

s e e d s
● of ●
inquiry

Using Short Texts to Enhance
Student Understanding of World History

DIXIE D. MASSEY & TINA L. HEAFNER

Samples are provided for evaluation purposes. Copying of the product or its parts
for resale is prohibited. Additional restrictions may be set by the publisher.



SOCIAL STUDIES SCHOOL SERVICE
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

PREFACE

“That was so much fun! Why can’t we read more texts like that?”

We have both been using short texts for over a decade, long before the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) made short texts popular. Each time, students and teachers alike have frequently responded with words similar to the opening quote. To address this desire for more fun and engaging social studies short readings, we created this book.

Our expectation is that this resource will promote robust learning that is kid-friendly and intellectually rigorous. We set forth three primary goals for this text. First, we want to encourage historical thinking and use content to drive inquiry. We understand that teachers picking up this text want their students to be able to apply discipline-specific skills and to *know* history. Thus, these texts cover a wide span of historical eras and challenge readers to use historical interpretation tools. Furthermore, many texts reference both previous and subsequent eras so that students begin to see connections between historical events and develop a conceptual understanding of history.

Second, we want to provide concrete activities for helping students read all texts that are assigned. We see many teachers who are frustrated that students either do not read or do not understand what they read. Far too often, students lack the structures to help them do more than read the words. The reading activities in this book are designed to help teachers know how to support readers and to motivate students to actively engage in reading content. Students are typically more willing to approach a short text than a multipage chapter. Furthermore, short texts arouse curiosity: the seed of inquiry. The text activities strengthen the understanding of struggling readers and English learners (ELs) through the ongoing discussions and actions associated with each activity.

Finally, we want teachers and students to enjoy history and to take pleasure in reading. We want the short texts to inspire compelling questions that can sustain interest in more sophisticated content sources. From commonly used practices in social studies classrooms, students may learn facts and they may know how to read. But when students aren’t motivated, they will experience limited success. One of the best outcomes we have experienced when using short texts is the enjoyment students have when reading. Whether they’re trying to guess who the text is about, as in the short text “A Pope, a Politician, and an Artist,” or they’re trying to act out the intriguing event that started WWI (“The Black Hand”), even hesitant readers typically join in because they want to be part of the fun. Collectively, students learn to gather evidence and evaluate information. They also develop theories based on evidence and seek out reliable sources to corroborate their interpretations. Fundamentally, short texts stimulate intrigue and drive inquiry forward. Thus, student motivation becomes key in promoting social studies learning through short texts.

CONTENTS

Preface.....iii

PART 1

Using Short Texts to Enhance Student Engagement and Comprehension..... 1

Introduction 1

Benefits of Short Texts..... 2

 Making Complex Texts Accessible 2

 Rereading for Deeper Analysis 3

 Increasing Reading Stamina 3

 Creating Interest and Engagement 4

 Building Conceptual Understanding 4

 Generating a Starting Place for Further Exploration 5

Building Comprehension..... 6

 Comprehension Strategies 6

 Historical Thinking and Comprehension 7

 Strategy vs. Activity 8

 Before, During, and After Reading 8

 Think Alouds 9

 Gradually Releasing Responsibility..... 11

PART 2

| | |
|--|----|
| Ten Activities to Use with Short Texts | 13 |
| Introduction | 13 |
| Activity 1: Use Short Text as a Think Aloud Model | 14 |
| Activity 2: The Metacognitive Flowchart: What to Try When It Doesn't Make Sense | 20 |
| Activity 3: Close Reading | 23 |
| Activity 4: Divide and Conquer | 29 |
| Activity 5: Dramatic Interpretations | 33 |
| Activity 6: Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA) | 36 |
| Activity 7: List, Group, Label, Theorize (LGLT) | 38 |
| Activity 8: Questioning the Text | 41 |
| Activity 9: What Does It Look Like? | 45 |
| Activity 10: Important Questions | 48 |
| Moving Beyond Short Text | 51 |

