Using Picture Books to Engage Students in History

Fordham NYC RBE-RN
Why use picture books?

How do you use picture books in your classrooms?

Why are they useful?

• Can learn from illustrations
• Provide a succinct overview of a topic
• Friendlier language
• Lighter tone
• Overall more engaging
• Show students how to think about the past
• Reinforce content and literacy
• Enliven the teaching of history
Teaching History
The Essential Elements of Good History Teaching

- Historical Thinking
- Historical Literature
- Hands-on Experience
Historical Thinking

“The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there.”

-L.P. Hartley
“Doing” History: The means by which historians make sense of content

• **Historical Accounts:**
  Historians decide what evidence tells us about the past creating various interpretations of the same facts.

• **Historical Context:**
  Historians understand that the past is different than the present and try to understand its unique features.

• **Evidence:**
  Historians use raw materials to piece together narratives about the past.

• **Empathy/Multiple Perspectives:**
  Historians try to understand the motivations, values, beliefs, and feelings of people in their historical setting.

• **Validity/Reliability:**
  Historians need to determine if the evidence they have is accurate or distorted.

• **Significance:**
  Historians must consider what is important enough to pay attention to – how many people are affected by an event or how long lasting the effect of an event may be.

Students “Doing” History:

- **Historical Context:**
  Helping students understand the differences and similarities between the past and the present.

- **Historical Significance:**
  Getting students to recognize historical events that are important to remember.

- **Multiple Perspectives:**
  Helping students understand that people in the past did not all see things the same way.

- **Historical Truth:**
  Encouraging students to use historical fiction to build their understanding of history.

- **Historical Accounts:**
  Showing students that historical accounts are incomplete and require additional facts for the whole story.

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Benefits of Using Sense-Making Concepts

- Provide a **lasting foundation** for historical thinking
- Supply **tools for thinking about the present** as well as the past
- **Combine process and content** so that you achieve multiple teaching goals simultaneously
- Offer an **authentic purpose** for reading the literature of history

Using Picture Books to Do Authentic History

1. Analyze primary sources using inquiry, develop questions
2. Analyze picture book illustrations for cues and clues
3. Read picture book for content
4. Connect to primary sources, answer questions
5. Assign a sense-making concept to the book
6. Apply knowledge in an activity
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<th>Causes of applications in 100 boys.</th>
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<td>Deserted by parents</td>
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<td>Mothers in prison</td>
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<td>Parents, drunkards</td>
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<td>Mothers in Hospital</td>
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<td>Fathers gone off with other women</td>
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100
Kid Blink Beats THE WORLD
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Students “Doing” History:

Questions for Historical Sense-Making Concepts

• Historical Context:
  How would this story be different if it happened today?
  What would have happened if this happened 50 years earlier?

• Historical Significance:
  What is important to know about this event?
  What could have happened differently?
  Why is it important to know about this event?

• Multiple Perspectives:
  What did people in the past think/believe about the event/conflict?
  What did different people think about the event/conflict?

• Historical Truth:
  What evidence makes you think that this story is true/could have happened?

• Historical Accounts:
  What do you think explains why this happened?
  What are the similarities and differences between the story and the primary sources?
Group Work

1. Analyze your primary image and document
2. Analyze the cover of your picture book
3. Read your picture book through once and complete the Vetting Picture Books worksheet
4. Read your book a second time, as you read:
   a. First look closely at the illustration on each page
   b. Identify a key point for each page
   c. Write a question you would ask your students to check for understanding on a sticky note on each page
5. Write new pages for your picture book based on your primary sources