



Content Area Learning: Teaching in an Online World

Get the FACTs Right

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Saturday, October 4, 2008

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What is FACT?

Primary source documents won't make much sense if you do not already know something about the time in which they were produced. That is, these documents do not "speak for themselves," and it is not enough just to mention them in a laundry list fashion. You need to use your background knowledge to interpret the documents and explain how they help answer history.

To begin, first clearly examine what the document IS telling you by

1. **F** = find facts (date, source, terms (people/concepts/events) in the document. (highlight in yellow)

Then for each document think about what a person needs to know to understand that document and what it is saying fully by

2. **A** = adding terms and their definition that support or oppose the main idea to the document. (write out to the side/bottom of the document; highlight in green)
3. **C** = connect how the added terms are evidence to support or oppose the document. (How did the document lead you to think of these terms? Why would these terms be mentioned in connection to this document?) (write out to the side/bottom of the document; highlight in pink.)

You often need to make inferences about documents. An inference is a belief you come to accept based on other facts. For example, suppose you find milk spilled on the kitchen floor. You may "infer" that your brother spilled it—even though you didn't actually see him do this. This inference is logical and reasonable, yet it still may not be true. For example, the cat may have knocked over a glass of milk, not your brother. You can usually make various reasonable inferences from a document. But as this "spilled milk" example shows, you need to be careful about this. Be sure all of your facts; your background knowledge and of what the document shows make your inferences seems logical.

4. **T** = tell the main idea of the document and explain how the document is evidence to prove/disprove or answer a statement or question. (How do all the previous answers to questions 1 – 3 put together help you prove something true or false or verify your answer to a question.) (write out to the side/bottom; should include all the above information as well as your how it answers the question)

Rationale

Students in many facets need the skill of analyzing a source both written and visual. Analyzing includes not only deciphering the main idea of the document, but then using that information to make connections to other aspects of history. The FACT method serves as a reinforcement of the content while giving students a format to follow so they can see the steps involved in reading and critical thinking. The real emphasis of the method is students making higher order, big picture connections that lie within history.

Classroom Use

I use the gradual release strategy to teach the FACT method. I model the format as if I am the student, students then get to practice either as a small group or whole class and give me the answers, and then they are to practice individually before they receive a grade on their work. For the entire lesson four short sources are needed, as well as some manner to distinguish the four steps of the method. Four different color highlighters work great, especially for visual learners. However, some teachers have also used underlining, circling, etc. It also helps to have an overhead projector, document camera, or LCD projector for students to follow you as you model the method.

Additional Uses

I continue to use the FACT method throughout the year, not only as homework but also as a basis for class discussion, assessment for learning and with document based essays. The biggest cautions are getting students to include all answers of the steps in the last step and also in the beginning of using the method students have at least discussed the content the source will be connected to. Once students have mastered the first three steps, on future FACT methods they only need to complete step four and may be able to accomplish the method on sources before it is discussed in class.

FACT Method Scoring Guide

Level 5 (90 – 100%)

- All relevant information (events, people, laws, terms, etc) is highlighted in yellow in the document.
- Many terms are added to the document that connects. All terms have definitions written in great detail and highlighted in green.
- All terms added are explained in great detail how they connect or what lead to thinking of that term, including quotes or paraphrase from the document and is highlighted in pink.
- The answer to a question contains all of the information already highlighted, (yellow, green and pink are included in this answer) in a way that answers the question fully and accurately and highlighted in blue.

Level 4 (80 – 89%)

- Most of the relevant information is highlighted in yellow in the document.
- Some terms are added to the document that connects. All terms have definitions that are mostly complete in details and highlighted in green.
- All terms added are explained with good detail how they connect or what lead to thinking of that document, including quotes or paraphrase from the document and is highlighted in pink.
- The answer to a question contains most of the information already highlighted in a way that mostly answers the question and highlighted in blue.

Level 3 (70 – 79%)

- Some relevant information is highlighted in yellow in the document.
- Some terms are added to the document that connects. All terms have definitions that are somewhat complete and highlighted in green.
- All terms added are explained vaguely how they connect or what lead to thinking of that term including quotes or paraphrase from the document and is highlighted in pink.
- The answer to a question contains some of the information already highlighted but only somewhat answers the question and highlighted in blue.

Level 2 (60 – 69%)

- Little relevant information is highlighted in yellow in the document.
- Few terms are added to the document. Definitions may be missing or incomplete and highlighted in green.
- Terms added are barely explained of how the document leads to thinking of that term but are highlighted in pink.
- The answer to a question does not contain all of the information already highlighted or is a vague answer to the question or inaccuracies but highlighted in blue.

Level 1 (0 – 60%)

- Very little information if highlighted in yellow in the document.
- One or no term is added or they do not connect to the document. Definitions are missing and not highlighted in green.
- Terms are not explained or highlighted in pink.
- The answer to a question is not there or does not contains all of the information already highlighted, (yellow, green and pink are included in this answer) or does not answer the question or is not highlighted in blue.