PART 3

| | |
|---|----|
| Topics in World History: Lessons and Texts | 55 |
| Introduction | 55 |
| Rise and Spread of Islam | 58 |
| Medieval Africa | 61 |
| Medieval China | 65 |
| Medieval Europe | 69 |
| Shogun Japan | 73 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Renaissance Art and Architecture | 76 |
| Renaissance Politics and Economics | 80 |
| Reformation | 83 |
| Scientific Revolution | 87 |
| Age of Exploration | 91 |
| Enlightenment | 95 |
| French Revolution | 99 |
| 19th Century Nationalism | 103 |
| Industrial Revolution | 106 |
| Imperialism | 111 |
| World War I | 115 |
| World War II | 118 |
| Holocaust | 121 |
| Rise and Fall of Soviet Communism | 124 |
| United Nations | 128 |
| Bibliography | 131 |
| Appendixes | 133 |
| Appendix A · 1: Template for Think Aloud | 133 |
| Appendix A · 2: Template for Think Aloud | 134 |
| Appendix B: Metacognitive Flowchart | 135 |
| Appendix C: Template for Directed Reading - Thinking Activity | 136 |
| Appendix D: Template for List, Group, Label, Theorize | 137 |
| Appendix E: Template for Important Questions | 138 |

PART 1

USING SHORT TEXTS TO ENHANCE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND COMPREHENSION

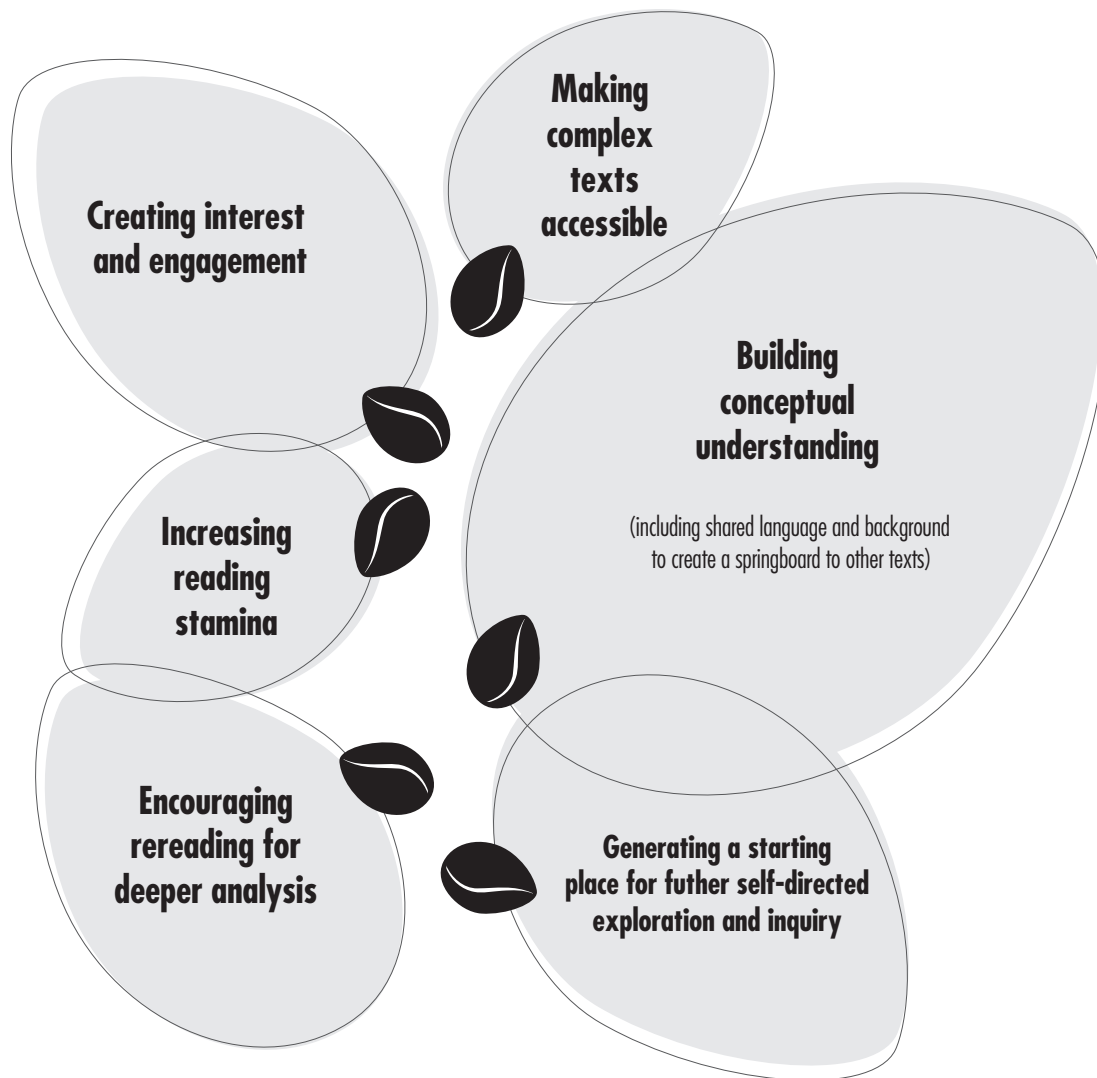
Introduction

Every teacher who has assigned reading has watched students flip or scan through the text to see how many pages they have to read. Not only do the sighs that follow lengthy history readings abound, but the end result falls short of developing independent and knowledgeable readers. However, one of the quickest ways to surprise students is to hand them a short text of three or four paragraphs to read. The typical response from students is, “Is this all? Where’s the rest?”

At first glance, short texts are inviting. This alone lays the foundation for bringing students into the text. Getting students to *choose to read* is a powerful motivation for ensuring that students will actually complete the reading. Of even greater importance is the essentiality of reading to building contextual knowledge and comprehending history. Thus, short texts offer many benefits for teachers and students, including

