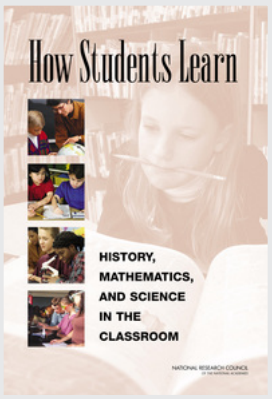

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DETAILS

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Part I

HISTORY

2

Putting Principles into Practice: Understanding History

Peter J. Lee

A major principle emerging from the work on *How People Learn* is that students do not come to their classrooms empty-handed. They bring with them ideas based on their own experience of how the world works and how people are likely to behave. Such ideas can be helpful to history teachers, but they can also create problems because ideas that work well in the everyday world are not always applicable to the study of history. The very fact that we are dealing with the past makes it easy for misconceptions to arise (soldiers and farmers are not the same now as in the seventeenth century, and "liberty" did not have the same meaning for people then as it does today). But problems with everyday ideas can go deeper. Students also have ideas about how we know about the past. If they believe, for example, that we can know nothing unless we were there to see it, they will have difficulty seeing how history is possible at all. They will think that because we cannot go back in time and see what happened, historians must just be guessing or, worse, making it up. If, as teachers, we do not know what ideas our students are working with, we cannot address such misconceptions. Even when we think we are making a difference, students may simply be assimilating what we say into their existing preconceptions.

Another principle of *How People Learn* is that students need a firm foundation of factual knowledge ordered around the key concepts of the discipline. Some of the key concepts for the study of history are concerned with the content or substance of history—with the way people and societies work. These substantive concepts include, for example, political concepts such as state, government, and power, and economic concepts such as trade, wealth,

and tax. But understanding history also involves concepts of a different kind, such as evidence, cause, and change.

Historians talk and write about things that go on in the world. Their histories are full of pioneers, politicians, and preachers, or of battles, bureaucracies, and banks. They give their readers explanations, they use evidence, and they write accounts, but their books are not about the idea of explanation, or the notion of evidence, or what kind of thing a historical account is. Rather, they use their own (usually sophisticated) understandings of evidence or explanation to write books about Columbus or the Maya or the American Revolution. Nevertheless, concepts such as evidence lie at the heart of history as a discipline. They shape our understanding of what it is to "do" history and allow us to organize our content knowledge (see Box 2-1).

There is no convenient agreed-upon term for this knowledge of the discipline. It is sometimes called "metahistorical"—literally, "beyond history"—because the knowledge involved is not part of what historians study, but knowledge of the kind of study in which they are involved. Another term sometimes used is "second-order" knowledge, denoting a layer of knowledge that lies behind the production of the actual content or substance of history. Finally, because the knowledge involved is built into the discipline of history, rather than what historians find out, another term used is "disciplinary" knowledge. In this chapter, all three terms are used interchangeably to refer to ideas about "doing history." It is important to stress that the intent here is not to suggest that students in school will be doing history at the same level or even in the same way as historians. The point is rather that students bring to school tacit ideas of what history is, and that we must address these ideas if we are to help them make progress in understanding what teachers and historians say about the past.

Once we start to include ideas of this kind among the key concepts of the discipline, we can see that they also provide a basis for enabling students to think about their own learning. We thereby arrive at the third principle emphasized in *How People Learn*—the importance of metacognitive strategies (see Chapter 1). Monitoring one's own learning in history means, among other things, knowing what questions to ask of sources and why caution is required in understanding people of the past. It means knowing what to look for in evaluating a historical account of the past, which in turn requires understanding that historians' accounts are related to questions and themes. In short, it means having some sense of what counts as "doing" history.

In Box 2-1, for example, Angela is implicitly asking whether her group is making the right moves in its attempt to explain why World War II started. She is using her knowledge of what counts as a good explanation in history to question how well the group really understands why the war began. In this way, metahistorical (disciplinary) concepts allow students to begin to

monitor their understanding of particular events in the past. As metacognitive strategies of this kind become explicit, they play an increasingly important role in learning.

This introductory chapter first explores students' preconceptions about history, pointing out some key concepts involved in making sense of the discipline. It considers students' ideas of time and change, of how we know about the past, of how we explain historical events and processes, and of what historical accounts are, and why they so often differ (second-order ideas). The discussion then turns to students' preconceptions of how political and economic activities work (substantive concepts). Of course, students' ideas change as their experience grows and they encounter new problems; this means we need to consider how we might expect students' ideas to develop as we teach them. Although there is a growing volume of research on students' ideas about history, one that is expanding particularly rapidly in the United States, it is important to remember that there has been much less work of this kind in history than in science or mathematics.[1] Research conducted in the United States and Europe over the past three decades appears to suggest that some of the key concepts of history (the discipline) are counterintuitive, and that some of the working assumptions about history used by students are much more powerful than others and may be developed in a systematic way over the years spent studying history in schools. The chapter ends with an exposition of how teachers can present history to their students in a way that works to develop historical understanding.

HISTORY AND EVERYDAY IDEAS

What do we mean by saying that history is "counterintuitive"? The "intuitions" at stake here are the everyday ideas students bring to history lessons. They are the ideas that students use to make sense of everyday life, and on the whole they work very well for that purpose. But people doing history are looking at things differently from the way we handle them for practical daily living.

Take the example of telling the truth. If a youngster gets home late and her mother asks where she has been, the child has a choice between "telling the truth" and "telling a lie." From the child's point of view, what has happened is a fixed, given past, which she knows very well; the only issue is whether she tells it the way it was. Often children learn what counts as "telling the truth" in just this kind of situation, where the known past functions as a touchstone; it is as if what one says can be held up against the past to see if it measures up. This idea works fine in some everyday situations, but in history the past is not given, and we cannot hold what we are saying up against the real past to see whether it matches. The inferential discipline

BOX 2-1 Understanding the Past and Understanding the Discipline of History

The three (British) seventh-grade students in the excerpt below are discussing why World War II started and whether it could have been avoided without thus far having studied this at school. All they have to work with from school history is their knowledge of World War I, along with anything they know from outside school. To understand what is going on here, we need to distinguish between two different kinds of knowledge about history: knowledge of what happened, of the *content* of history, and knowledge about the *discipline* of history itself.

Angela	I think Hitler was a madman, and I think that's what . . .
Susan	He was . . . a complete nutter, he should have been put in a . . . um . . .
Angela	He wanted a super-race of blond, blue-eyed people to rule the world.
Susan	Yeah—that followed him. . . .
Angela	I mean, but he was a short, fat, dark-haired sort of person.
Susan	. . . little person.
Katie	Could it be avoided? I don't think it could have.
Angela	No.
Katie	If Hitler hadn't started . . . I mean I can't blame it on him, but if he hadn't started that and provoked . . . you know . . . us . . . if, to say, you know, that's wrong . . .
Susan	It would have been [avoided]. . . .
Katie	Yeah, it would have been, but it wasn't.
Susan	Yeah, if you think about it, *every* war could've been avoided.
Angela	I reckon if Hitler hadn't come on the scene that would never have happened.
Katie	Oh yeah, yes, yes.
Angela	There must've been other *underlying* things, like World War I we found out there was lots of underlying causes, not only . . . Franz Ferdinand being shot. . . .
Susan	Yeah.
Angela	. . . but loads of other stuff as well.
Katie	Oh yeah, I don't think he was so far . . .

Angela	Yeah, there must've been a few other main currents. . . .
Katie	But, like that Franz Ferdinand, he didn't get, that was the main starting point for it all, that really blew it up. . . .
Angela	But I don't know whether . . . because we don't know any underlying causes. If Hitler *hadn't* been there, I don't know whether it could've been avoided or not.
Susan	Yeah but most wars can be avoided anyway, I mean if you think about it we could've avoided the First World War and *any* war . . .
Katie	. . . by discussing it.
Susan	Exactly.
Katie	Yeah, you can avoid it, but I don't think . . .
Angela	Yeah but not everybody's willing to discuss. . . .

SOURCE: Lee and Ashby (1984).

In discussing World War II, the three girls try to use what they have learned at school about World War I. Their knowledge points in two different directions. What they know about the events suggests to them that "most wars can be avoided" if people discuss their problems, so Susan and probably Katie think that World War II could have been avoided by reasonable negotiation. They have learned a "lesson" from their study of one passage of the past and, sensibly enough, try to apply it to another. Unfortunately the "lesson" does not hold. Angela has learned a different kind of knowledge from her earlier study of World War I, and it leads her to treat her friends' lesson with caution. She has learned that a historical explanation is likely to require more than a single immediate cause, and that "underlying causes" may also be at work. So even if there had been no Hitler, we need to know more about international relations between the wars before we can say that World War II could have been avoided. Angela's knowledge of how explanations are given in the discipline of history provides her with a more powerful way of thinking about why things happen. She knows what to look for.

of history has evolved precisely because, beyond the reach of living memory, the real past cannot play any direct role in our accounts of it. History depends on the interrogation of sources of evidence, which do not of themselves provide an unproblematic picture of the past.

Everyday ideas about a past that is given can make it difficult for students to understand basic features of doing history. For example, how is it possible for historians to give differing accounts of the same piece of history? (See Box 2-2.) Students' common sense tells them that the historians must be getting things wrong somewhere.

Differences in the Power of Ideas

The everyday idea of telling the truth is often closely linked to a very recent past in which people remember what they did or saw. Some students behave as if they believe the past is somehow just there, and it has never really occurred to them to wonder how we know about it. In Box 2-2, Kirsty, like many other fifth and sixth graders, does not even raise the question of how we could know about the past.

Other youngsters are only too well aware that this question may be problematic. Allison, a fifth grader, states the difficulty quite clearly: "You cannot really decide unless you were there." If one thinks like this, history becomes impossible. If knowing something depends on having seen it (or better still, having done it), one can never say anything worthwhile about most of the past. Many students stop here, wondering what the point of history is. However, while some working assumptions make history appear to students to be a futile exercise, others allow its study to go forward.

