

Saywhat?!

Language, History and the Common Core

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The Common Core is coming.

What will history instruction aligned to it look like?

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In this session, we will look at one standard and see how it can be addressed using three separate documents.

Under the Common Core, the focus shifts from content to skills. Content is used to teach skills rather than the other way around as has been the case until now. Students will be tested on skills, not content.

The skills students are to learn are specified in the standards. Each Social Studies teacher will select age and class appropriate documents, then present them to students with questions that guide them as they develop the specified understanding, thinking and writing skills.

The Common Core social studies standards are available on the web, and in a free iOS app.

On the web at

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH>

In the free iOS app, Common Core Standards

The skill standard with which
we will be working today is

RH.4

“Determine the meaning of
words and phrases as they are
used in a text,....”

Document #1

Published in 1590 as part of *A Briefe and True Report of the Newfound Land of Virginia*

http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white_debry_html/debry40.html

How would we write the headline today if we wanted to convey the author's thought?

Their sitting at meate. XVI.



Document #1

How would we write the headline today if we wanted to convey the author's thought?
What questions do we need to ask and answer before we can create that sentence?

Their sitting at meate. XVI.



What questions do we need to ask and answer before we can create that sentence?

Perhaps the first should be:

Is **MEATE** an
English language
word?

What questions do we need to ask & answer before we can create that sentence?

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- Its entry there shows that the 1590 **meate** has lost its final **e** to become **meat**

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- Its entry there shows that the 1590 meate has lost its final e to become meat
- However, the phrase "at meate" or "at meat" has no meaning today

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- Its entry there shows that the 1590 meate has lost its final e to become meat
- However, the phrase "at meate" or "at meat" has no meaning today
- In 1590, however, the phrase had a meaning that has since been lost

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- Its entry there shows that the 1590 meate has lost its final e to become meat
- However, the phrase "at meate" or "at meat" has no meaning today
- In 1590, however, the phrase had a meaning that has since been lost
- That meaning was, "3. A meal, a feast. Sometimes: spec. the principal meal of a day, dinner. Also in various prepositional phrases (mostly somewhat arch.). at (†the) meat , †at meat and meal: at table, at or during a meal or meals. Similarly after meat, before meat, †to go to meat , etc. Now arch. and regional."

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- So today, we would most likely write "at meate" as "dinner" or "meal"

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How would we write the headline today if we wanted to convey the author's thought?
Are there other questions we need to ask and answer before we can create that sentence?

Their sitting at meate. XVI.



What questions do we need to ask and answer before we can create that sentence?

How about, what is the second
word in the sentence?

Their fitting at meate.

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- In 1590, there was an additional letter in the English alphabet, the elongated s.

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How about, what is the second word in the sentence?

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- To modern eyes, it looks like fitting.
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- In 1590, there was an additional letter in the English alphabet, the elongated s.
- Our lower case s was used as the last letter of a word.

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- To modern eyes, it looks like fitting.
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- In 1590, there was an additional letter in the English alphabet, the elongated s.
- Our lower case s was used as the last letter of a word.
- The elongated s was used at the beginning or in the middle of words.
- It differs from a lower case f in that the cross piece only appears on the left side.

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- The elongated s was used at the beginning or in the middle of words.
- It differs from a lower case f in that the cross piece only appears on the left side.
- Therefore, the second word in our sentence is sitting.

So, how might we write this sentence today?

Their fitting at meate.

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

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

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

The skill standard with which we are working today is RH.4

“Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text,....”

Document #2

2nd amendment to the US Constitution, adopted by the First Congress in 1789, ratified 1791.

The meaning of this amendment was not questioned in the nineteenth century, but violent disagreements began in the mid-twentieth; what do you think changed?

Amendment II

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

The amendment as recorded in the National Archives after ratification.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html

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- Therefore the 1792 Congressional mandate that all free, white 18-45 year old males purchase and maintain a weapon, and be trained to use it for military duty was abandoned.

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- In the 19th century, “the people” in this context was understood to mean the group acting through an elected state government, not individuals.
- Beginning after the Civil War and again in the latter half of the 20th century, a vocal growing percentage of citizens began to understand “the people” here to mean individuals. By 2008, a Gallup Poll showed 73% of the US public held this belief.

Document #2

2nd amendment to the US Constitution, adopted by the First Congress in 1789, ratified 1791.

Do the two commas inserted in the recorded copy of the amendment change the meaning of the amendment as adopted?

Amendment II

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ART. IV. A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. Adopted.

The amendment as adopted by Congress and submitted to the states for ratification.

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=001/llsl001.db&recNum=220>

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A sticker mandated for display in school Biology texts by the Cobb County, Georgia school board (2004). The county was sued in federal court, and the court ordered the stickers removed from the texts.

What is wrong with the stickers?

This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully, and critically considered.

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Perhaps an answer will emerge if we change just a couple of words.

This textbook contains material on gravity. Gravity is a theory, not a fact, regarding a physical phenomenon. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully, and critically considered.

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the·o·ry, n., pl. -ries.

1. a coherent group of general propositions used as principles of explanation for a class of phenomena: Einstein's theory of relativity.
2. a proposed explanation whose status is still conjectural, in contrast to well-established propositions that are regarded as reporting matters of actual fact.
3. Math. a body of principles, theorems, or the like, belonging to one subject: number theory.
4. the branch of a science or art that deals with its principles or methods, as distinguished from its practice: music theory.
5. a particular conception or view of something to be done or of the method of doing it; a system of rules or principles.
6. contemplation or speculation.
7. guess or conjecture.

[1590–1600]

—Syn. 1. THEORY, HYPOTHESIS are used in non-technical contexts to mean an untested idea or opinion. A THEORY in technical use is a more or less verified or established explanation accounting for known facts or phenomena: the theory of relativity. A HYPOTHESIS is a conjecture put forth as a possible explanation of phenomena or relations, which serves as a basis of argument or experimentation to reach the truth: This idea is only a hypothesis.

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The sticker authors use "theory" in a non-technical sense to imply guess, conjecture, contemplation or speculation (definition #6 or #7); however since the context is technical, definition #1 clearly applies. This play with the word **theory** makes their sticker argument *fallacious*.

One could reasonably argue that definition #2 might have applied to **Evolutionary Theory** when Darwin published *The Origin of Species* in 1859. However, the more than 150 years of research and discovery that have developed, expanded and strengthened it since then places it clearly within definition #1 today.

What does it tell you about the state of scientific literacy in our nation that only one third of us (according to the Gallup Poll) recognize the difference between a guess and a scientific theory?

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I am also 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.