The more you know about the past, the better prepared you are for the future.

- Theodore Roosevelt
"Those who don’t study history are doomed to repeat it. Yet those who do study history are doomed to stand by helplessly while everyone else repeats it."
What is historical understanding?

- A familiarity and facility with disciplinary ways of interpreting and reasoning with historical texts.
  - historical stories, narratives, and literature
- An appreciation of the slippery nature of historical knowledge.
- The application of conceptual, narrative, and discrete factual knowledge.
- Think through cause-effect relationships.
- Develop historical consciousness
- How we understand ourselves (identity) in the context of history?
BIG QUESTIONS:

1. How do you engage students in meaningful learning about the past, rather than which history to teach?
2. Does historical understanding/instruction serve as a means of teaching empathy?
IDEAL GOALS

- The pursuit of historical knowledge.
- Any such pursuit would be motivated by, and have direct implications for, lived experience. (IN THE PRESENT)
- Understanding that the past is connected to our present.
- Studying the past to better understand ourselves and our world.
Think like a historian...

- How do you actually teach students to understand history and think like historians?
- Provide an example of how you, as a classroom teacher, would engage students in learning history.
Research on historical understanding has largely pursued two sets of questions:

1. How might students be prompted to engage in the procedural practices of disciplinary historical thinking?

2. How does students’ lived experiences shape their understanding and interpretation of the past?

Both research questions are highlighted throughout this chapter review—research on students’ engagement with disciplinary practices and research on how students’ lived experiences interact with historical study.
Early Research

- United Kingdom (1973) - School’s Council History 13–16 Project
  - A curriculum reform initiative that sought to teach history as a “form of knowledge,” with distinct concepts, ideas, and ways of conducting inquiry and establishing truth claims.
  - CRITICAL THINKING

- Younger students conceive history as a fixed story
- Older students later recognize the interpretive, contextualized nature of history.

- British researchers also identified more and less sophisticated ways that students employ concepts in history.
  - Cause
  - Change
  - Time
  - Empathy
Early Research

- United States (1991) - focus on how adolescents process and interpret historical texts.

- Historians evaluate historical sources that reflect disciplinary attention to
  - Authorship
  - Audience
  - Perspective
  - Temporal
  - Geographic context
Historians evaluate historical sources that reflect disciplinary attention to.

- WHAT DOES HISTORY OFFER ME?
  - *Authorship (whose voices matter and whose don’t?)
  - Audience (who is learning history?)
  - Perspective (Theoretical Lens/Argument) ---Looking at same event from different lenses.
  - Temporal (Time---History is cyclical)
  - Geographic context (Physical Space/Location)
Corporate roles in defining history

Corporations have the resources to define history for us.

- **National focus on adolescent literacy.**
  - Rand Corporation (2002)

- **Carnegie Corporation (2006)**
  - Reading Next
Researchers roles in defining history

- Response by researchers of historical thinking
  - focus on disciplinary literacy
  - explore the effects of various instructional techniques and curricular interventions on adolescents’ ability to read, think, and write about historical texts in a disciplinary fashion.
  - Building of critical thinking skills.
  - development of research on historical reading and writing has had direct and positive implications for classroom instruction.
Important questions that concern how the past is used in the present:

1. What motivates one’s interest in the past?

2. How does identity or collective memory shape how one understands the past?

3. How do informal encounters with the past that occur outside the classroom influence students’ historical understanding?

4. And how do particular interpretations of the past, in turn, shape identity?
Historical Consciousness and Discipline Practices
Historical Consciousness

- How aware are we of historical events, and patterns of motivation that inspire certain events to take place?
  - Contextualization
- Emphasis on disciplinary literacy
- Through formal education, students will develop the tools and analytic frameworks with which to examine and understand their historical selves.
  - HOW DO STUDENTS SITUATE THEMSELVES IN HISTORY?
Goal: Improving students’ historical thinking.

Studies use similar instructional modules
  - including central historical questions or problems
  - authentic historical sources, structures for analyzing
    - Primary and Secondary Sources
  - critiquing sources
  - use of discussion and writing to facilitate and record students’ interpretation of the sources and central question
"I'm in the den mom, reading the newspaper for my social studies class."
Several researchers have explored student historical thinking with digital materials (e.g., Damico & Baildon, 2007) and e-platforms to support student historical inquiry.

Series of design experiments with an open learning environment that contains over 1,000 multimedia artifacts about the 1950s–1960s civil rights movement, Saye and Brush (2007) found that use of technology to create a problem-based historical investigation engaged learners

- encouraged empathy
- challenged epistemological assumptions.
Hernandez-Ramos and De La Paz (2009) found that eighth-graders who constructed multimedia mini-documentaries showed significant growth in factual recall and some evidence of historical thinking when compared to control students who studied under more traditional instruction.

Scaffolds that could support students’ historical reading and learning in online, hypertext, or multimedia learning environments.