Samantha (fifth grade):

Why are there different dates?
No one knows, because no one was around then, so they both can be wrong.
How could you decide when the Empire ended?
If you found an old diary or something it might help.
Does it matter if there are two different dates?
Yes, because you can get mixed up and confused.

We can see here both the problem and initial steps toward a solution. Samantha appears to agree with Allison when she writes, "No one knows, because no one was around then." But Samantha, unlike Allison, sees the beginnings of a way out for historians. Perhaps someone told it the way it was and wrote it down, and we could find it: "If you found an old diary or something it might help." This view remains very limiting because it still sees

the past as fixed, but it does make history possible. If we have true reports, historians are in business.

Of course, many students see that truthful testimony may not be easy to come by. They are well aware that people have reasons for saying what they say and the way they say it. As Brian (eighth grade) remarks, "I don't think we could find out definitely [when the Empire ended] because there are only biased stories left." Students who decide that we cannot rely on reports because they are biased or give only opinions are almost back to square one. If history is possible only when people (eyewitnesses or agents) tell us truthfully what happened, its study once more comes to a stop.

It is only when students understand that historians can ask questions about historical sources that those sources were not designed to answer, and that much of the evidence used by historians was not intended to report anything, that they are freed from dependence on truthful testimony. Much of what holds interest for historians (such as, What explains American economic supremacy in the postwar years? Did the changing role of women in the second half of the twentieth century strengthen or weaken American social cohesion?) could not have been "eyewitnessed" by anyone, not even by us if we could return by time machine. Once students begin to operate with a concept of evidence as something inferential and see eyewitnesses not as handing down history but as providing evidence, history can resume once again; it becomes an intelligible, even a powerful, way of thinking about the past.

The Progression of Ideas

Insofar as some of the ideas students hold are more powerful than others, we may talk about progression in the way students understand the discipline of history. For example, changes in students' ideas about our access to the past allow us to discern a pattern of progression of ideas about *evidence*. Working from less to more powerful ideas, we find a given past with no questions arising about how we can know; a notion of testimony, with questions about how truthful a report may be; and a concept of evidence, whereby questions can be asked that no one was intending to answer.[2] (Medieval garbage dumps were not constructed to fool historians.) Once we are able to think in terms of a progression of ideas in history, we can see how students' understandings can gradually be extended. In some cases we can accomplish this by enabling students to discover how prior conceptions break down in the face of historical problems. However workable the idea of a given past may be in everyday life, for instance, it is a misconception in history. In other cases we can build more directly on existing ideas. Thus testimony is important to historians, even if it must be used as evidence rather than simply being accepted or rejected. The goal is to

BOX 2-2 Two Different Ideas About Historical Accounts

In research by Project CHATA (Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches) into students' understanding of how there can be different historical accounts of the same events, 320 British students in grades 2, 5, 6, and 8 were given three pairs of stories and asked how it is possible for there to be two different history stories about the same thing. Each pair of stories was about a different topic, and the two stories making up any particular pair were the same length and ran side by side down a single page. Specially drawn cartoons illustrated key themes and steps in the story. Younger children tended to say that the two stories in each pair were "the same" because they were "about the same thing" but were just "told differently." Many of the students considered that the pairs of stories were different because no one has enough knowledge. Older students tended to emphasize the role of the author, some relying on relatively simple ideas of lies and bias as distorting stories, and others taking a more sophisticated view about the inevitability and legitimacy of a point of view. About 20 percent of the older students pointed out that stories answer different questions and fit different parameters (not their word). They did not see historical accounts as copies of the past and thought it natural that such accounts should differ.

One pair of stories had to do with the end of the Roman Empire, each claiming it ended at a different date. The first story, dealing mainly with the barbarian incursions, ended with the fall of the Empire in the West in 476. The second, which concentrated on the Empire's administrative problems, took the story up to the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Below are two (written) responses to the task.

Kirsty (fifth grade):

Why are there different dates?

One of the stories must be wrong.

How could you decide when the Empire ended?

See what books or encyclopedias say.

Does it matter if there are two different dates?

*Yes, because if someone reads it and it has the wrong date in it then they will be wrong and might go round telling people.**

Kirsty's view of history is that if there is more than one account, one must be wrong. The past is given (in books), and she is sure that if historians read the same books and are honest, they will come up with the same story "because they will do the same things and they are not lying." Everyday ideas are apparent here, but they do not help Kirsty solve the problem she faces. We can see how different things look for someone who has a more sophisticated understanding of what a historical account is if we read Lara's response to the same problem.

Lara (eighth grade):
Why are there different dates?
Because there is no definite way of telling when it ended. Some think it is when its city was captured or when it was first invaded or some other time.
How could you decide when the Empire ended?
By setting a fixed thing what happened for example when its capitals were taken, or when it was totally annihilated or something and then finding the date.
Could there be other possible times when the Empire ended?
Yes, because it depends on what you think ended it, whether it was the taking of Rome or Constantinople or when it was first invaded or some other time.

Where Kirsty sees the past as given, Lara understands that it has to be reconstructed in that statements about the end of the Roman Empire are judgments about the past, not just descriptions of events in it. This means that a historical account is not fixed by the past, but something that historians must work at, deciding on a theme and timescale. Thus the problem of the date of the end of the Roman Empire is not a matter of finding an already given right answer but of deciding what, within the parameters of a particular account, counts as the end. Knowing when the Roman Empire ended is not like knowing when Columbus reached America.

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*All responses in this chapter not otherwise attributed are unpublished examples of responses from Project CHATA. For published CHATA work, see, for example, Lee and Ashby (2000).

help students develop more powerful ideas that make the study of history an intelligible task, even in the face of disagreement and uncertainty, whether encountered in school or in the multiple histories at large in the wider world.

Grounds for Caution

Some caution is needed here. The notion of getting students to understand the discipline of history may appear to make life absurdly difficult for adolescents, let alone fourth graders. It is perhaps appropriate, therefore, to clarify at this juncture what we are *not* saying. We are not saying that teaching history is about training mini-historians. Second-order, disciplinary understandings of the kind we are talking about are not all-or-nothing understandings. Historians no doubt learned some science at school or college, but their understanding of science is not likely to be in the same league as that of a professional physicist. This does not mean their understanding is equivalent to that of a 7-year-old, nor does it mean such understanding is useless. Developing students' understanding of history is worthwhile without implying any grandiose claims.

It is also important to recognize that learning to understand the discipline does not replace the goal of understanding particular periods of the past. The substantive history (the "content" of the curriculum) that students are required to study is important, and so there will always be arguments about what is to be included, what should be omitted, and whether there is too much to cover. Regardless of what must be taught, however, understanding the kind of knowledge history is, its evidentially based facts and its stories and explanations, is as much a part of what it means to know some history as is knowing about the chosen periods of study, whatever these may be. Better understanding of key second-order ideas can help students make sense of any new topics they encounter. Although the quantity of research evidence available on the transfer of disciplinary ideas from one topic to another is relatively small, an evaluation of the Schools Council History Project in the United Kingdom suggests that teaching for transfer can be successful.[3] In light of the principles of *How People Learn*, this should not be entirely unexpected.

The point of learning history is that students can make sense of the past, and doing so means knowing some historical content. But understanding the discipline allows more serious engagement with the substantive history students study and enables them to do things with their historical knowledge. This is why such an understanding is sometimes described in terms of *skills*. However, the term is misleading. Skills are commonly single-track activities, such as riding a bicycle, which may be learned and improved through practice. The understandings at stake in history are complex and demand reflection. Students are unlikely to acquire second-order under-

standings by practice alone; they need to think about what they are doing and the extent to which they understand it. This kind of metacognitive approach is essential for learning history effectively. Building ideas that can be used effectively is a task that requires continuous monitoring and thinking on the part of both teacher and student.

The Ideas We Need to Address

Historians give temporal order to the past, explain why events and processes took place as they did, and write accounts of the past; they base everything they do on the evidence available. In this section we examine some key second-order concepts that give shape to the discipline of history: *time*, *change*, *empathy* (roughly, understanding people in the past), and *cause*, as well as *evidence* and *accounts*, mentioned earlier in passing. With any such list of second-order concepts, it is important to remember that we are using labels that refer to an adult concept to cover a whole range of understandings. When we talk about a concept such as *evidence*, as we have already seen, some of these understandings will fall far short of the kind of ideas we eventually want our students to grasp. For many students, what we present to them as *evidence* will be thought of as *information* or *testimony*. Thus if we say of a particular lesson that one of its purposes is "to teach students about evidence," we are thinking of where we want the students to arrive, not how they may actually be operating. The same considerations apply to anything we say about other ideas.

Time

The concepts of time and change are clearly central to history. Time in history is measured through a conventional system of dates, and the importance of dates is that they allow students to order past events and processes in terms of sequence and duration. The latter is particularly important if students are to understand that processes in history (for example, urbanization or shifts in the attitudes of Europeans and Native Americans toward each other) may be long-drawn-out and cannot be treated as if they were events taking place at a particular moment.

Teachers at the elementary level often say their students have no concept of time. This may mean that children foreshorten the passage of time in waiting for some anticipated event or that they cannot "work" clock time (perhaps their counting skills are defective, or they do not understand the analogue symbolism of a clock face). It seldom means that even very young children have failed to internalize their everyday basic temporal structures, such as day and night or breakfast, lunch, and dinner, let alone patterns of work and play. But they may have trouble estimating the long duration of

passages of the past, and once again the attempt to transfer common-sense ideas about time from everyday life to history may pose problems.

