How did we get here?

Many conversations about teaching history:

- Dissatisfaction with our approaches to teaching History
- Problematic dichotomy between content and skills
- History as interesting but irrelevant and incoherent stories from the past
- Wrote for the HTA NSW in 2006
  - *Teaching History* – Christine Counsell
  - Research interests in History education

Our Context

Independent school in Sydney
- Boys School 3 – 9, Co-educational 10 – 12
- Compulsory History in Years 7, 9 and 10
- Introduction of Project Zero Teaching for Understanding as a curriculum model
  - Understanding Goals
  - Cultures of Thinking
  - The Heart of the Discipline

Historical Understanding

Curriculum planning that encourages historical understanding and historical thinking:

- Historical Understanding
- Historical Significance
- Evidence
- Continuity and Change
- Cause and Consequence
- Historical Perspectives
- Historical Empathy
- Contestation and Contestability

Concepts that organise the knowledge of experts need to organise the instruction of students!
Doing History involves…

- Un-training student thinking towards History
- Problematising the past through inquiry
- Tackling evidence
- Developing a conceptual understanding of historical ideas
- Recognising the distinctive nature of the subject
- Adductive reasoning
- Motivating students to think for themselves

Relationship between content and concepts is planned and considered.
Conceptual knowledge enhances historical knowledge
Deep knowledge required for deep understanding to occur
“the most important thing is what you choose to teach”
David Perkins (2008)

Challenging and engaging

- Questions to help students to do the work of an historian
- Consider genuine sources through lens of historical inquiry
- Wrestling with History – not diluted and not de-problematised!
- As Christine Counsell (2004) says, “if there’s no problem there’s no History.”

Medieval Europe
• 3rd Year 7 case study
• 12 – 14 lessons
• 3 lesson seq (Continuity & Change)
Inquiring into the Past

To what extent did the Black Death transform Medieval life?

Why the Black Death?

• Appealing
• European focus
• Conceptually rich
• Historically significant
• Window into Medieval attitudes

Guided Inquiry

Understanding Goals
• How can an appreciation of the Black Death help us to understand Medieval attitudes?
• What can a study of the Black Death teach us about how things change in history, why things happen and the consequences.
• What role do primary sources play in helping us to understand Medieval history?
• Who are ‘others’ and how do we communicate our findings to them?

Giovanni Boccaccio 1313 - 1375

• Italian scholar and poet
• Wrote ‘Decameron’ which he completed in 1352
• Written in Florence, Italy
• He provides an account of the Black Death in the city of Florence.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Boccaccio
Think about… | Record comments here
---|---
Troublesome words? What do you think they mean? |  
Describe what Boccaccio is seeing. (what happened?) |  
What appears to have changed in Florence? (What’s happening?) |  

Personifying Change

Quick
Angry
Surprised
Evil
Panicky
Aggressive
Timid
Reckless
Resilient

Year 9 2009

• A focus on extended writing and writing as ‘joined up thinking’
• Using language to release the conceptual – The language of causation!
• Encouraging students to play around with ideas refining their thinking as they go
• ‘Lumping’ and ‘Splitting’ ideas, making connections and prioritising
• Adding complexity - Historiography
Why was Hitler able to become Chancellor of Germany?

- Conceptual focus: Causation
- 3-4 lesson sequence
- Complex question with areas of disagreement amongst historical community
- Students encouraged to form their own argument
- Encouraged to review their own thinking as they progress. Formally and informally

Sorting and Prioritising

Circumstance

Coercion

Persuasion

Conditions in Germany

January 1933

Hitler and the Nazis

Sorting and Prioritising

Historiography

- Challenging textbook presentation of history which can present a single and simple narrative
- Adding complexity (and confusion) through changing interpretations
- Encouraging students to consider how they can support their view with the opinions of others – linking to a concept of evidence
### Self and Peer Marking

Peer evaluation – maturity in the world of the immature!

- Receiving feedback in light of an agreed criteria
- Creating a ‘critical community’ – like a historian would write for – where student ideas have to stand up to scrutiny
- Rules – Be helpful, Be specific, Be Nice! (Berger 2003)

### The Importance of Criteria

**Peer Feedback**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A student in this band well:</td>
<td>5.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Understand the theme, which is the relationship between people and the environment.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Use appropriate vocabulary to describe and discuss the theme.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Analyse the theme in relation to the environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student in this band well:</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Demonstrate a good understanding of the theme.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Use clear and concise language to describe and discuss the theme.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Analyse the theme in relation to the environment.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student in this band well:</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Demonstrate a profound understanding of the theme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use clear and concise language to describe and discuss the theme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Analyse the theme in relation to the environment.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Peer Feedback

In January of 1933, Adolf Hitler was able to become the chancellor of Germany, because of the fundamental fact that he was given power by President Hindenburg. This is because of the underlying belief that Hitler was needed in Germany at the time of the Great Depression by politicians, and by the citizens of Germany. The elected leader is in thinking that he could be handled. As we now know, he was wrong.

Hitler was very well known for his fantastic, decorous, skill, that around him was to be an influential speaker, and so he was regarded as a very powerful politician. It was said that if Hitler had died before 1933, he would still be one of the greatest politicians of all time. He used his ability to spread his message throughout all of Germany. He used radios, newspapers, film and posters to do so, as well as organizing rallies around Germany, where he himself would go to tell people of what he planned to do, and why he could help them. He gave the German people the blame for all their problems, such as their loss in the war, the great depression and unemployment. His extremist approach antagonized the people of Germany, it is some of his replies, it is said that he had succeeded in whipping the entire crowd into a frenzy. He spread his message again, that he gained much support from the citizens of Germany.

The conditions in Germany at the time of Hitler’s rise were terrible, as
In Summary

- Historical concepts not skills
- Foregrounds understanding and thinking
- Problematic and interpretive (wrestling)
- Guided inquiry – Thoughtful questions and choices
- Distinct nature of History – Doing History!
- Tackle misconceptions
- Metacognition
- Challenging and engaging

References