- making complex texts accessible,
- rereading for deeper analysis,
- increasing reading stamina,
- creating interest and engagement,
- building conceptual understanding (including shared language and background to create a springboard to other texts), and
- generating a starting place for further self-directed exploration and inquiry.

Short texts create pathways to new learning and to helping students understand the past. They inspire curiosity and interest, which are essential to independent learning.



Benefits of Short Texts

Making Complex Texts Accessible

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have reemphasized the significance of short text as an important tool for developing independent readers (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA & CCSSO] 2010). The oversimplification of content has created greater dependence of students on teachers. Students have become conditioned to being told what to think and read; as a result, they lack confidence in their ability to initiate learning or inquiry. The revised *Publisher's Criteria* noted that the Common Core State Standards “require students to read increasingly complex texts with growing independence” (Coleman and Pimentel 2012, 3).

Activities for Moving Beyond Short Texts

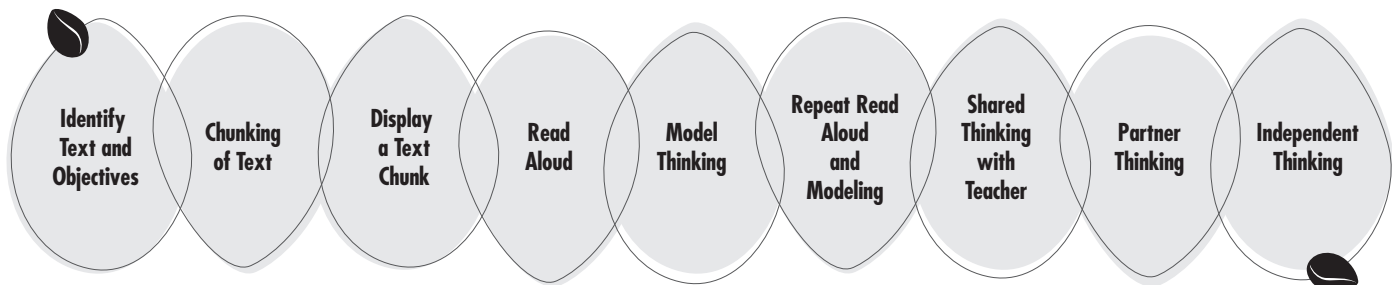
1. Hold that Thought
2. Text Sets
3. Text Series

Each activity contains a general description, an implementation plan listing specific steps, and a teaching example. While the activities are meant to be used with multiple texts, some activities will work more efficiently with some texts than others. For this reason, the lessons in Part 3 offer suggestions of which activities to use to support the reading of specific short texts.