For example, when English first-grade students were asked to sort paired pictures of people and objects into piles labeled "from long ago" and "from now," a significant majority were influenced by such factors as the physical condition of the objects portrayed and the state of the pictures. When a picture of a 7-year-old in a Victorian Little Lord Fauntleroy suit was paired with a modern photograph of an old man, most students said the Victorian picture was "from now." A picture of a beat-up and dirty modern car would be placed on the "from long ago" pile when paired with a photograph of a bright and shiny museum stagecoach. The pairing of clean and crisp pictures with bent, faded, and dog-eared pictures proved to be almost as distracting. It is clear that for these first graders, the historical distinction between long ago and now had been assimilated into the common-sense distinctions of old versus young and old versus new.[4]

With time, as with other ideas, history can be counterintuitive. Several features of history show the limits of a "clock time" understanding. Even apparently conventional terms are not always what they appear to be. Notoriously, a century in history is not necessarily a hundred years when used as an adjective (as in "eighteenth-century music"). The nineteenth century may be held to have closed with the start of the Great War of 1914–1918 or with the entry of America into the war and the beginning of the "American Century." The reason there are alternative possibilities and even disputes about such matters is obvious enough: historians clump and partition segments of time not as bits of time but as events, processes, and states of affairs that appear to belong together from certain perspectives. Thus the eighteenth century may be shorter musically than it is architecturally. Start and end dates are debatable, such that it makes no sense to argue over the beginning and end of any conventionally designated century. Much the same could be said about decades. When, for example, did "the 1960s" begin?

Of course, none of this means the conventional time markers and their normal mathematical relationships are unimportant in history or that they do not need to be understood, only that they must be supplemented by other ideas. The problem with centuries or decades is that they are linked to ideas of *period* in history (see Box 2-3). Knowing historical periods and being able to use them depends on knowing some of the history from which they are constructed. It means knowing the themes historians have chosen as a basis for thinking about the past. It may also mean knowing how people saw themselves, which presupposes that students recognize the distance of the past from our thinking as well as our time. For this reason, as well as the fact that it requires a good deal of knowledge, a sense of period is a difficult achievement for students, one that tends to come late in their study of history.[5]

BOX 2-3 Periods in History

Periods in history are not necessarily transparent, as this example from Sweden indicates. The students are responding to the teacher's question about which historical period came after the Renaissance.

Student	The Baroque Period.
Teacher	In the fine arts, yes.
Student	The Age of Greatness.
Teacher	Yes, but that was in Sweden.
Student	The Age of Freedom.
Teacher	That came a bit later.
Student	The Age of Monarchic Absolutism.
Teacher	Yes, or the Age of Autocracy. What's the period that we're reading about now?
Student	The Age of Freedom.
Teacher	In Sweden, yes.
Student	The Age of Enlightenment.
Teacher	Yes.

Halldén, who reports this exchange, comments, "It is tragic-comical that, in this particular case, the concepts that are supposed to help the students grasp the continuity of history become a problem in themselves." He adds, "It is highly probable that this is not an exceptional case."

SOURCE: Halldén (1994).

Change

Events are not in themselves changes, although this is exactly how many students see things. For children, the everyday model of change can often be simple. One minute "nothing" is happening, and then something does happen (often, someone does something). So there has been a change, and the change is that an event has taken place. It is a natural step to think of the event as a change.[6]

History tends to deal with longer scales than the moment-to-moment scale of everyday life, and historians are unlikely to subscribe to the notion of "nothing" happening. The idea that nothing happens is typically an ev-

eryday-life notion, rooted in highly conventional and agreed-upon ideas about what counts as interesting. Historians also operate with criteria of importance that include or exclude events, but these criteria are likely to be contested. Instead of the idea that no events occurred, historians are apt to work with the notion of *continuity*. This notion presupposes two other key ideas—*state of affairs* and *theme*. Change in history is generally to be understood in terms of changes in states of affairs; it is not equivalent to the occurrence of events. Consider the change from a state of affairs in which a class does not trust a teacher to one in which it does. There may be no event that could be singled out as marking the change, just a long and gradual process. Similarly in history, changes in population density, the role of the automobile industry in the economy, or attitudes toward minority cultures may change without any landmark event denoting a point in time in which the change took place. If students see changes as events, the idea of gradual, unintended changes in situations or in the context of actions and events is not available to them. Change is likely to be regarded as episodic, intentional (and hence rational or stupid), and able to be telescoped into a small compass (see Box 2-4).

As students become aware that historians must choose themes to write about (it is not possible to write about everything at once), they can begin to think in terms of patterns of change. What was changing? How? Was it changing a lot or just a little? Answering such questions involves concepts such as the *direction* and *pace* of change. One of the key understandings for students is that changes can run in different directions both between and within themes. Suppose the theme is subsistence and food production. For societies in Western Europe over a long period, food became more reliable, relatively cheaper (compared with income), more easily obtained, and available in a wider variety. Of course, in a parallel theme dealing with changes in the environment, there were costs. Here once again, students' preconceptions can cause problems. There is some evidence from research that students tend to think of the direction of change as automatically involving progress, and that this tendency may be more marked in the United States than in some other countries.[7] This misconception can lead to a condescending attitude toward the past, while also making it more difficult to grasp the complexities of change.

Two of the most common ideas likely to be encountered among students are the notion that everything gets better and that the past can be viewed in terms of deficits. Kenny (fourth grade) suggests some examples of progress:

> *Better cars, they've gone from women [now] getting the exact same thing as men; now black people have gone from being horrible people to being—they're the best athletes in*

BOX 2-4 Change as Progressive, Rational, and Limited in Time

Keith Barton spent a year in two Cincinnati classrooms, observing, discussing lessons with the teachers, and interviewing students. In his formal interviewing he showed pictures from different periods of American history to pairs of fourth and fifth graders and asked them to put the pictures in order, explaining their reasons as they did so.

He found that students envisaged change as something linear and "generally beneficial." They tended to think of change as being spatially and temporally limited in scope and "conceived of history as involving a limited number of discrete events, rather than lengthy and extensive processes." They "thought of change as having come about for logical reasons" and believed that people in the past decided to make changes because they realized, usually in the face of some particular event, that change would improve matters. Hence Jenny, a fourth-grade student, explained the end of witch trials like this:

> *When they accused like the mayor's wife or somebody's wife that they were a witch, and he said, "This has gone too far, we've killed enough innocent people, I want you to let everyone go, my wife is not a witch, and this has just gone too far," and then, just like that, everybody just forgot, and they didn't accuse people of witches anymore.*

Jenny has turned a process of change into an event. Someone important made a rational decision that everyone accepted forthwith.

SOURCES: Barton (1996), Lee and Ashby (2001).

> *the world, they've gone from bad to good—and the cars have gone from bad to good; everything has gotten better than before.*[8]

The idea of progress is reinforced by the idea—a very natural one acquired in part, no doubt, from parents and grandparents—of a deficit past. "Milk used to come in bottles because they didn't have cardboard." It was delivered to people's houses because "they didn't have many stores back then." Bicycles looked different because "they hadn't come up with the ideas yet."[9]

Patterns of change also provide a context for attributing *significance* in history. Significance can be attributed to changes within themes. A key idea for students is that the same change may have differing significance within different themes.[10] The significance of change in food marketing, for ex-

ample, may differ for a theme of changes in health and one of patterns of working life and employment.

Empathy

One kind of explanation in history involves showing that what people did in the past makes sense in terms of their ideas about the world. This kind of explanation is often called *empathy*. Here we run into some problems. The word "empathy" has more than one meaning, and it tends to be used only because finding a single word that does the job better is difficult. (Other labels are "historical understanding" and "perspective taking"; however, the former is too broad, and the latter tends to get confused with "multiple perspectives," which is more a matter of the points of view from which accounts are constructed.) The use of the word "empathy" in history education is to some extent stipulative (that is, the word is assigned a particular meaning, whatever other meanings it may have in the world outside history education). To that extent it is jargon, but there is no harm in this if it helps professionals reach a consensus on what they are talking about.

The central idea here is that people in the past did not all share our way of looking at the world. For this reason, when writing or reading history we must understand the ideas, beliefs, and values with which different groups of people in the past made sense of the opportunities and constraints that formed the context within which they lived and made decisions about what to do. Thus empathy in the study of history is the understanding of past institutions, social practices, or actions as making sense in light of the way people saw things. Why, for example, would a free peasant agree to become a serf in the Middle Ages? Southern (1953, pp. 109-110) explains an act that appears almost perverse to us now by showing how it could fit into a pattern of beliefs and values: "There was nothing abhorrent in the idea of servitude—everything depended on its object. All men by sin have lost the dignity of freedom and have made themselves, in varying degrees, slaves of their passions. . . ." He quotes St. Anselm:

> Is not every man born to labor as a bird to flight? . . . . So if all men labor and serve, and the serf is a freeman of the Lord, and the freeman is a serf of Christ, what does it matter apart from pride—either to the world or to God—who is called a serf and who is called free?

Southern continues:

It is easy to see that from this point of view secular serfdom had no terrors. The burdens and restrictions it imposed were of featherweight compared with those imposed by the radical servitude of unredeemed nature. At best, this human

> *servitude was a preparatory discipline . . . at worst, it added only one more lord . . . to an array of lordly passions under which human nature already groaned. . . .*

Southern's explanation—and of course this is only a short excerpt, not a full explanation even of the narrow issue of why people might *choose* serfdom—relies on the reconstruction of past beliefs and values using historical evidence. Empathy is not a special faculty for getting into other people's minds, but an understanding we achieve if we entertain ideas very different from our own. "Entertaining" ideas here denotes more an achievement than a special sort of process. It is where we arrive when, on the basis of evidence, we can say how someone might have seen things. It requires hard thinking and use of the evidence we have in a valid way. Empathy, however, is not just having the inert knowledge that people saw things in the way they did, but also being able to use that knowledge to make sense of what was done. This is not a matter of having an emotional bond. In history we must empathize with ideas we might oppose in the unlikely event we came across exactly the same ideas in the present. If understanding people in the past required shared feelings, history would be impossible. Understanding the hopes of the Pilgrims means entertaining their beliefs and values and knowing that they had those hopes. But we cannot now share the hopes—feel them ourselves—even if we want to, because to hope for something means to see it as a possible outcome, and our hindsight allows us to know that the outcome did not occur. Similarly, we cannot experience the fear felt by people in Britain in 1940 that Hitler might triumph and occupy their country. The same holds for a great deal of history.

