



**Muse Machine 2023 Summer Institute-Inspired Lesson Plan**

## **"Moments in Time" Historical Facts vs. Historical Interpretation**

**Developed by Alyssa Stark**

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### **Introduction:**

Students usually assume history is a collection of facts and truth. This lesson by Alyssa Stark from The Miami Valley School, however, demonstrates the inherent untruth of that assumption. In this unit, using skills in structural and interpretive analysis practiced by Alyssa at Muse Machine's 2023 Summer Institute, students explore historical interpretation and facts to understand the role bias plays in understanding primary source documents and historic events. Students then apply this understanding to their studies of 18th- and 19th-century revolutions by creating newspaper articles from the perspectives of each side that show a clear command of historical information and perspective bias.

## Muse Machine Lesson Plan – Summer Institute 2023

**Teacher:** Alyssa Stark, The Miami Valley School

**Title:** "Moments in Time" Historical Facts vs. Historical Interpretation

**Subject Area & Grade Level:** 9<sup>th</sup> Grade World History

**Date of Implementation:** November-December 2023

**Inspiration:** jeremy o'brian's demo lesson on structural analysis using Moment Work techniques

### OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

#### *Summary:*

Students will explore historical interpretation and historical facts to understand the role that interpretation plays in understanding primary source documents and historical events. We will introduce Tectonic Theater Project's concept of "moments" with a theater game in which students will create and layer gestures. As a result, they will understand that the choices they make about the presentation and organization of their gestures create opportunities for differing perspectives. They will be challenged to expand the concept of a "moment" as a metaphor for understanding historical periodization.

In groups, students will research and establish the historical facts of various 18th- and 19th- century revolutions, build upon those facts by layering on secondary sources, and thereby create a fuller perspective of revolutionary factions. Students will then practice writing from different perspectives (e.g., revolutionary vs. royalist) and create two newspaper articles that demonstrate a clear command of both historical information and perspective bias.

#### *Standards:*

- Differentiate between historical facts and interpretations while acknowledging that the two are related.
- Consider multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.
- Identify the author or source of a historical document.
- Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.
- Read historical narrative imaginatively, taking into account what the narrative reveals of the humanity of the individuals and groups involved.
- Support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

#### *Objectives/Outcomes:*

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1. Students will be able to acknowledge and identify the connection between historical interpretations and historical facts.
2. Students will be able to use multiple perspectives from primary documents to describe the complexity of a historical event.

### *Teaching Approach(es):*

Facilitated group and project work, whole class instruction

### *Assessment Tool(s):*

**Formative:** Group research worksheet, document analysis worksheet, daily journal questions and discussions

**Summative:** Pre- and post-test, final newspaper articles, final analysis of newspaper articles

## LESSON PREPARATION

### *Teacher Needs:*

#### **Teacher Context & Research**

- Read relevant sections in [Moment Work: Tectonic Theater Project's Process of Devising Theater by Moises Kaufman and Barbara Pitts McAdams](#) (pp. 34-48, 54-57, 76-77 in the Kindle edition)
- Review your class's textbook for relevant materials.
- Assemble primary documents that are related to each revolution.
- Seek out information and guides on analyzing sources.

#### **Helpful Hints**

1. Time lessons to ensure things move smoothly.
2. Excerpt primary documents to help students gradually get used to reading and understanding primary documents.

### *Student Needs:*

#### **Prior Knowledge**

Identifying different types of sources

#### **Student Voice**

Group choice, topic choice on revolution, design choice on project product (newspaper article)

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### Vocabulary

- *historical facts*: objective pieces of information about past events that are generally agreed upon by historians based on available evidence
- *historical interpretation*: analysis and explanation of historical events and facts that provides insight beyond presenting the facts. Analysis, historical perspective, and synthesis that offers a new or greater understanding of the event.
- *historical context*: the social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental conditions that surround and influence a particular historical event, period, or fact. This information is vital for making sense of any piece of history. (In my class, we call this SPICE-T for Society, Politics, Interaction with the Environment, Culture, Economics, and Technology.)
- *revolution*: a significant change in political, social, or intellectual structures within a society
- *primary source*: a first-hand account of an event or topic that provides the most direct evidence of a time or event because they were created by people that were there at the time of the event
- *secondary source*: A source that is created later by someone who did not experience firsthand the events being written. A secondary source work often interprets, analyzes, or summarizes information from primary and other secondary sources.
- *periodization*: the process or study of categorizing the past into discrete, quantified, and named blocks of time
- *gesture*: a movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning (not a fully acted scene!)
- *moment*: Tectonic Theater Project’s unit of theatrical time, expressed as “I begin... I end”

## EVIDENCE OF OUTCOMES

Students can demonstrate the difference and value between the historical facts and historical interpretation of a document on their own in an exit ticket.

## ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

Historical documents offer a wealth of information as a window into the past. That window can be broadened by using secondary source materials to develop a historical interpretation.

Historical interpretations can be perceived as static and permanent though they are one piece of a much larger historical story.

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Because history integrates facts with the perspectives of contemporary observers and later historians, recognizing bias as a part of history should remind students to seek additional perspectives before drawing conclusions.

### LEARNING PLAN

**Essential Question:** How can students' understanding of historical events and interpretation help them understand complex historical perspectives?

**Resources/Materials:**

- [Days 1-6 Slide Deck](#)
- [HIPP document analysis handout](#)
- [HIPP guiding questions handout](#)
- [Newspaper article template](#)
- [Newspaper article assignment and grading rubric](#)
- [Revolution guided notes handout](#)
- [Revolution research questions handout](#)
- Primary documents on revolutions
- Pencils, markers, scissors, printer

**Hook:** Teach students about Moment Work and how to create a gesture moment (see the Moment Work textbook, pp. 41-48). Let students interpret some of the moments to demonstrate how understanding can change from person to person. Demonstrate how to layer gestures, observe the new moments, and ask students to offer new interpretations. Make the connection to how people with different perspectives in history tell different stories. (We will continue to use Tectonic's frame of "I begin" and "I end" to talk about studying history.)

**Main Lesson Narrative/Sequence:**

Day 1 – (Introduction of the Project) As a whole group, students will participate in the "Moments in Time" gesture game. Then, students will be introduced to the research project and be assigned to watch an introductory video on their chosen revolution (linked from the research questions handout).

Day 2 – (Research Time) In groups, using guided notes and research questions built to focus on perspectives, students will research their chosen revolution.

Day 3 – (Document Analysis) Students will be introduced to primary documents about their revolution to build complexity into the narrative they have developed with their tertiary and secondary research. Students will be given the HIPP handouts to guide them through questions to analyze their primary documents.

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Day 4 – (Drafting) Students will start drafting their newspaper articles and the story that they would like to tell. They will be given templates for their articles, but they are welcome to complete the assignment freehand.

Day 5 – (Workday on Articles)

Day 6 – (Sharing) Students will share their newspaper articles and analyze differences between them. They will also take the unit post-test, which covers the first half of the unit.

### **Demonstration of Learning:**

Students will demonstrate their learning through various checks throughout the lesson. The first check is their research, the second is their document analysis, and lastly their newspaper articles.

Examples from my Fall 2023 class:

- [HIPP document analysis](#)
- [Student newspaper \(French Revolution\)](#)
- [Student newspaper \(Haitian Revolution\)](#)
- [Student newspaper \(Mexican Revolution\)](#)

### **Final Review:**

Their summative assessment will occur during finals and test their knowledge on vocabulary as well as their ability to analyze documents. Students will also take the [unit post-test](#).