Activity 1: Use Short Text as a Think Aloud Model

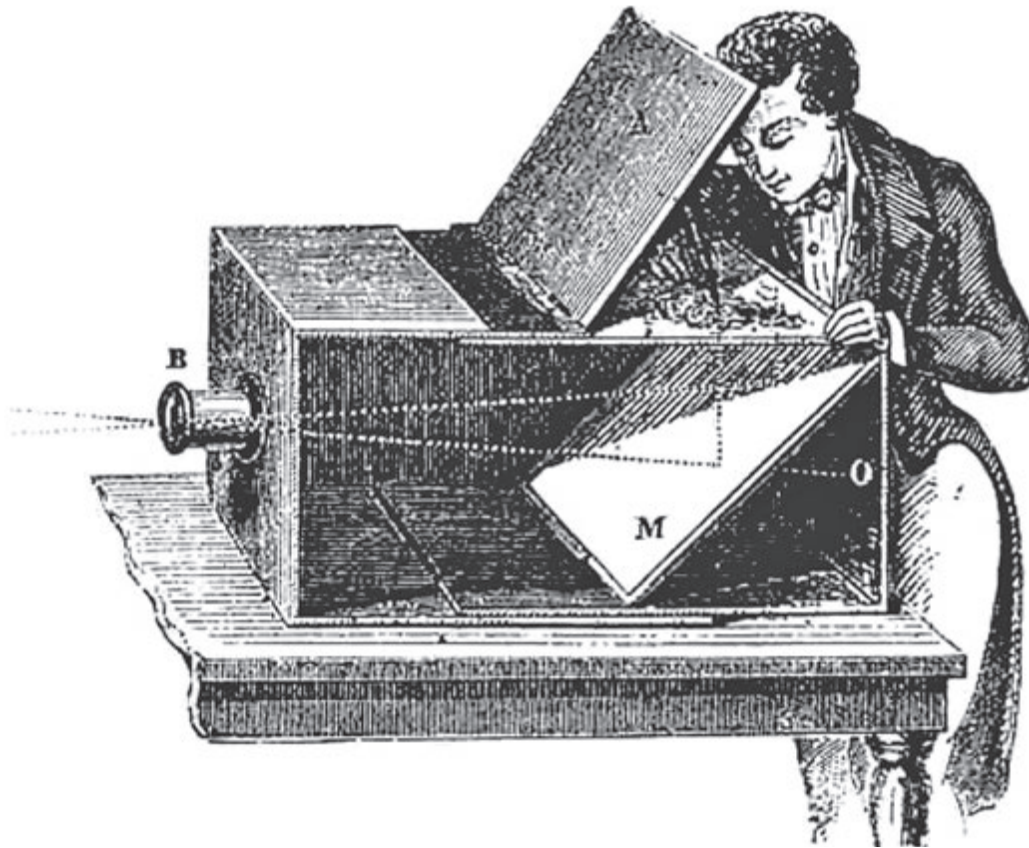
A Think Aloud provides an explicit model of the teacher's thinking processes for students. Think Alouds can demonstrate a variety of processes, including how to contextualize the text, how to source the text, or how to use comprehension strategies such as questioning to better understand the text. By asking students to conduct their own Think Aloud about a section of text, the Think Aloud can also become an informal assessment.

Steps for Planning a Think Aloud



1. *Identify Text and Objectives:* Identify the text and one or two learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are instructional objectives that might include historical understanding of an era and using questioning to better understand the text.
2. *Chunking of Text:* Within the text, choose a small number of stopping points to stop and model. It is best to mark these in advance. More detailed modeling can occur if the number of modeling points is kept small.
3. *Display a Text Chunk:* Display only the amount of text to be read for one modeling point.
4. *Read Aloud:* Read the text aloud to students.