None of this is to say that we do not want students to care about people in the past. If they treat people in the past as less than fully human and do not respond to those people's hopes and fears, they have hardly begun to understand what history is about.[11] But people in the past can appear to be strange and sometimes to do peculiar things (things we would not do) and so it is not always easy for students to accord them respect.

Partly because students tend to think about people in the past as not having what we have, and partly because they encounter decisions or ways of behaving that are difficult to make sense of, they tend to write off people in the past as not as smart as we are. (Evidence for the ideas described below goes back nearly 30 years and appears to have survived through a variety of changes in teaching.)[12] Students are quite capable of assuming that people in the past did not understand or do very basic things. A highly intelligent eighth grader, puzzling out why the Saxons might have used the ordeal of cold water to discover whether someone was guilty of a crime, declares, "But *we* know that nowadays if you ain't got air you're dead, but they didn't." An exchange between two eighth graders, this time about the ordeal of hot water, shows a similar disposition to write off the past:[13]

Sophie	And what about the boiling water, the boiling water—that could be hotter one time than another. I know it boils at 100 degrees centigrade, but um . . .
Mark	They wouldn't be able to get it that high, would they, in them times.

Another common way of dealing with the strange activities of human beings of the past is to assimilate those activities with our own. Often this is done in routine, even stereotypical ways. Mark, a fifth grader, explains why European monarchs paid for overseas ventures to the New World:[14] "They were greedy and wanted gold and more land, and sometimes they wanted jewels and different things." This sort of explanation is almost standard for monarchs and emperors, regardless of the period involved. Claudius invaded Britain for much the same reason:[15] "to get the pearls, the tin and the gold," or because "he wanted more land." Of course, assimilation can be more sophisticated than these examples, but may still leave problems unresolved. When, to return to our earlier example, students do not simply write off the Saxon ordeal but instead construe it as either a "punishment" or a "deterrent," they often remain dissatisfied with their own explanation.

At a higher level, students begin to think carefully about the particular situation in which people found themselves. What exactly were the circumstances in which they had to make decisions about what to do? This thinking can involve careful exploration, in which a variety of elements of the situation are related to one another. But although students who think like this make considerable efforts to understand why people in the past did what they did, they still tend to think in terms of present ideas (see Box 2-5).

Some students, however, will recognize that people in the past not only found themselves in different situations from those of today, but also thought differently, as is evident in this eighth grader's explanation of trial by ordeal:[16]

> *I think that the Saxons used the ordeal partly because of their belief in God. I think that the Saxons believed that as the ordeal was the judgment of God, and because God had power over everyone, God would heal your hand or make you sink if you were innocent, or make you float or your hand not heal if you were guilty. I think that the Saxons believed that God would save you, and God was saying if you were guilty or innocent.*

The ordeal becomes intelligible as a different way of thinking about things from our own, and our job in doing history is to understand it in past

terms as well as ours. Occasionally, students even in the second or third grade think like this, but given the way parents and grandparents introduce children to the differences between the past and the present, as well as prevailing ideas about "progress," we are more likely to encounter assumptions about a deficit past. Nevertheless, with teaching that aims to develop sensitivity to past ways of thinking, one can expect to find students making moves such as the one Sarah (a fifth grader) makes in trying to work out why the Helots did not rebel against their Spartan masters:

> *We're given the training of freedom, right, we're given this ever since we grew up, and we have had freedom, in different ways. But these people never had freedom at all, so they can't imagine life without being enslaves [sic] right? They don't know what it's like, they'd be scared of it.*[17]

There is an element of condescension in this view, perhaps. But what appears to her fellow students as craven weakness on the part of the Helots in failing to rebel despite great numerical superiority, Sarah recognizes as an intelligible position.

Cause

Not all explanations in history are concerned with understanding people's reasons for acting or thinking as they did. We often want to explain why something happened that no one intended. Actions have unintended consequences, or simply fail to achieve their purposes. Historians also explain why large-scale events or processes occurred (for example, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, or American westward expansion). In such cases, understanding what people were trying to do—their reasons for action—can be only part of an explanation of how events turned out, and we are likely to have to start talking in terms of *causes*. Students who have noticed this sometimes take a step too far and dismiss intentions as irrelevant since "they didn't happen." (No one intended World War I, so what people were trying to do is irrelevant.) When asked whether knowledge of people's plans is important to historians even if the plans go wrong, a typical response of students thinking this way is:[18] "No! 'Cos they didn't cause anything then if they went wrong."

Students often treat causes as special events that make new events happen in much the same way as individual people do things: causes act the way human agents act. When one fails to do something, nothing happens; similarly, if no causes act, nothing happens. It is as if the alternative to something happening is not something different occurring, but a hole being left in history.[19] Students thinking like this misconceive the explanatory task,

BOX 2-5 Exploring the Logic of the Situation

Even young children may sometimes give quite sophisticated explanations of apparently puzzling actions in the past, but they tend to rely on our modern ways of thinking to explain why people did as they did.

Twenty-three second graders in three schools in England were interviewed to explore how far and in what ways their ideas about history changed as they went through school. The CHATA researchers interviewed them twice in grade 2 and again at the end of grades 3 and 4. The students were asked to explain actions that appeared puzzling according to modern ways of thinking. They were given information about the people concerned and the circumstances they faced, including the broader context of the situation. The materials also included information about ideas and values held by people at the time.

In grade 2, 6 children were baffled in the face of a puzzling action, and 12 gave explanations of action in personal terms (e.g., the emperor Claudius ordered the invasion of Britain because he "wanted gold"). By grade 4 there was a shift: 2 children remained baffled, but more than half had moved to or beyond explanations appealing to roles (e.g., explaining the invasion by appeal to the kinds of things that *emperors* do). Four children explained by examining the situation in which people were acting.

One fourth grader (Carol) tried to reconstruct the situation and values of Elizabeth I to explain why she delayed so long in ordering the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, in a way not characteristic of many eighth graders.*

Carol	Well, there're a number of reasons. Well, one, Mary was Elizabeth's cousin, and she couldn't desert her just like that, even though, well, their differences; and also I think she wanted to hold the favor of the Catholics in England and Scotland for as long as she could, and also, she didn't want to have a civil war, as I said, she didn't really have the money to, er, well, get together an army to fight.
Interviewer	So, erm, hang on . . . so she wanted to avoid civil war?
Carol	Yes.

Interviewer	Who would she have had the civil war with?
Carol	Well, as she was a Protestant, she might have had a civil war with the Catholics.
Interviewer	Ah, right, right, anything else?
Carol	Er, well, it partly . . . it might have been to do with the other countries, the Catholic countries, France, Spain, Holland. And she might have, even though they weren't sort of joined together, united as friends, I think she wanted to avoid a war, at least very bad relations with those countries.
Interviewer	Right . . . and why would she want to avoid a war with those?
Carol	Well, as I said before, there's the money, the . . . she wanted to keep, and also, well, I suspect she wanted to keep on good relations with the whole of Europe.
Interviewer	Right, any other points?
Carol	Er, not really. I don't think so, at least.
Interviewer	No, Ok. Does anything puzzle you about Elizabeth delaying for so long?
Carol	No, no.
Interviewer	Nothing at all?
Carol	No.

Carol's achievement here is considerable. She takes into account Elizabeth's relationship with Mary, the possibility of clashes between Protestants and Catholics at home, the danger of war with other European countries, and the financial burdens of war. But none of these considerations goes beyond present-day ways of thinking about Elizabeth's decisions. Despite having relevant information at hand, Carol does not, for example, take account of Elizabeth's reluctance to execute another monarch, and shows no sign of understanding what a serious step this would be.

*Interview from unpublished CHATA longitudinal study, Lee, Dickinson, and Ashby (1996b).

seeing it as explaining, for example, why the Civil War happened as opposed to "nothing" happening. But the task for historians is to explain why the Civil War occurred rather than other possibilities (such as a compromise solution or the gradual demise of slavery).

Another idea connected with seeing causes as special kinds of events is that causes are discrete entities, acting independently from each other. Construed this way, they can be thought of as piling up so that eventually there are enough causes to make something happen. Hence students make lists, and the more causes are on the list, the more likely the event is to happen. (The bigger the event, the longer the list needs to be.[20]) Some students, while still seeing causes as discrete events, go beyond the idea of a list and link the causes together as a linear chain. The first event impacts on the second, which in turn causes the third, and so on down a line. Should a textbook tackle the question of why Europeans went exploring with brief sections on the Renaissance, the rise of nation states, demand for luxury goods, and technological developments, some students will see these as interchangeable items. Others will try to order them in a linear chain, seeing the Renaissance as leading to nation states, which in turn led to demand for luxury goods, which in turn led to technological changes in navigation and ship design. This is a more powerful idea than simply piling causes up, but still makes it difficult for students to cope with the complex interactions that lie at the heart of historical explanations.[21]

The notion of causes as discrete events makes it difficult for students to understand explanations as dealing with relationships among a network of events, processes, and states of affairs, rather than a series of cumulative blows delivered to propel an outcome forward. In the textbook example of the question of why Europeans went exploring, the Renaissance helps explain developments in technology and astronomy, the rise of the nation state helps explain both demand for luxury goods from the east and the technological developments, and those technological developments in turn made it possible to meet and indirectly further stimulated the demand. There is a network of relationships involved, not a simple chain. In historical explanations, the relationships among the elements matter as much as the elements themselves—it is how they came together that determined whether the event we want to explain happened, rather than something else. Within this network of interacting elements, a key idea is that there are some elements without which the event we are explaining would not have occurred. This idea provides a basis for understanding that historians tend to select necessary conditions of events from the wider (sufficient) set. If these necessary conditions had not been present, the event we are explaining would not have happened; it is often these that are picked out as the "causes." This in turn gives students a means of thinking about how to test explanations. If causes in history are usually necessary conditions and necessary conditions

BOX 2-6 Causes as Necessary Conditions

Researchers in Project CHATA gave British students in grades 2, 5, 6, and 8 cartoon and text material on Roman and British life prior to the Roman conquest of Britain and a short story describing Claudius's invasion. They were then given two explanations of why the Romans were able to take over most of Britain. One said, "The Romans were really able to take over most of Britain because the Roman Empire was rich and properly looked after." The other said, "The Romans were really able to take over most of Britain because they beat the Britons at the battle by the River Medway." They were then asked how we could decide whether one explanation is better than another.

James, an eighth grader, shows that he is thinking of causes as necessary conditions. (He replies using his own labels—A and B for the two rival causes he is considering and X for the event he was asked to explain.)

> *If without A, X doesn't happen, but it does [happen] even without B, then A is more important than B.*
>
> *If point A [the Roman Empire was rich and properly looked after] wasn't true, could the Roman takeover of Britain still happen?*
>
> *If point B [the Romans beat the Britons in a battle by the River Medway] wasn't true could the Roman takeover of Britain still happen?*
>
> *A good explanation would mean the Roman takeover of Britain couldn't really happen while a bad explanation wouldn't stop it happening even if the explanation wasn't there/wasn't true.*

In a further example, in which James is testing the explanation that the Romans took over Britain because they had good weapons, he asks:

> *If the Romans didn't have good weapons, would they have been able to take over Britain anyway? If they could, then [the suggested explanation] is wrong.*

SOURCES: Lee (2001, p. 80), originally in Lee and Ashby (1998).

are the ones that must be present for the event to happen, we can test an explanation by asking whether the event could have happened without the causes selected to explain it (see Box 2-6).

Historical explanations place some relationships in the foreground as causes and treat others as background conditions. A "cause" in history is

frequently chosen because it is something that might have been different or is not to be found in other ("normal") situations. This perspective, too, connects with everyday life, but this time more helpfully. The cause of a rail disaster is not the fact that the train was traveling at 80 mph but that the rail was broken, or the driver went past the signal telling him to stop. Our ideas about what is normal help us decide what is a background condition and what is a cause. Trains often run at 80 mph without coming off the rails. But a broken rail is not present in those cases in which the incident did not happen, and drivers might be expected to stop when signals tell them to. Thus it is these states of affairs, events, or actions that tend to be identified as "causes."

It is easy for students to assimilate this distinction between background conditions and causes into the everyday distinction between long- and short-term causes. When they do so, they are likely to try to differentiate causes by attempting to assign them dates, fastening on arbitrary cut-off points between long and short instead of understanding the more context-related ways in which we pick "causes" out from the mass of interconnected antecedents to particular events.

If students think of causes as discrete events that act to produce results, they have difficulty recognizing that it is the questions we choose to ask about the past that push some factors into the background and pull others to the foreground to be treated as causes. We select as a cause something absent in other, comparison cases. The question of why the Roman Empire in the west fell is a classic case. The question may be answered in at least two different ways: first, "when it had successfully resisted attack for hundreds of years," and second, "when it didn't end in the east." In the first case we look for events or processes that were present in the fifth century but not (to the same degree) earlier. In the second we look for factors present in the west in the fifth century but not at that time in the east. What counts as a cause here, rather than a background condition, is determined in part by what question we ask.[22]

Evidence

We have already noted the way some ideas about how the past can be understood bring the study of history to a halt while others allow it to move forward. The concept of *evidence* is central to history because it is only through the use of evidence that history becomes possible. Even when students ask themselves how we know about what happened, however, it does not follow that they will recognize source material as evidence to be used differently from the notes or textbook accounts they may encounter on other occasions.

Research suggests that for some students, the question of how we can know about the past does not arise.[23] Younger students in particular are likely to assume that history is just known; it is simply information in authoritative books, such as encyclopedias. Forced to consider the question of *how* we know, they may slip into an infinite regress (bigger and better books) or assume that a witness or participant wrote down what happened on "bits of paper," in diaries, or in letters, or even carved it into the walls of caves (see Box 2-7). The assumption that the past is given on authority makes any encounter with multiple sources problematic. If sources are simply correct or incorrect information, all we can do is accept or reject what is proffered. Sources either get things right, or they do not. Common sense suggests that if two sources say one thing and a third says something different, the third must be wrong. And once one knows which sources are right, why bother with reading two that say the same thing?

The idea that what we can say about the past depends on eyewitnesses can provoke apparently similar reasoning, although it has a different significance. Students still count sources to decide what to believe (the majority wins), but there is an implicit understanding that the question of how we know about the past is at stake. We may still just have to accept or reject what we are told (after all, we were not there, so how else can we know), but we have a more sophisticated basis for making a choice. We can begin to ask questions about whether the witnesses agree, whether they are truthful or not, and even whether they were in a position to know. Once students ask such questions, further questions arise about why people lie or distort the truth in partisan and selective ways. Here a further everyday idea comes into play—the notion of bias.

The trouble is that students are likely to hold well-established everyday ideas about personal bias, which often surface in the statement "He would say that, wouldn't he." Students know only too well that people have their own agendas and may twist what they say to fit them or that people tend to take sides, whether personally or as part of a social group. One study found that even many students aged 16–18 who were taught about the importance of detecting bias in historical sources behaved as though bias were a fixed property of a source that rendered it useless. Once they managed to find any sign of a point of view, the students jettisoned the source; there was no point in considering it further.[24] This kind of idea again rests on the assumption that historians can repeat only what past sources have truthfully reported. And since students know that most people's reports must be taken with a grain of salt, they regard history as a dubious activity.

The preconception that history is dependent on true reports also encourages students to think of the reliability of a source as a fixed property, rather than something that changes for different questions. This notion in turn can lead students to take the historian's distinction between primary

BOX 2-7 Finding Out About the Past: Received Information or Evidence?

Denis Shemilt explored U.K. students' ideas about evidence. He found that for some students the question of how we know about the past does not arise, whereas others understand that historians used evidence to produce knowledge about the past. Research conducted under Project CHATA more than a decade later found very similar patterns of ideas.

When students stick with common-sense ideas they can run into difficulties. This is clear in the following excerpt, in which Annie, a ninth-grade student, responds after being asked how she knew that Hitler started World War II:

Annie	I've read it.
Interviewer	How did the author [of the book] know?
Annie	He might have been in the war or have been alive and knew what happened.
Interviewer	How do people who write books know about cave men?
Annie	The same . . . only they've to copy the books out again and translate some of 'em.
Interviewer	Are you saying that cave men wrote history books?
Annie	No, they'd carve it on the rocks.

Contrast this with Jim, an eighth grader, who can see that sources must be interrogated if we are to say anything about the past.

Interviewer	Is there anything you have to be careful about when you're using sources to find out what's happened?

and secondary sources to mean that the latter are less reliable than the former. The recognition that someone writing a long time after an event has occurred is not in as good a position to know about it as someone writing at the time is useful as a broad principle. The danger is that students will mistakenly generalize the principle to historians, as if their histories were also reports from the past rather than attempts to construct pictures of the past on the basis of evidence. This misconception is all the easier to fall into

Jim	You have to think about how reliable they're going to be . . . either if they're a long time after the event they, they're not likely to be, erm, primary sources of evidence, there's going to be more passed on either by reading something or having a story told to you, which if its told you it's less likely to be accurate because details. . . .
Interviewer	. . . Details go in the telling?
Jim	Yeah, and also if it's a particularly biased piece of evidence, [we] might have to look at it and compare it to another piece of evidence, and it might not be much good on its own to get information, just opinion—it would only be good if you wanted an opinion of how people saw the event.
Interviewer	Right.
Jim	So you have to look at what context you're looking at the evidence in and what you want to find out from it.

Jim makes the point that reports can be damaged in transmission over time, and shows he is aware that we must weigh how far we can trust reports about the past. However, he also distinguishes the value of a source as a report of what happened from its value as a means of shedding light on a different kind of question—how people saw what happened. He is beginning to show signs of recognizing that we can ask questions about the past that the sources we have were not meant to answer.

SOURCES: Shemilt (1987); Lee, Dickinson, and Ashby (1996a).

when both contemporary reports and historians' inferential arguments are called "sources."

In any case, the distinction is a difficult one, and presupposes that students already understand it is the questions we decide to ask that determine whether something is a primary or a secondary source. Thus Gibbon's book *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* may be either a primary or a secondary source, depending on whether we are asking questions about Rome or about eighteenth-century ideas. Much the same sort of

issue arises for Frederick Jackson Turner's argument before the American Historical Association in 1893 that the frontier was closed. Even the idea that a primary source is contemporary with whatever it addresses encounters difficulties with something like Bede's *History*. In the face of these difficulties, some students develop their own categories; as one sixth grader said:[25] "I can tell this is a primary source because it doesn't make any sense."

A crucial step for students in shedding everyday preconceptions and making real headway in understanding historical evidence is therefore to replace the idea that we are dependent on reports with the idea that we can construct a picture of the past by inference. Historians are not simply forced to choose between two reports, but can work out their own picture, which may differ from both.[26] With this understanding goes the recognition that we can know things about the past that no witness has reported. What matters is the question we are asking. Gibbon and Turner were not *reporting* anything about the beliefs and values of their time, but historians may use what they said (and other evidence) to produce an account of those beliefs and values. Jim, in Box 2-7, shows signs of thinking like this when he says you have to remember what you want to find out from any piece of evidence you are using.

Once students understand two parallel distinctions—between relic and record and between intentional and unintentional evidence—they can escape from the trap set by some of their everyday preconceptions. A record is a source that intends to tell us, or someone else, something about some event, process, or state of affairs. Relics are sources that were not intended to tell us what happened, or sources that are used by an investigator to answer a particular question in ways that do not depend on what they intend to report but on what they were part of. Coins, tools, and acts of Congress do not report the past to us, and so cannot be more or less "reliable." They are the traces of human activities, and we can use them to draw inferences about the past. Even deliberate reports of the past can be used to answer questions in this way when we do not ask about what they meant to report, but what they show about the activity of which they were a part.

One final point is worth making in connection with students' ideas about evidence. Common sense dictates that claims must be *backed up*, so students understandably look for evidence that does this: the more, the better. This is perfectly acceptable, but students also need to understand that however much evidence they gather in support of a claim, one piece can be enough to refute it. Learning to try to disconfirm claims may be difficult initially, but disconfirmation can be a highly efficient strategy in the face of a multiplicity of claims. We say "can be" because in history matters are seldom clear-cut, so the single piece of knockout evidence may be difficult to find, and there is always a danger that students will try to short-circuit difficult problems demanding judgment simply by trying to discredit whatever is put before them.

Accounts

The concept of a historical *account* is related to that of evidence. Whereas with evidence the focus tends to be on the establishment of particular facts, with accounts we are more concerned with how students view historical narratives or representations of whole passages of the past.

Many younger students appear to work with the idea that what makes a "true story" true is that all the component singular factual statements within it are true. As a first move in distinguishing between true stories and fiction, this idea is reasonable enough, but as a characterization of a true story, it will not stand up even in everyday life. All the component singular factual statements in an account may be true, but the meaning of the account may still be highly contestable. The meaning of a story is more than the sum of its parts. In history this point is of great importance, as the following account demonstrates.

Adolf Hitler

In 1933 Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. In elections held soon after he became chancellor, he won a massive majority of the votes. Pictures taken during his chancellorship suggest his popularity with the German people. He presided over an increasingly prosperous nation. A treaty signed with France in 1940 enabled Hitler to organize defenses for Germany along the Channel coast, and for a time Germany was the most militarily secure power in Europe. Hitler expressed on many occasions his desire to live peacefully with the rest of Europe, but in 1944 Germany was invaded from all sides by Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Unable to defeat this invasion of his homeland by superior numbers, Hitler took his own life as the invading Russian armies devastated Berlin. He is still regarded as one of the most important and significant figures of the twentieth century.

Every component statement in this account is true, but the story would not be accepted by most people as a "true story," and no historian would regard it as a valid account. Given that its title indicates a general survey of what is important about Hitler and his political career, the most obvious defect is the omission of clearly germane material that would give a different implicit meaning to the story. Moreover, what is said carries implications that would normally be specifically ruled out if they did not hold. If we are told that a politician won a massive majority, this normally means that voters had choices and were not under duress. The point of saying, without qualification, that someone has expressed a desire to live at peace is that it shows

what he or she wants, and Hitler did not—in any straightforward sense—want peace. The account puts matters in ways that would normally suggest certain relationships, but in this case the relationships are highly questionable.

Students tend to deal with the problem that true statements do not guarantee acceptable historical accounts by using concepts employed in everyday life. If accounts are not clearly and unambiguously true or untrue, they must be matters of opinion. This view carries with it the idea that it is impossible to choose between conflicting accounts and, for some students, the idea that therefore anything goes. History is reduced to an arena in which opinions are freely exercised, like dogs in the park.[27]

Another preconception that can cause difficulties for students is the idea that a true account is a copy of the past rather than something more like a picture, or better still, a theory. If students think true stories are copies of the past, there will obviously be a problem when different stories exist. One way students explain this is by saying that different stories must arise when historians make mistakes. Another explanation is that part of the story has not been found. It is as if stories lie hidden like mosaics buried beneath the sands, waiting to be uncovered, but when historians sweep aside the sand, they find that some pieces are missing. Either way, the view is that historians do not know the real story (see Box 2-8).

Some students think alternative historical accounts are created when people deliberately distort the truth, usually because they are "biased." The everyday idea of bias as something like taking sides allows students to attempt to solve the problem by looking for accounts written by someone neutral. This approach makes sense for everyday clashes between two people with clear interests in some practical outcome (Who started the fight?), but it does not work for history, where alternative accounts may have nothing to do with taking sides over a practical issue. The ideal of neutrality is sometimes broadened into writing from a "perspective-free" stance.[28]

Such ideas will cause difficulties for students until they can see that stories are not so much copies of the past as ways of looking at it. The key notion here is that stories order and make sense of the past; they do not reproduce it. There can be no "complete" story of the past, only accounts within the parameters authors unavoidably set when they decide which questions to ask (see Deirdre in Box 2-8). All this means that accounts demand selection, and therefore a position from which selection is made. A point of view is not merely legitimate but necessary; perspective-free accounts are not possible. Research suggests that some students already understand this point by the end of eighth grade.[29] They know we can assess the relative merits of alternative accounts by asking the right questions. What are the accounts claiming to tell us? What questions are they asking? Are they dealing with the same themes? Are they covering the same time span?

How do they relate to other accounts we accept and to other things we know?

SUBSTANTIVE CONCEPTS

Second-order, disciplinary concepts such as *change* and *evidence*, discussed above, are involved in any history, whatever the content. Other concepts, such as *trade*, *nation*, *sachem*, *protestant*, *slave*, *treaty*, or *president*, are encountered in dealing with particular kinds of historical content. They are part of what we might call the *substance* of history, and so it is natural to call them "substantive concepts."

Such concepts belong to many different kinds of human activity—economic, political, social, and cultural. They are numerous and fit together in many different ways, which makes it difficult to form a coherent picture of student presuppositions about these concepts. As teachers, however, we tend to be much more aware of the substantive preconceptions students bring to lessons than of their disciplinary ideas. As part of the content of history, substantive concepts are usually central to what we think of ourselves as teaching, and if we forget to pay attention to students' ideas, they often remind us by revealing the misconceptions that can be so frustrating (and sometimes entertaining).

Concepts are not the same as names and dates. It is important to remember that understanding concepts—such as *colony*, *market*, or *migration*—involves knowing a rule (what makes something a migration, for example) and being able to identify instances of that rule. The substantive concepts we encounter in history can come from any walk of life or any discipline, but each denotes a cluster of *kinds* of things in the world. Names and dates are not like this; they are particulars that students must know about as individual items. Moreover, names are not limited to people. Some denote particular things, such as the Constitution, or France, or Wounded Knee. Some, like the American Revolution, denote a cluster of events and processes not because they are one kind of thing, but because they make up a greater whole to which we wish to assign a name. Of course, *constitution* is a concept that we want students to understand and apply across a range of cases, but the Constitution is the name of one particular case. Similarly while *revolution* is a general concept, the American Revolution is the name of a particular instance, although in this case exactly what it denotes can be disputed. This kind of dispute is a frequent occurrence in history (consider the Renaissance, the Age of Discovery, and the Industrial Revolution), and one that we need to help students understand if they are to be able to make sense of differences in historical accounts.

Substantive concepts in history involve a complication not often encountered in the practical concepts of everyday life: their meaning shifts

BOX 2-8 Historical Accounts Are Not Copies of the Past

While some students think of history stories as copies of the past (provided we know enough to get things right), others think of them as alternative ways of answering questions and making sense of the past.

In CHATA research exploring students' ideas about historical accounts, researchers gave 320 students in grades 2, 5, 6, and 8 two different stories of the Saxon invasion of Britain, one concentrating on the arrival of the Saxons and one taking the story right through the period of settlement. The students were then asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

History really happened, and it only happened one ***way, so there can only be one*** proper ***story about the Saxons in Britain.***

Amy, a second grader, was interviewed:

Interviewer	You said "because it happened or we wouldn't know it." So, do you think history only happened one way?
Amy	Yes.
Interviewer	Yeah? And do you think there's only one proper history story about the Saxons in Britain?
Amy	Yes.
Interviewer	How come we've got all these other different stories then, Amy, do you think?
Amy	Because they don't know which one's the real one.
Interviewer	Right.
Amy	And they just make them up.

over time as well as space. An eighteenth-century king is not the same as a fifteenth- or a twenty-first-century king, and students who think they are likely to behave in the same way and have the same powers and roles are likely to become confused. Conceptions of presidents, church leaders, and even the wealthy or beautiful differ in different times. Thus while students can learn, for example, what a president is, they may run into difficulty if they gain this knowledge in the context of Thomas Jefferson and go on to assume when they deal with Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society that

Interviewer	Who makes them up?
Amy	The historians.

Amy is convinced that if there is more than one story, there must be something wrong. Not all students go as far as Amy in their dismissal of historians, but many share her view that if only one thing happened, there can only be one story. Annabelle, a sixth grader, writes:

> *Something in history can only happen one way. I got up this morning. I wouldn't be right if I wrote I slept in. Things only happen one way and nobody can change that.*

These students think of history stories as copying the past: one past gives one true story.

Deirdre, an eighth grader, takes a very different view. She recognizes that different stories fit different questions and is therefore able to see that there can be more than one historical account of the "same" events:

> *Yes, history really did happen. Yes, there was an outcome. But lots of different factors and things may have affected it. A history story may emphasize one particular point, but it doesn't mean that that is the only correct history story. They can say different things to answer certain questions. They can go into more detail on a certain point. They may leave out certain points but it doesn't mean it is right or wrong. There can be many different history stories about one thing.*

SOURCE: Lee (2001).

presidents are just presidents. The full significance of Jefferson can be understood only through the historical accounts of his presidency. Indeed, learning about historical particulars always involves studying historical accounts; in other words, it means knowing some historical content.

The concepts that enable us to operate in the world are not neatly defined, closed capsules. We cannot expect students to learn definitions and examples, however thoroughly, on a particular occasion and then simply apply them to other cases. Students' social concepts emerge out of current

ways of life and fit into patterns of behavior that may not be fully understood, but are so "normal" that for students they are just the way things are. Students carry these concepts with them into the past. Apparently harmless concepts, such as *town* or *painter*, can be burdened with present associations, never deliberately taught, that may cause serious difficulties. When students learn of the Pilgrims coming upon an abandoned Native American "town," some assume that the Pilgrims were on to a good thing: at least they would quickly find shelter in some of the empty buildings. But even when a concept is not one that is salient in their everyday lives, students may assimilate it into known patterns of behavior that are. One of the first things beginner history teachers learn is that for most youngsters, a monk is likely to be a pretty safe source of evidence. How could it be otherwise? Monks spent their time worshipping God and living a Christian life. Clearly they would not tell lies.

Research suggests that while there may be differences in the development of relevant political and economic concepts in different societies, there may be commonalities in the United States and Western Europe.[30] There is some evidence from Europe that between second and fifth grade, the idea of someone in charge, a "boss," develops, although politicians are often not distinguished from other forms of boss. Students are likely at this age to think of people in power giving commands through direct personal contact.[31] Research provides some support for a pattern in which political and military affairs are understood by students first as the actions of individuals or collectives without structure (such as a crowd) and later in terms of systems and structures (such as armies and nation states).[32] A recent study found that before fourth grade, many Italian students believe wars are begun by individual fighters and end when people are too tired to go on or are enslaved or killed.[33] From the fourth grade on, students are more likely to see war as a clash between nation states and to believe that political authorities begin and end hostilities. Even within a particular society and school system, however, students' political concepts may develop in very different ways, depending on what experiences they have had, as well as on what they have been taught.[34]

In economic matters (money, profit making, banking, ownership, poverty, and wealth), students tend to transition from ideas based on moral norms to more overtly economic ideas in which people and actions are considered in terms of their potential as opportunities to increase personal wealth. Youngsters tend to think that shopkeepers exist to make people happy and will be pleased if prices drop, since that means people can save their money. By fourth grade, most students should be beginning to integrate ideas about, for example, buying and selling, so as to understand the workings of economic life. But an understanding of these things at the level of everyday life does not necessarily carry over into other areas. Ninth or

tenth graders may have difficulty understanding how banks make profits, and the fact that sixth graders can cite profit as a motive for starting a factory does not necessarily mean they understand how shops, let alone factories, make profits[35] (see Box 2-9).

We need to remember that even when students have a quite sophisticated understanding of political and economic concepts, they may find it difficult to transfer those concepts from one case to another in history. A consequence of changes in the meaning of concepts in history is that learning history means paying attention to details and to contexts because they often determine what can and cannot be transferred. This is a point made at the beginning of the chapter in describing students who tried to apply ideas about the origins of World War I to the origins of World War II. (Both World Wars I and II are historical particulars, of course, even though both fall under the concept of *war*.) In short, students need to know some substantive history well: they need to have a deep foundation of factual and conceptual knowledge and to understand these facts and ideas in a broader framework. The qualification "some" history is important because what students do know must be manageable. And for what students know to be manageable, it must be organized so they can access and use it, knowing how to make cautious and realistic assessments about how far and in what circumstances it is applicable. We therefore need to consider the kind of history that will allow this to be achieved.

HISTORY THAT WORKS

In the previous section, the focus shifted from second-order understandings of the kind of discipline history is to substantive understandings of the content of history. Students certainly need to know some history well if they are to see, first, that there are nuances and complications within any particular topic or period that may or may not apply outside it, and, second, that however much they know, it may still be necessary to know more. But as they begin to make connections between how people in the past saw things on the one hand and actions, policies, and institutions on the other, it becomes possible for even young students to begin to appreciate something of the complexity of historical understanding. For such understandings to develop, a topic (and preferably more than one) must be studied in depth. But not everything has to be thus studied. As long as the scope and scale of a particular in-depth study are workable, students can be introduced to the kinds of thinking required. Here such concepts as *empathy* and *evidence* are central, and time must be allowed for students to begin to develop their ideas of how we can make claims about and understand the past.

While understanding something in depth is a necessary part of learning history, however, it is not enough. Moving from one in-depth topic to an-

BOX 2-9 Substantive Concepts in History: Payment for Work

As part of a broad investigation of students' ideas about a range of economic concepts, Berti and Bombi interviewed 60 Italian students aged 6 to 14 to explore their understanding of payment for work. They found that some second graders envisaged payment for work as an exchange between just two figures: one person providing goods or services and another consuming them. They saw "pay" as an exchange of money, but had no clear idea of the direction of the exchange, seeing the relationship as comparable to that of friends who give each other money. ("Change" was seen as money given to the purchaser of goods, and the youngsters thought it may often be more than is tendered in the first place.) Chiara (age 6) explained how people get money at the drugstore.

> *When you go to get medicine, then the money they give you for the medicine you keep for getting something to eat.*

The interviewer asked whether her father, who owned a drugstore, gave people more or less or the same amount as they gave him. Chiara replied:

> *My daddy gives them different amounts. . . . [He] gives more than they gave.*

Most third graders understood payment for work in terms of a "boss" figure paying people for work, seen either as a private owner of a business or the council or state (understood as a much richer version of the private owner). They knew that the money goes from boss to worker, but did not necessarily understand how the boss acquires the money used to pay the workers or whether the boss is also paid.

Massimo (age $6^1/_2$), having said that people who organize work pay the workers, explained how these people in turn get their money:

> Massimo — Sometimes they get it from home, maybe they ask their wife for it and . . . sometimes they find it in their wallet, if they don't have much then they go and get it from those who have.

Interviewer	And the man who pays the bus-driver, how does he come to have the money?
Massimo	He could go to the bank and get it.
Interviewer	What is the bank?
Massimo	Where they go and put money, and when they need it they go and take it. . . .
Interviewer	To get the money does this man have to put some in the bank already or does the bank give him some all the same?
Massimo	The bank gives it to him.

More than half the fifth graders and all the seventh graders could fit the idea of payment for work into a framework of relationships whereby bosses, too, receive money from other business people or customers who buy goods and services from their business. Giovanni (aged 10 $^{1}/_{2}$) was asked who pays factory workers:

Giovanni	The owner of the factory.
Interviewer	And how does he get the money?
Giovanni	Because while others work to produce various objects, the owner sells them at a higher price, then he gives a small percentage to the workers, and he himself keeps the greater part of the money he's made.

Of course, American children may not have exactly the same ideas as Italian children. The point is not that all students, in whatever culture, will have the same range of ideas, although this is a possibility in Western industrialized countries; research in Britain, for example, appears broadly to fit the pattern suggested by Berti and Bombi. The importance of research of this kind is that it makes us aware that we cannot assume students share adults' assumptions (even at a very basic level) about how the economic, social, and political worlds work. Teaching history without recognizing this may have serious consequences for students' ability to make sense of the history they encounter.

SOURCE: Berti and Bombi (1988, pp. 32, 34, 38).

other and illuminating each in the historical spotlight only begins to develop historical understanding if such topics are set in a wider historical framework. Students will be unable to make much sense of historical change if they examine only brief passages of the past in depth. The snapshots of different periods they acquire will differ, but it will be impossible to say why the changes occurred. Moreover, if students need study only short periods of history, they will have no opportunity to come to grips with a central characteristic of historical accounts—that the significance of changes or events varies with timescale and theme. A long-run study is therefore essential for students both to understand the kind of discipline history is and to acquire a usable framework of the past.

Working through a narrative sequence of events of the history of the United States may not be the most effective way of helping students acquire a framework that can be adjusted to accommodate to or assimilate new knowledge. To provide something students can use and think about, we may need to teach a big picture quite quickly, in a matter of two or three weeks, and keep coming back to it. Such a framework focuses on large-scale patterns of change, encompassing students' in-depth studies so they are not simply isolated topics. For a temporally extended topic such as migration, exploration, and encounter, students can derive a broad picture of migration to and within America, at first picking out just the main phases of population movement to America (the land bridge crossings, the Arctic hunters, the Europeans). As in-depth studies of Native American settlement and later European arrivals (including Columbus, later Spanish exploration, Virginia, and the Pilgrims) are taught, they can be fit into this broad picture. But if it is to be a usable framework, the original broad picture will have to be adapted and made richer as it expands to include new in-depth studies. The original three phases will become more complex. Patterns of movement within America can be taught (again quickly), and changes in population movement from outside can be studied, so that, for example, differences in the kind of European migration over time are recognized.

Such a framework is not just a long narrative of events and cannot be organized in the same way as an in-depth study, bringing together all aspects of life in their complex interrelations. Instead the framework must allow students to think in terms of long-run themes, at first rather isolated from one another, but increasingly linked as students' understanding increases. Population change, migration, and cultural encounter provide themes for a framework, but these themes will be taught at the level of a big picture of change. It is the in-depth studies nesting within the framework that allow students to explore how the themes play out at the level of events.

If such a framework is to avoid overloading students with information, it must give them a range of large-scale organizing concepts for patterning change. It is the ability of such concepts as *internal* and *external migration*,

population density, and *life expectancy* to "clump" information in meaningful ways that allow students to handle "the long run" in history rather than becoming overwhelmed by a mass of detail. The in-depth studies chosen to nest in the long-run study remind students that the details of those studies' complex interrelations matter too, and can serve as tests for the adequacy of the framework developed in the long-run study. But the latter must concentrate on the big picture, not degenerate into a series of impoverished would-be in-depth studies. Part of learning history is learning the effect of scale, and the difference between big generalizations (which can admit of exceptions) and singular factual statements.

Taking stock of the ideas presented thus far, we can say that students' substantive knowledge of history should be organized in a usable form so they can relate it to other parts of the past and to the present. This means students need to acquire a usable framework of the past, a big picture organized by substantive concepts they increasingly understand and can reflect upon. It also means they need an in-depth knowledge of contained (not overlong) passages of the past, with time to explore the way of life and world view of the people they are studying. This in turn allows them to begin to be aware of the complex interrelations involved and to be thoughtful and reflective about analogies they draw with other times and places. But learning history also requires an understanding of history as a discipline, evidenced in students' increasing understanding of key second-order concepts. Without this understanding, students lack the tools to reflect on their own knowledge, its strengths, and its limits.

Any picture of the past to which students are introduced inside school is likely to encounter rival and often opposed accounts in the wider world outside.[36] As soon as singular factual statements are organized into historical accounts, they acquire meanings within the stories in which they figure. Such stories may already be part of students' apparatus for thinking about the world before they encounter competing accounts in school. Teaching multiple perspectives, or critiquing particular accounts, is a valuable step toward facing up to students' predicament, but it is not enough.

To understand this point, consider these students' responses when faced with two alternative historical accounts. Laurence, an eighth grader, insists that the differences between the stories do not matter "because it is good to see how other people thought on the subject and then make your own mind up. Everyone is allowed to hold on to his own opinions, and no matter what the evidence, people believe different things." Briony, another eighth grader, claims that the differences are just a matter of opinion, and it does not matter "because it's up to you to express your opinion unless there are sufficient facts that prove a story. . . . I think it really is a matter of opinion." Rosie, a sixth grader, says accounts will differ "because some people are biased and therefore have different opinions of how it happened. . . . People are always

going to have different opinions of how something happened." If students think like this, multiple perspectives are simply different opinions, and people can believe what they want. Xiao Ming, also in the sixth grade, sums up: "There can be many different opinions from historians so there can be different stories. Of course one *has* to be true but we don't know which one." Critiquing accounts will not make much sense to Xiao Ming when, despite our critiques, we can never know which is true.

Without explicit teaching and reflection on the nature of historical evidence and historical accounts, as well as the different ways in which various types of claims can be tested for validity, multiple perspectives become just another reason for not taking history seriously. If students are to go beyond helpless shoulder shrugging in the face of contested histories, they must have an intellectual toolkit that is up to the task. There is a danger that "toolkit" implies something overly mechanistic, so that it is simply a matter of applying the tool to get the job done. Such a simple analogy is not intended here. What is meant is that some tasks are possible only if certain tools are available, and in this case the tools are conceptual. Students need the best tools we can give them, understandings that enable them to think clearly about, for example, what kind of evidence is needed to support a particular kind of claim or what questions are being addressed in competing accounts. Once they understand that accounts are not copies of the past but constructions that answer a limited range of questions within a chosen set of boundaries, students can begin to understand how several valid accounts can coexist without threatening the possibility of historical knowledge or leading to a descent into vicious relativism.

Students have ideas about the past, and about history, regardless of what and how we teach them. The past is inescapable; it is built into our ways of thinking about ourselves. What would we say of someone who, when asked what the United States is, could define it only as a geographical entity? Our notion of what the United States is incorporates a past; it is a time-worm. Nor should we think that, because we are often told students do not know this or that piece of information about the United States, they have no version of its past. They certainly have one, but the question is whether it is the best we can give them. And while "the best" here does not mean "the one best story," because there is no such thing, the fact that there is not just one best story most certainly does not mean that any story will do. What we should give our students is the best means available for making sense of and weighing the multiplicity of pasts they are offered in various accounts. To this end, students must learn to understand the discipline of history—the one offering school can make that the busy world outside cannot. Schools could hardly have a more important task.

The study of history is often portrayed as learning an exciting—and sometimes not so exciting—story. This chapter has attempted to show that

there is more to learning history than this. But we are not thereby absolved from asking how the history we teach can engage our students and what they might feel about what they are getting from it. History offers students (albeit at second hand) strange worlds, exciting events, and people facing seemingly overwhelming challenges. It shows students the dark and the light sides of humanity. It is one of the central ways of coming to understand what it is to be human because in showing what human beings have done and suffered, it shows what kind of creatures we are. The past is, as has often been said, a foreign country.[37] Its strangeness provides endless puzzles and endless opportunities for students to widen their understanding of people and their activities. An important part of understanding what appears strange is the disposition to recognize that we must try to understand the situations in which people found themselves and the beliefs and values they brought to bear on their problems. If students fail to see that there is anything to understand or do not care whether they understand or not, history will appear to be a senseless parade of past incompetence and a catalogue of alien and unintelligible practices. Empathy, in the very specific senses discussed earlier in this chapter, is central here. Historical imagination needs tools.

History can also offer another very human motivation—a sense of mystery and adventure. One source of adventure is to follow the experiences of people who were moving into unknown territory. Such study can be quite literal, when focused on people who explored lands they had not known existed, or metaphorical, when focused on those who attempted what no one had done before in some aspect of life. In the case of one of the topics discussed in the next chapter—the Pilgrims—the sense of the precariousness of their situation and the sheer scale of the challenges they faced has long been understood by teachers to offer obvious opportunities for the engagement of students' imagination. For older students, a dawning understanding of the enormity of the choices Native Americans had to make, in circumstances in which the future could only be guessed at, can offer a more complex and morally difficult stimulus to the imagination. But beyond adventure, strangeness, and a sense of awesome challenges, there is mystery. Young children—and many adults—love the mystery of the unknown. The voyage of St. Brendan (a topic in the next chapter) appeals to just this sense of mystery. What happened so long ago? What can we make of such a weird but sometimes plausible tale? Even better, the mystery arises in circumstances in which St. Brendan was having real adventures, too.

Of course, if history is the tale of things known, a fixed story that simply must be learned, then mystery can be reduced to waiting for the next installment. If we teach history as simply a set of facts to be imparted to our pupils, the mystery is a phony one. The teacher knows the answers, so where is the mystery? It can only be in deciphering the workings of the teacher's mind, in

finding out what he or she wants to hear—in short, in getting the right answer. In history there are unending opportunities for students to be given tasks that leave room for them to maneuver, and to be more or less successful in finding a valid answer to an open question. Knowing the facts then becomes an urgent and meaningful business because they are essential for beginning to answer the question, and the question is worthwhile because it is a real question.

For a long time, and not just in history, schools have tended to keep a kind of secret knowledge from all but their oldest and most able students. Knowledge is contested, is provisional, and is subject to continuous change. Mystery never stops, and there is always a job for the next generation to do. The authors of this and the following chapter still remember, as one of the high points of their teaching lives, the excitement of the moment when a group of students whose main subject was science realized that science was not "all sewn up." In learning the history of medicine, they came to see—quite suddenly—that the whole way in which scientists approached and understood disease had undergone major shifts. *They* had a future in science beyond tweaking the textbooks. If they could devise new questions, they could begin new projects. Knowledge was not closed but open and open to them, too, if they mastered what was known well enough to understand what was not.

As we learn more, we should begin to see that mystery does not fade away as we come to know things. The more we know, the more questions there are, and the more there is that we need to understand. History must look like this to students as well. There is excitement in finding oneself in a richer, more open world than one thought one inhabited, but there is even more excitement in suddenly finding oneself empowered by a flash of understanding. It is not only that one has some stake in the answers and the right to a view. One can actually see that it is precisely what one is learning that gives one the right to the view, as well as the means to improve upon it. Understandings of this kind must be taught precisely because they are not things one picks up in everyday life. Generations of people have had to fashion the conceptual tools that really make a difference in the way we see the world. The only institutions whose central task is to hand those tools on and encourage the next generation to develop them are schools and universities, and the only people whose professional job it is to do this are teachers.

NOTES

1. This reservation is important, but it should also be pointed out that there has been considerable agreement among independent research teams in the United Kingdom; moreover, some recent U.S. work, as well as research in places as diverse as Portugal, Spain, and Taiwan, appears to point in a similar direction.

   There is a strong U.S. tradition of research into the ways in which the meaning of particular history stories and topics is viewed by school students, but there has been rather less focus on students' understanding of the discipline. Where such research has been undertaken, many of the researchers, such as Jim Voss, have worked mainly with college students. However, Keith Barton, Linda Levstik, and Bruce VanSledright have all done extensive research on the ideas of younger school students. Peter Seixas in Canada has carried out wide-ranging research with older school students. Sam Wineburg has worked with school and college students and with historians, and has recently begun to pay particular attention to ideas acquired outside school. Other U.S. researchers, such as Gaea Leinhardt, have investigated the differing approaches of history teachers to classroom history teaching, and investigation of students' understanding of textbooks has been widespread.

   Students' understanding of second-order concepts has been explored by Isabel Barca and Marilia Gago in Portugal; Lis Cercadillo, Mario Carretero, and Margarita Limón in Spain; and Irene Nakou in Greece. Research in this area outside the United States and Europe is also beginning to expand. Early findings from a Taiwanese study by Liu Ching Cheng and Lin Tsu Shu suggest that students in Taiwan share many ideas about historical accounts with British and Portuguese students. Mario Carretero has carried out some of his research in Argentina, and Angela Bermudez and Rosario Jaramillo have investigated ideas about causation in Colombia.

   Lists of this kind can only hint at the range of work, and any brief selection of names is necessarily invidious. This list, for example, omits a whole new generation of U.S. researchers whose work is beginning to be published. (See, for example, the authors in O.L. Davis Jr., Elizabeth Anne Yeager, and Stuart Foster (Eds.). *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies*, Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield, 2001.)
2. Lee et al., 1996a.
3. Shemilt, 1980.
4. Shemilt, 1994.
5. Shemilt, 1983, pp. 11-13.
6. Ibid, 1983, p. 7.
7. Barton, 1999, 2001.
8. Barton, 1996, p. 61.
9. Ibid, 1996, p. 56.
10. Cercadillo, 2000, 2001.
11. Levstik, 2002; Walsh, 1992.
12. Dickinson and Lee, 1978, 1984; Shemilt, 1984; Ashby and Lee, 1987; Lee et al., 1997; Lee and Ashby, 2001.
13. Ashby and Lee, 1987, p. 71.

14. Brophy and VanSledright, 1997, p. 130.
15. Lee et al., 1997, p. 236.
16. Lee et al., 1996a, 1997.
17. Dickinson and Lee, 1984, p. 134.
18. Shemilt, 1980, p. 33.
19. Shemilt, 2000, pp. 89-92.
20. Shemilt, 1980, pp. 30-32.
21. Lee et al., 1998.
22. Martin, 1989, pp. 58-61.
23. Shemilt, 1987; Lee et al., 1996a.
24. Thomas, 1993.
25. Ashby, 1993.
26. Wineburg, 1998; Wineburg and Fournier, 1994.
27. Lee and Ashby, 2000.
28. Barca, 1997; Cercadillo, 2000.
29. Lee and Ashby, 2000.
30. Furnham, 1992; Berti, 1994; Delval, 1992; Torney-Purta, 1992.
31. Berti and Andriolo, 2001.
32. Berti and Vanni, 2002.
33. Ibid., 2002.
34. Berti and Andriolo, 2001.
35. Furnham, 1992, pp. 19, 25, 26.
36. Seixas, 1993; Penuel and Wertsch, 1998; Wertsch and Rozin, 1998; Wineburg, 2000.
37. Lowenthal, 1985.

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