice the text evidence woven into the answer):** *The overarching purpose of the Constitution was to “establish Justice, insure peace, keep them [the people] healthy, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our children, do establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”*

4. What body is given all law making powers?

5. Describe the details of the make-up of the House of Representatives, including the requirements to become a member (you must quote but no more than 10 words).

6. Of the original representatives in the House of Representatives, what percentage of the total were from the southern states (if you are unsure how to calculate this ask your math teacher or a peer)? What impacted this percentage? How?

7. Describe the details of the make-up of the Senate, including the requirements to become a Senator and who is in charge of the Senate (you must quote from the text in your answer but no more than 10 words).

8. What is the role of the House of Representatives and the Senate in the impeachment process?

9. What one thing surprises you about Article 1, sections 4, 5, and 6?

10. Where must all laws that call for changes in taxes originate?
11. If the President does not agree with a law passed by the House and Senate what happens? How can the House and Senate bypass the President’s approval?

12. How long does the President have to decide on a bill becoming a law?

13. What one thing surprises you about Article 1, section 8?

14. Article 1, Section 9 states in part that “A person cannot be punished for breaking a law that was not a law when he broke it.” Explain why this idea is important. (Use the quote in your answer as textual evidence.)

15. What is the most surprising thing about Article 1, section 10?

16. What 2 positions are explicitly described as part of the executive? What are the requirements for a person to be elected to either of these positions?

17. According to the Oath of Office for the executive what must all members of the executive swear to protect?

18. Describe the President’s power to make treaties and appoint members to the Supreme Court.

19. In Article 2, Section 3 what does the Constitution explicitly say is the President’s role regarding laws? What does this mean?

20. What happens if the President or other member of the Executive commit “crimes that could hurt the country”?


22. What is treason?

23. What is the main focus of Article 4, sections 1 and 2? Why is this important to you in 2018?

24. Describe the purpose of Article 4, Sections 3 and 4.

25. What is the procedure to change the Constitution (include details)?

26. What is the purpose of Article 6? What is one surprise in this Article? Why?

27. How does the Constitution specify that it will become law?
Appendix K: Guided Questions: The Bill of Rights

Guided Questions: The Bill of Rights
Directions: Working collaboratively with a peer of your choice, on a separate sheet of notebook paper (MLA Heading), use your close reading and annotation of the Bill of Rights to answer the following questions. Each person MUST individually complete the assignment and turn in their own work—DO NOT COPY EACH OTHER'S WRITING! (Collaboration is for discussion of the topic.) You must TAG the question and supply text evidence for your answer in the form of a quote (follow the examples from your work on the Constitution). Classwork Grade.

1. According to the introduction on page one of Primary Sources: The Bill of Rights, What was the purpose of the Bill of Rights? What happened at the meeting and how would the changes become law?

2. Describe three specific rights that are guaranteed in Amendment 1 of the Constitution.
   a. Example using textual evidence (you may NOT use this one, there are 3 in addition to this 1): The first right guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution includes the right to practice any religion. The Amendment states that “Congress shall make no law setting up one national or state religion. It cannot stop anyone from being part of a religion.”
   b. Example sentence starter to transition to next right: Another right created by the First Amendment to the Constitution is ...
   c. Example sentence starter to transition to the last right: The final right created by the First Amendment to the Constitution is ...

3. What right is established by Amendment 2?

4. What does Amendment 3 guarantee? Why was that important to people in 1789?

5. What does Amendment 4 guarantee?

6. What rights are guaranteed in Amendment 5? Provide at least 2 examples of how this is important in 2018.

7. What are 3 rights that are established by Amendment 6?

8. What right is guaranteed under Amendment 7?

9. What surprises you about Amendments 8, 9, and 10?

10. What does Amendment 10 infer about power between the states and the federal government?
Appendix L: Guided Questions: George Washington’s First Inaugural Address

Guided Questions: George Washington’s First Inaugural Address

Directions: Working collaboratively with a peer of your choice, on a separate sheet of notebook paper (MLA Heading), use your close reading and annotation of Primary Source Document: George Washington’s First Inaugural Address to answer the following questions. Each person MUST individually complete the assignment and turn in their own work—DO NOT COPY EACH OTHERS WRITING! (Collaboration is for discussion of the topic.) You must TAG the question and supply text evidence for your answer in the form of a quote (follow the examples from your work on the Constitution). Classwork Grade.

1. According to the Editor’s Note on page one of Primary Sources: George Washington’s First Inaugural Address, how is the scene of Washington taking the oath of office described?

2. Sourcing: Who is the author? Who is the audience? What kind of document is it? What is the date of the document (the original not the adaptation date)?

3. What does the author think of his own qualifications for the job he is taking?

4. What revolution does the author reference (Is he being literal or figurative? Think: Is he referencing an armed rebellion?)?

5. When writing about the revolution, why does the author use the phrase “... it cannot be compared with the way in which most governments have been created”?

6. What does the author describe as his purpose for the document?

7. What are the author’s expectations of congress and how do these relate to Madison’s writing in Federalist 10?

8. What parallels does the author construct when discussing his love for his country? Why do you think he use this rhetorical technique?

9. What does the author say about Article 5 of the Constitution (include a clear statement describing the purpose of Article 5)?

10. What does the author explain about his salary? Why does he specifically address this idea to the House of Representatives (Hint: look at Article 1, Section 7)?

11. Summarize this primary source document and explain the historical context of the document using at least 1 direct quote from the document (no more than 15 words quoted).
Appendix M: Graphic Organizer Historical Context of

*George Washington's Inaugural Address*

**Historical Context:**

**Directions:** Using your textbook, support documents, Interactive Student Notebook, and the following links identify 10 historically significant events that occurred prior to George Washington’s First Inaugural Address. Focus your search on the theme of “Political Ideas/Institutions.” Complete the chart below.

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/

http://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/american-revolution-history

http://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Context:</strong> Historical Event/Idea/Person (focus on theme of “political ideas/institutions”)</th>
<th><strong>Historical Significance:</strong> Describe how the event/idea/person is historically significant. Include textual evidence. Include why you think the event is significant to consider in light of Washington becoming the first president of the US.</th>
<th><strong>Source/corroboraton:</strong> Where did the information come from? Find the information in more than one source.</th>
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Appendix N: Mini-project Government Illustration Project (Preparatory Scaffold)

**Directions (Major Assessment Grade—Due 12/14/2017):** Using your notes from support documents/readings (8-2.6; 8-3.1; 8-3.2; 8-3.3), articles and your textbook, create an illustration of the way our federal government functions. Including the key individuals in the major government positions; the key functions of the branches of government, and the principles of government (8-3.3) that are present in our federal government. The image on page 106 of your textbook can serve as a model to get you started. This material will be on your test.

You may use any paper, poster board, or other tangible (hard copy) medium for this assignment.

**Examine the Rubric Below for Required Elements:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIRED: Topics/Ideas/</th>
<th>Excellent: 2 Points</th>
<th>Average: 1 Point</th>
<th>Poor/Missing: 0 Points</th>
<th>Earned (50 points possible):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifies and labels the branches of the federal government</td>
<td>All branches of government have been identified &amp; labeled correctly</td>
<td>Branches are identified and labeled missing 1 or 1 element mislabeled</td>
<td>Missing or incorrectly labeled elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>X3</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies and labels the head of each branch of government</td>
<td>The correct person/people are listed in each branch</td>
<td>1 leader is misidentified</td>
<td>Missing or incorrectly labeled elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>X3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies and describes the Primary Function of each branch of government</td>
<td>Main functions for branches of government are correctly identified</td>
<td>No more than 1 error in identifying the functions for the branches of government</td>
<td>Missing or incorrectly labeled elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>X3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies and Describes how each branch limits other branches</td>
<td>Expertly describes how each individual branch limits the other branches</td>
<td>Average to vague description of how the individual branches limit each other</td>
<td>Missing or incorrectly described elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>X3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides an explanation of how members of each branch get into office</td>
<td>Expertly and completely explains how members get into office</td>
<td>Makes 1 error in explaining how members get into office</td>
<td>Missing or incorrectly explained</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>X3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REQUIRED: Topics/Ideas/</td>
<td>Excellent: 2 Points</td>
<td>Average: 1 Point</td>
<td>Poor/Missing: 0 Points</td>
<td>Earned (50 points possible):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides a brief history of each branch of government (at least three interesting events in the history of for each branch) X3</td>
<td>Provide expert but brief history for each branch of government including 3 events for each branch</td>
<td>Average history of each branch or missing 1 branch</td>
<td>Missing or incorrect information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains the historical significance of <em>Marbury v. Madison</em> X1</td>
<td>Expertly explains the historical significance of this case.</td>
<td>Identifies the case but does not explain historical significance</td>
<td>Missing or not explained</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explanation of Electoral College X1</td>
<td>Excellently identified and explained</td>
<td>Identified but vague explanation</td>
<td>Missing or not explained</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Grammar X2</td>
<td>No More than 2 errors</td>
<td>No More than 5 errors</td>
<td>More than 5 errors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphical Representation: Neat and orderly organization of the content on poster/paper X1</td>
<td>Excellent workmanship, excellent effort. Very clear that a great deal of thought put into organization.</td>
<td>Moderate workmanship some effort put forth, seems to have required thought and is moderately well organized</td>
<td>Poor workmanship. Little effort put into illustration. Poorly organized, not purposefully though through.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources Cited X2</td>
<td>Origin of all information is clearly cited.</td>
<td>Missing Citations</td>
<td>Unclear where information is from</td>
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<td>Total Points:</td>
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Appendix O: Student Engagement and Attitudes on the use of Primary Sources

Students who completed an informed consent for the study responded to the question below through Google Forms.

**Question:** “Did you learn more about the Constitution and Bill of Rights by reading them closely, discussing what you read and then answering guided questions or do you think you would have learned more if your teacher simply told you what you needed to know about the documents for the test and you never read them?”

**Student answers:**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Student response</th>
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<tr>
<td>i would of learned better if my teacher would of told me what i needed to know about the document in the front of a class because im not a big fan of reading and also when i read if it is not inserting i forgot in in like the next 10 min but when a teacher is at the front of a class joking and all that about is i reamber it</td>
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<tr>
<td>i learned some about the constitution a little more because are teacher was speaking on the constitution and taking notes was the best choice of doing it</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would need my teacher to talk to me more about it. Out of all the guided questions we did in class the bill of rights were the one that i didn't understand. I was getting confused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned more about the Constitution and Bill of Rights by reading them closely and answering questions because when I do that like its like I'm doing the right thing because I'm focused on answering and reading by myself &amp; It's much more focusing for me also I think I learned more from reading and answering questions because we get to work with others &amp; we get to hear what there opinion is about the document. Also I learn more with when the teacher tells us because he explains it more better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn more about the Constitution and The Bill of Rights because my teacher has helped me learn more about them by teaching us what he is suppose to be teaching us and giving us the right evidence to support are answers and he gave us the right to study just to make sure we know what to think about during the test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my opinion I think I would have learned more if my teacher would told me what I needed to know about the documents ( Constitution and Bill of Rights ). Because sometimes I do not understand what I am reading or understanding by reading them &quot;closely&quot; about the documents by just reading the documents, and afterwards just know ALL about the documents are about. And it would be better if the teacher told me what I needed to know about the documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that me looking more closely helped me best because when i get an image it helps me out a little bit more. but then when i get to the test I get nervous and I don't remember as much as I studied. so for me its easier doing it off the test then doing it with the test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i think i would have learned more if my teacher told me what i needed to know because that is the way i learn best is by the teacher talking to me about it. it helps me understand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

193
I learned about the constitution and the bill of rights from both because in my opinion it's good to read closely and let the teacher explain it. See I get distracted easy I mean I can't help it so I go home and do my work and bring it back because it's quite at my house so I can concentrate more than I do at school. But a good thing about letting the teacher explain it is so you can understand it more.

I learned by the reading about it. But I'm pretty sure I would have learned it a little better if the teacher would have done a lesson on it.

I would have learned more if the teacher told us what we needed to know about the documents.

I learned more about them by reading them closely and answering questions on them because it makes you focus more and you have to go back in the text and reread it to find the answers.

No, I learned more more my teacher.

I would rather know what I need to look for on a document so I can study better. This is partially why I turn in work late as often as I do, I'm not very good at picking out what's important and what's not important.

I think I would have learned more if the teacher told me what I needed to know so I don't have to ask questions later.

I would be better off if the teacher explained and go over them because it would stick better in my head than if I was to read it off a paper. When doing some of the question I remember some of the things the teacher had said so I knew the answer.

I Kinda Did I Wish I could Have Learned It A Little Better But It Is What It Is....

Yes

Yes I did learn about the constitution and bill of rights by reading them closely and answering questions, but I personally I would like if the teacher would go up to the board and teach

Personally it wouldn't have mattered because we would have learned the same thing regardless.

The best way to learn about the constitution and bill of rights is to use the documents your teacher has given you to understand.

I think I learned better from reading closely and answering questions. Why? Because it not only allows you to think for yourself but it allows you to challenge yourself of thinking harder when you get to something you don't know or something you did not know and you wanted to know more about it. Reading for yourself and answering question is good for me as well as a teacher teaching and explaining what to do or what you need to learn.

I didn't learn anything well barely because think since we just got handed those documents that we really didn't care about them so to me I think that you as the teacher should teach us and tell us all we need to know.

It definitely was a change up in the daily routine when it came to history class in the 8th
grade, but when I saw that on the board I immediately thought to myself, god no this again, and kept repeating that attitude over and over and over again, to the point where I just didn’t do it, yes I do believe that if you can get into the work that it can be beneficial, but it just simply wasn’t for me, it didn’t grab my attention at all really, so in conclusion I do not think it was beneficial (to me at least) and I do look forward to you teaching instead.

Well I was taught that the teachers would get up and teach it to us in front of the class for the whole class period but since it is the new year teachers just give out papers and we do them that may be the reason while I am failing my class I don’t know it is just this new thing where we just do the papers and be done does not work for me.

I believe I learned more about the Constitution and Bill of Rights by reading them closely and answering questions because I work better by myself so it’s easier for me to understand what I’m learning about and not get confused.

I learned that without these branches, politicians, laws, and constitutions The U.S. wouldn’t be how it is right now.

It would be better if I was just told what I needed to know about the documents. I’m a hands on learner, not a visual learner.

I can learn better if the teacher spent a little more time explaining the documents since I have a difficult time understanding the topic and or concept the assignment.

I think that I would have learned more if the teacher told me what I needed to know about the documents. If the teacher did that I could have studied what I needed to know instead of just reading the documents and other stuff.

the teacher explained it because that how we have been taught our whole lives them doing most of the teaching and we don’t normally read that much.

Well kinda, Because they been so much stuff we had learned like, bill of rights, Virginia plan, and more.

Yes I did learn more about it and the teacher help me a lot with it when he is teach us with like I understand it and then there more thing that I learn more then this year with the teacher and then there some that I did not understand then he help me find the page and then I got the work done and then that why.

Well I learn more when I’m by myself and do more work if I’m by myself.

I think I learned more by reading them and studying them to get a better understanding of it. I also think that I would also learn more by the teacher telling me the most important parts of the documents also.

I did learn somethings about the Constitution but not a lot. But I learn more about the Bill of Rights than the Constitution.

I think I would have learned a lot more if I read articles closely and if my teacher would tell me what I need to know about the documents.

If the teacher stood up in the class and told us about the Constitution and Bill of Rights I would fell as if I learned it better.

Yes I learned more because it was broken half amendments and I understood it more.

I learned more by reading them closely and answering questions because it gave a better understanding to really know what they mean if you take time to read and think about each law in the Bill Of Rights and the Constitution. I think if my teacher would have told
me everything i needed to know, I wouldn't have remembered everything because he
couldn't tell us how to think about it and get an understanding. We have to do that on our
own and I feel like thats a really important part of learning, getting an understanding of it
all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>is rotation valid: 1, is_table: true, is_diagram: false, primary_language: en</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes i think if i learn more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i learned a lot from the teacher yes i know we could have learned more but we learned a lot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Yes I learn more about the Constitution and Bill of Rights one thing is giving less of
questions that we know but, the question is straight out of the articles. |
| more by reading them because i can remember better when i see words and numbers. |
| I more about the Constitution and Bill of Rights by reading them closely and answering
questions because I did it by myself. |
| The best way for me to learn would be for the teacher to give me the sheet and read over
it and answering questions because then we can answer any questions that we have for
the teacher |
| I learned a little bit about the constitution and bill of rights |
| i think i would learn more and/or better if my told me what i needed to know |
| Yes i have learned more. |
| I think i would have learned more with your help only because i found the reading a little
hard . |
| i learned more when you was explaining details about the bill of right and giving
examples to fully understand it . |
| I learn more when you explained what it was about, I don't take in information by reading
and answering questions. |
| the best way is for the teacher teaching the lesson to me. By paper i can just read but still
don't understand. I need the teacher to help me understand what i need to know. |
| i think i would've learn more if my teacher told me what i needed to know about the
document and why i choose that is because it would of made it more easier |
| I would like for yhu tell me the important things. |
| I would have learn more with both because explanation give me an image but both gives
me a whole picture. |
| If my teacher told me what I mostly needed to know about the documents, cause
sometimes I forget and maybe remember when I find what is mostly needed and/or see
the true answer to the problem... |
| I had learn more about the bills of rights because I study a little a bit because
the teacher teach me about the bill of rights. |
| Yes I did read about the constitution and the bill of rights but i think reading the
documents instead of them telling it to us is better because I work better when I read it for
myself in my head instead of the teacher reading it outloud to the whole class. |