Document A

The history of the Government connections with the Indians is a shameful record of broken treaties and unfulfilled promises. The history of the border white man's connection with the Indians is a sickening record of murder, outrage, robbery, and wrongs committed by the former, as the rule, and occasional savage outbreaks and unspeakably barbarous deeds of retaliation by the latter, as the exception.

The testimony of some of the highest military officers of the United States is on record to the effect that, in our Indian wars, almost without exception, the first aggressions have been made by the white man. . . . Every crime committed by a white man against an Indian is concealed and palliated. Every offense committed by an Indian against a white man is borne on the wings of the post or the telegraph to the remotest corner of the land, clothed with all the horrors which the reality or imagination can throw around it.

Cheating, robbing, breaking promises—these three are clearly things which must cease to be done. One more thing, also, and that is the refusal of the protection of the law to the Indian's rights of property, "of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Document B

...It was the custom, as they found, whenever meat was so spoiled that it could not be used for anything else, either to can it or else to chop it up into...old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy and white—it would be dosed with borax and glycerin, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption.

There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together. This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one—there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit.

Document C

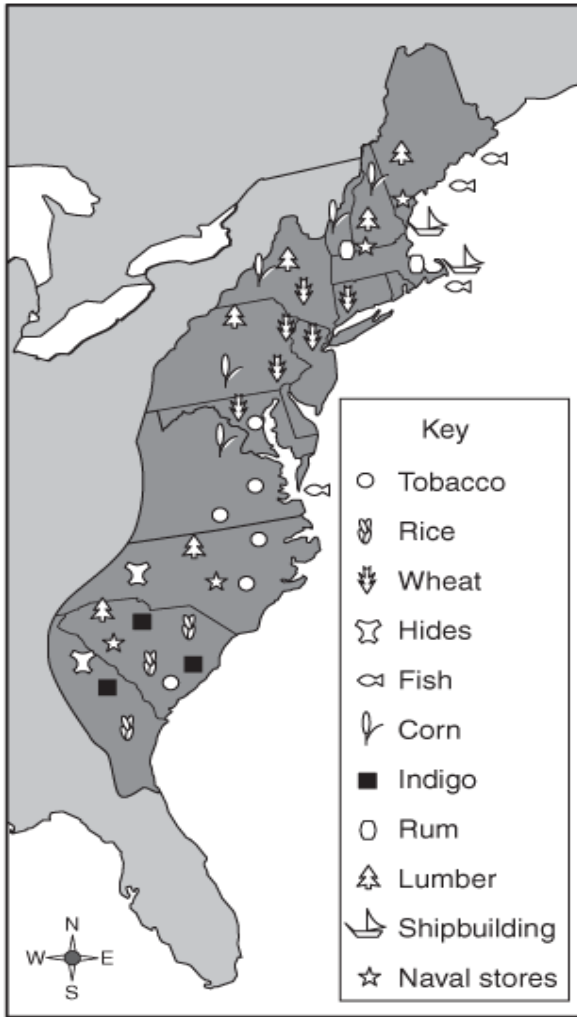
We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. --That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, -- That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government...The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

Document D

"In the dust-covered desolation of our No Man's Land here, wearing our shade hats, with handkerchiefs tied over our faces and vaseline in our nostrils, we have been trying to rescue our home from the wind-blown dust which penetrates wherever air can go. It is almost a hopeless task, for there is rarely a day when at some time the dust clouds do not roll over. 'Visibility' approaches zero and everything is covered again with a silt-like deposit which may vary in depth from a film to actual ripples on the kitchen floor."

Document A

Economic Products of the Colonies

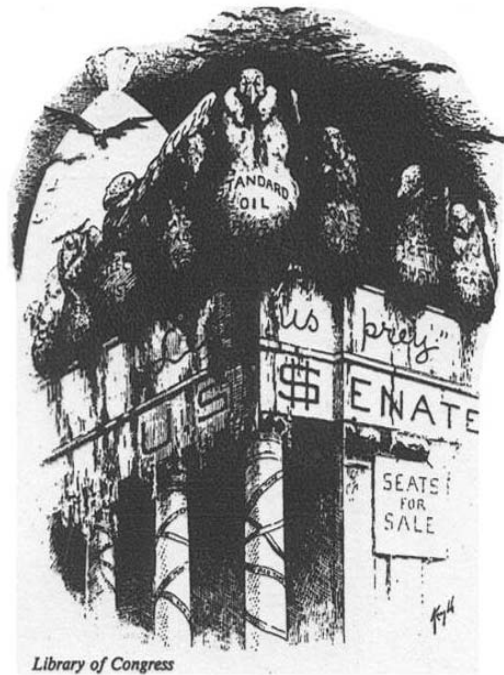


Document B



Document C

The Senate in the Gilded Age:



Document D