Example of What Does It Look Like?



An artist manually traces an image that has been projected using a camera obscura.

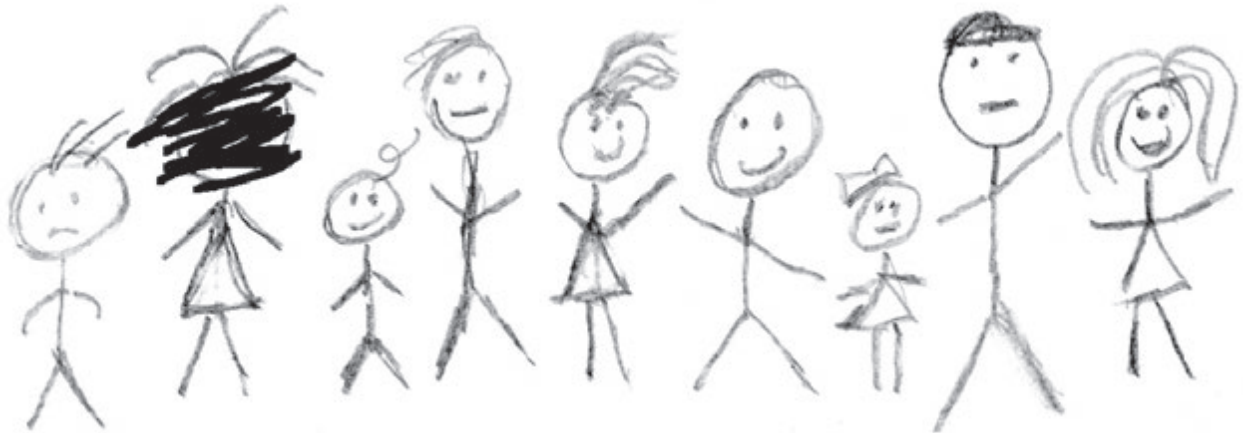
Cameras have been around since the time of the ancient Chinese and ancient Greeks. The early cameras took up an entire room, but the even bigger problem was that there was no way to actually preserve the images. An image could be temporarily projected onto a wall or other surface, but the only way to permanently capture the image was to trace it manually. Today, we wouldn't dream of having a camera that couldn't take a photograph, but the ancient cameras were just that—machines without a pictures—until the Industrial Revolution, that is.

In 1826, the first attempt at printing a photograph was made, but it needed an exposure time of eight hours in order to appear. Imagine trying to have a person sit still for the eight hours needed to capture their picture! Obviously that wasn't going to happen. Louis Daguerre continued to experiment with cameras, paper, and chemicals, and in 1839 he was able to show the public the first photographic process, which he called the daguerreotype. In keeping with the Industrial Revolution's emphasis on new manufacturing processes and improved efficiency, the process of photography, as well as printing one's photographs, then became available to the public.

The same year that Daguerre made his photographic process public, a girl named Drina asked a young German man named Albert to marry her. Albert agreed to everything—to the marriage, and to moving into her house to be with her family and friends. Albert was interested in science and art, and the new process of

photography captured his attention. He soon began having pictures taken of his growing family. With nine children, it was hard to keep a family portrait up to date! Drina, too, seemed determined to document the happiness of her children, as if to contrast it with her own lonely childhood, throughout which she hadn't been allowed to play with other children her age (and in fact, hadn't even been allowed to be alone).

Even then, photography still took a long time, much to Drina's frustration. Once, when she had gathered her children around her for a shared photograph, she blinked, and the photo captured her with her eyes closed. She was so annoyed that she scratched out just her face in the photo and then had a second photograph taken two days later with the exact same pose—except she chose not to look at the camera to eliminate the risk of her eyes being closed a second time! It all goes to show that even a queen can be vain.



Top image, sketch of 9 children. Bottom image, family photo of Drina, Albert, and their 9 children.

Image Sources

Camer obscura. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Queen Victoria and family. By Caldesi and Montecchi (Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons).