

Engaging U.S. History

From Roanoake to this morning's news

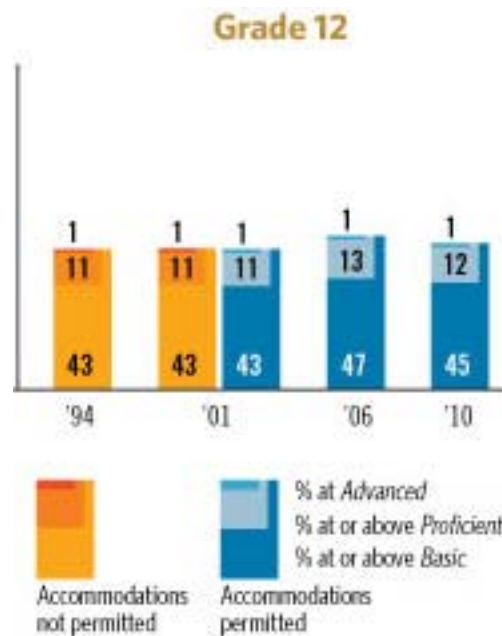
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Presented at the annual convention of the
California Council for the Social Studies
Saturday, March 9, 2013

The Problem



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), various years, 1994–2010 U.S. History Assessments.

Read the most recent NAEP U.S. History Assessment on the web at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main2010/2011468.asp>

A Solution:

Make it Strange!

- One surefire way to engage students is to take something familiar and make it strange, or to take something strange and make it familiar.

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Make it Strange!

- One surefire way to engage students is to take something familiar and make it strange, or to take something strange and make it familiar.
- Doing so sets up a sort of psychological dissonance. In the back of their minds, students perceive something out of order and are compelled to try to make it right.

For example:

Is **MEATE** an
English language
word?

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- If you voted yes, what does it mean?

Is **MEATE** an English language word?

- If you voted yes, what does it mean?
- If no, why does it not pass the word test?

Is **MEATE** an English language word?

Here is the sentence in which I found it.

Their fitting at meate.

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Their fitting at meate.

This sentence was published in Theodor de Bry's 1590 folio edition on the colonization of America. In it was included Thomas Hariot's A BRIEFE AND TRUE REPORT OF THE NEW FOUND LAND OF VIRGINIA (1588, the first report on England's initial attempt, in 1585, to build a colony in North America) with an addendum of drawings by John White. White and Hariot were members of that first colonization effort. The sentence I found is the headline above one of White's drawings.

If someone were to rewrite
this headline in modern
English, what might it say?

Including the engraving of White's image with the headline might help. http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white_debry_html/debry40.html

Their sitting at meate. XVI.



Looking at White's original watercolor might also help.

http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white_debry_html/white40.html



Here are the two images side by side.



http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white_debry_html/plate40.html

If someone were to rewrite this headline in modern English, what might it say?

Their fitting at meate.

Actually, it has been modernized several times.

In 2003, the University of North Carolina published a transcription of the headline ([online](#)) using the modern English alphabet (no elongated s) and a modern typeface.

Their sitting at meate.

In 1975, Michael Alexander chose to modernize its spelling and punctuation.
(from **Discovering the New World: based on the works of THEODORE DE BRY**,
edited by Michael Alexander. Harper and Row, 1975, page 79)

Their sitting at meat

In 1946, Stefan Lorant published a version in which he completely modernized the text.
(from **The New World: The First Pictures of America**, edited by Stefan Lorant.
Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946 and 1965, page 257)

How They Eat

In 1999, I translated it as

Sitting Down to a Meal

The lesson doesn't stop here

After examining the headline, I suggest dividing your class into small groups (no larger than 5 each). Have each group work on translating the published text (below) that appears beneath the engraving of White's drawing in the 1590 publication. Give the groups 15 or 20 minutes to complete their work, then have each report its result (as well as the problems it encountered and how it overcame them) to the class as a whole. When all have reported, have the class attempt to come up with a consensus translation.



Heir manner of feeding is in this wise. They lay a matt made of bents one the grownde and sett their meate on the mids therof, and then sit downe Rownde, the men vppon one side, and the woemen on the other. Their meate is Mayz foddren, in suche sorte as I described yt in the former treatise of verye good taste, deers flesche, or of some other beaste, and fishe. They are verye sober in their eatinge, and trinkinge, and consequentye verye longe liued because they doe not oppress nature.

Modernizations for the text shown above can be seen at:

<http://www.classroomtools.com/brieftrn.htm>

What do students learn from this lesson?

- 1) The English language changes over time, in the same way as do political institutions

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 - b) Words like MEATE have changed spelling & meaning

What do students learn from this lesson?

- 1) The English language changes over time, in the same way as do political institutions
 - a) The alphabet has changed: i.e. the elongated s has disappeared
 - b) Words like MEATE have changed spelling & meaning
 - For a list of some of the changes like these illustrated in this lesson see my web page at <http://www.classroomtools.com/briefles.htm>

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 - a) Everything we think we know about the first English colonies in North America is rooted in documents like the one we looked at here

What do students learn from this lesson?

- 2) History is much more than names, places, events and dates to be memorized & regurgitated
 - a) Everything we know about the first English colonies in North America is rooted in documents like the one we looked at here
 - b) These documents need to be interpreted, but interpretations may vary greatly depending on the researchers backgrounds and points of view

For additional resources related to
this activity, see my web site page
located at

<http://www.classroomtools.com/briefe.htm>

One can also make
non-primary source
material strange.

For example:

Students are familiar with history being taught as narrative, both in books and lecture. One can make these narratives strange by breaking them into pieces, giving one piece to each student on a card; then allowing the class to put the story together by organizing themselves into a coherent story (with the instruction that no one is allowed to surrender his/her card to anyone else).

We will now see how this works by attempting to reconstruct the Roanoake story.

Materials and instructions for this activity appear at
<http://www.classroomtools.com/RoanokeMystery.htm>

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What do students learn from this lesson?

- 1) Historians do not usually, if ever, find stories from the past whole and intact. They assemble them from pieces of information (primary sources) they and others come across as they research, interpret and share.
- 2) If pieces are missing, we (historians and other humans) almost automatically fill in the blanks to make the pieces we do have meaningful.
- 3) As new primary sources come to light, or new information is mined from existing sources using new techniques, stories can change.

What do students learn from this lesson?

- 1) Historians do not usually, if ever, find stories from the past whole and intact. They assemble them from pieces of information (primary sources) they and others come across as they research, interpret and share.
- 2) If pieces are missing, we (historians and other humans) almost automatically fill in the blanks to make the pieces we do have meaningful.
- 3) As new primary sources come to light, or new information is mined from existing sources using new techniques, stories can change.
- 4) Everybody has something important to contribute; we just need to seek it out and use it.

As new primary sources come to light, or new information is mined from existing sources using new techniques, stories can change

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- In May 2012, the British Museum (holder of the Roanoke primary sources) announced that using new techniques, researchers had discovered hidden marks on a map drawn by John White of the area where the colony was situated
- Researchers are now planning archeological efforts to explore the areas marked by the formerly hidden symbols, to see if they may at last discover the fate of the lost colonists
- You may read more about this at
http://www.firstcolonyfoundation.org/news/2012_white_map.aspx
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/04/us/map-markings-offer-clues-to-lost-colony.html>

Next we will look at how
we can make two
standard classroom items
strange – the wall
calendar and the
historical timeline.

Important Events in U.S. Historical Black-White Relations, 1585-2013

On what day of what month should we note the arrival of the 1st slaves?

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Important Events in U.S. Historical Black-White Relations, 1585-2013

On what day of what month should we note the drafting of the Constitution?

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1st slaves						

February

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Important Events in U.S. Historical Black-White Relations, 1585-2013

On what day of what month should we note the Dred Scott decision?

January

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Not slavery						

February

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August

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Not slavery						

Important Events in U.S. Historical Black-White Relations, 1585-2013

On what day of what month should we note the 13th amendment?

January

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1st slave						

February

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August

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November

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December

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Important Events in U.S. Historical Black-White Relations, 1585-2013

On what day of what month should we note Brown v. Board?

January

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1st slave						

February

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March

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August

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1st						

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December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Important Events in U.S. Historical Black-White Relations, 1585-2013

What lessons might students draw from the calendar below?

January

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Christmas	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 1st	30	31				

February

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

March

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

April

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

May

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

June

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Constitution Day	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

July

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

August

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18 Independence Day	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 13th	28	29	30 14th	31		

September

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 12th	2
3	4	5	6	7 1st	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 2nd	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22 3rd	23
24	25	26	27	28	29 4th	30

October

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

November

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	10 10th	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20 11th	21 12th	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 25th						

Important Events in U.S. Historical Black-White Relations, 1585-2013

What lessons might students draw from the calendar we created?

1. The United States condoned slavery through more than half its history

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Important Events in U.S. Historical Black-White Relations, 1585-2013

What lessons might students draw from the calendar we created?

1. The United States condoned slavery through more than half its history
2. Even after the abolition of slavery, apartheid and discrimination weighed heavily on African-Americans
3. It has only been in the last 13% of our history that we've begun to seriously address the effects left by the racism of the previous 87%.

Find the tools for creating calendars like the one with which we've been working on my web page located at <http://www.classroomtools.com/timeview.htm>

Another technique that has never
failed to engage my students

Tough Choices

In these activities, students grapple with real problems, faced by real people working together in small groups.

In the one we'll work through now, you and eleven others will act as jurors hearing evidence and deciding the guilt or innocence of Susan B. Anthony, charged with voting illegally on November 5, 1872.

Tough Choices

The Trial of Susan B. Anthony

- Evidence presented at trial showed that Miss Anthony insisted on, and was allowed to register to vote on November 1, 1872; then insisted on, and proceeded to vote on November 5, 1872. The election inspectors at the polling place voted 2 to 1 to allow her to cast the ballot she had voted. Her lawyer argued that the 14th amendment (1868) made her a citizen with equal rights to men, and rendered laws prohibiting women from voting unconstitutional.

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- The prosecution cited New York state law (Miss Anthony lived and voted in Rochester, NY) that prohibited New York women from voting; and the 1870 federal law that criminalized illegal voting. The prosecutor argued that voting in violation of NY law was illegal voting under federal law.

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- U.S. Supreme Court justice Ward Hunt, presiding at the Anthony trial in his role as circuit court judge, ruled that Miss Anthony was incompetent to testify in her own defense (as she was a woman), so the defense was forced to rest without presenting any testimony.

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- To find Miss Anthony guilty, all 12 members of your jury must vote for guilty. After discussing the evidence presented, and the law, how say you – guilty or not guilty?

Tough Choices

The Trial of Susan B. Anthony

- At the actual trial, once the defense rested, Justice Hunt pulled his previously written decision from his coat pocket, then read it from the bench. He directed a verdict of guilty (thus prohibiting the jurors who had heard the case from discussing the evidence and coming to their own verdict) and fined Miss Anthony \$100 and the costs of prosecution. In order to prohibit an appeal, he ordered that her jail sentence be postponed until after she paid the fine. She refused to pay the fine, and was never jailed.

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- To find out more about Tough Choices, with additional examples to use with your students, see my web page at <http://www.classroomtools.com/tough.htm>

I am currently working on a book showing how materials and lessons like those in this presentation can be used to teach critical thinking and other citizenship skills in U.S. History classes. If you would like to know when it becomes available, e-mail me at billchapman@classroomtools.com and ask me to send you notification when my book is available for purchase.