- writing prompts
- argumentation templates
- embedded annotations
- different forms of textual representation
Historical Reading

- Domain-specific texts make unique demands on students’ literacy and reasoning.
  - Textbooks
- These demands transcend general reading comprehension and include, in the case of history:
  - Appreciation and Skepticism—Thinking of authority of narratives -relation of power. (Critical thinking)
Several researchers have broadened the literature on historical thinking to include studies that examine how students and adults reason about unconventional texts, such as movies, physical spaces, and online materials.

- Students fail to discern the perspective and constructed nature of film.
- These forms (digital) materials are in circulation on a daily basis. Particularly social media.
Text Effects on Cognitive Learning

The California Gold Rush was officially initiated with the arrival of the Forty-Niners.
Text effects on cognitive studies

- Researchers examined whether certain text-based instructional manipulations can effectively promote student historical reasoning.
- Think Alouds/Discussion
- Insertion of author's voice
  - (How emotions arises/empathy)
- Narratives: examined the effect of the type of texts students read on their interest and on the questions they asked.
- Students generated questions after reading narrative, expository, and problematizing (or, controversial) texts about the Industrial Revolution.
- The researchers found that narrative and problematizing texts provoked more situational interest and emotive questions than expository texts.
Text effects on cognitive studies

- What students do to successfully contextualize historical images and documents:
  - historical knowledge
  - strategy

- The authors found that providing students with knowledge of key historical concepts, and helping them construct an associative network around those concepts, was most predictive of student success on contextualization tasks.
EMPATHY

● Can empathy be taught? (Opinions?)
● Putting yourself in the same situation as another. Feeling/experiencing things as they have.
● Sharing the same ‘experience’
  ○ Vicariously
● Having compassion for others feelings
● Empathy plays an important role in our society’s ability to function, promoting a “sharing of experiences, needs, and desires between individuals.”
Can empathy be taught?

- **HISTORICAL EMPATHY**: Researchers have explored the nature and development of historical empathy, a term associated with a deep appreciation for the strangeness of the past. These studies examine emergent forms of historical empathy and suggest certain instructional techniques, such as discussion around texts, which help foster an empathetic orientation towards the strangeness of the past.

- **HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**
THE SCIENCE OF EMPATHY

- Riess, MD, 2017
- Empathy plays a critical interpersonal and societal role, enabling sharing of experiences, needs, and desires between individuals and providing an emotional bridge that promotes prosocial behavior.
- In the past, empathy was considered an inborn trait that could not be taught, but research has shown that this vital human competency is mutable and can be taught.
- Research in the neurobiology of empathy has changed the perception of empathy from a soft skill to a neurobiologically based competency.
  - The theory of inner imitation of the actions of others in the observer has been supported by brain research.
THE SCIENCE OF EMPATHY

- Due to evolutionary development of this brain-based capacity, affective empathy, or emotional sharing, most easily occurs among members of the same “tribe”.
  - Individuals tend to have the most empathy for others who look or act like them, for others who have suffered in a similar way, or for those who share a common goal.
  - We see these biases play out repeatedly in communities, schools, sports teams, and religious communities.
THE SCIENCE OF EMPATHY

● People are evolutionarily wired (via the thalamus) to recognize and respond to differences, and socially or culturally based perceptions can trigger subconscious fears that threaten emotional homeostasis.
  ○ Because of this evolutionary bias, cognitive empathy must play a role when a lack of emotional empathy exists because of racial, ethnic, religious, or physical differences.
● Capacity to see a person’s situation from his or her point of view, coupled with enhanced value being placed on the welfare of those who are unfamiliar can override bias.
● Empathy requires cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and moral capacities to understand and respond to the suffering of others. Compassion is a tender response to the perception of another’s suffering.
HISTORICAL EMPATHY

- Kaya Yilmaz, 2007
- “I define empathy or historical imagination as the ability to see and judge the past in its own terms by trying to understand the mentality, frames of reference, beliefs, values, intentions, and actions of historical agents using a variety of historical evidence.”
- Empathy is the skill to re-enact the thought of a historical agent in one's mind or the ability to view the world as it was seen by the people in the past without imposing today's values on the
HISTORICAL EMPATHY

- For historians, empathy refers to a combination of intellectual and imaginative capacity.
- Perspective Taking - Ability to see and entertain as conditionally appropriate, connections between intentions, circumstances, and actions, and to see how any particular perspective would actually have affected actions in particular circumstances.
- The skill to recognize how people in the past viewed their circumstances, evaluated their opinions, made decisions, and how their perceptions were shaped by values, beliefs, and attitudes.
HISTORICAL EMPATHY

- The development of historical empathy in students is a considered and active process, embedded in the historical method.
- Taking into account the nature, processes, and purposes of disciplinary history and historical inquiry within the context of classrooms: six characteristics or components of historical empathy in terms of what empathy involves or does not involve.
  - * does not involve imagination, identification, or sympathy
  - * involves understanding people's actions in the past
  - * involves a through appreciation of historical context
  - * demands multiple forms of evidence and perspective
  - * requires students to examine their own perspectives
  - * encourages well-grounded but tentative conclusions
HISTORICAL EMPATHY

- Practical Suggestions for Exercising Empathy
  - Suggestions about how the history teacher can benefit from historical empathy by employing it as a teaching tool in the classroom. It takes five steps for students to be able to engage in empathy and develop their perspective-taking skills:
    1. Project their own thoughts and feelings into a particular historical situation
    2. Distinguish the historical period under study from their own perspective.
    3. Employ a variety of reference materials and contemporary sources related to the topic they are studying
    4. Present a particular person or situation in a way that extends beyond the merely typical to encompass the unique circumstances of the case.
    5. Make use of the two-sided narrative to illustrate the role of inadequately empathic relationship between the historical participants in giving rise to misunderstanding, conflict, or tragedy.
Historical Study and Lived Experiences

- Instructional interventions that engage students in disciplinary practices and potentially change students’ epistemological understanding of historical knowledge.

- A primary goal for all work on history education is for students to develop a degree of historical consciousness that allows them to locate themselves in the context of temporal change and to understand how their own experiences shape their view of the past.
  - This is so important because many histories are taught from the dominant narrative. A limited scope...which creates a limited self perception from a student's historical lens
Cultural resources and historical understanding

• Several studies suggest that students draw on diverse cultural resources to construct historical narratives.
  ○ Parents reacted differently to the events portrayed in photographs depending on their personal experiences, memories, and perspective of the Vietnam War.
  ○ Students, despite their differing schools, backgrounds, and religions, shared fairly uniform narratives of the war, derived from common cultural experiences, such as visiting the Vietnam Memorial Wall, or watching popular films.
    - Also from being around older relatives/community members. Vicarious memory/remembering.
Cultural resources and historical understanding

- Cultural consensus among youth - shared experiences
- Reflection of changes to the school curriculum
- The ways we learn about the past outside of formal institutions (e.g., through reading, television or movies, and advertisements). Together, these studies highlight the myriad influences on historical consciousness and expand the notion of education beyond schooling
  - Not only formal schooling, but our immediate environment and the people in it.
Individual identity, group membership, and historical understanding

- Several studies examined the roles that identity and group membership play in how people engage with and understand the past.
- Polman argues that the first student was more successful in part because his learning environment was more highly scaffolded, but also because he had a teacher who accepted and built on his identity as a computer gamer.
  - Formal/instructional support in addition to moral support.
- Several studies consider the role of religious and cultural affiliations in shaping students’ thinking about the past.
Individual identity, group membership, and historical understanding

  - Porat found that students’ narratives of a contentious event in Israeli history were shaped more by the interpretation of their social and political milieu than by the actual textbook account.
  - Feelings and sentiment outweigh historical facts
Individual identity, group membership, and historical understanding

● A number of studies have highlighted the role that race and ethnicity play in how students interpret and understand the past.

● Epstein’s (2009) work highlights the extent to which racial identity shapes historical narrative, regardless of instructional influence.
  ○ Regardless of teachers’ instruction, black students were more likely to emphasize persistent inequalities, violence, and conflict, whereas white students pointed to progress more often.
Individual identity, group membership, and historical understanding

- Hughes, Bigler, and Levy (2007) found some attitudinal shifts when they examined European American and African American students’ reactions to learning about historical racism.

- They found that European American children became less biased towards African Americans when compared to students in a control condition, whereas African American students’ racial attitudes did not vary by condition.
  - Ethnic/Racial identity is central to the process of narrative development and modification.
Individual identity, group membership, and historical understanding

- The authors found that what the history students learned at home differs from what students learned in school, and that multiple identities influence students’ thinking about history (e.g., that of their country, their parents or grandparents’ country of origin, religious community, youth culture).
  - Korean adolescents in U.S. schools have a different sense of U.S. history depending on their migration status (e.g., study-abroad Korean youth, and Korean immigrants with and without a sense of national belonging to the United States).

- **How, then, do people navigate more than one set of influences on their lived experience as they make sense of the past?**
Individual identity, group membership, and historical understanding

- Historical consciousness is not a capacity that people have or don’t have; rather it is “a form of thinking exercised in different ways and to different extents in different contexts.
- Clearly, individual identity and group membership influence students’ historical consciousness and must be engaged directly and deliberately to support history learning.
Where Have We Been, Where Are We Going?

How might we best support teachers as they learn to teach for historical understanding?

To support history learning, all for a more systematic effort to identify the experiences, tasks, and environments that support new and veteran teachers’ learning and to examine the effects of such factors on student learning.

Encourage the field to develop a clearer understanding of how disciplinary practices, conceptual knowledge, epistemic orientation, lived experience, and factual knowledge intersect and interact to support historical understanding.

You can’t understand content without context.
  ○ Undercutting the process of historical understanding if the SOURCE of when/where/from whom historical (factual) information comes from.
  ○ Development of historical empathy.
THANK YOU!
Hernandez-Ramos and De La Paz (2009) found that eighth-graders who constructed multimedia mini-documentaries showed significant growth in factual recall and some evidence of historical thinking when compared to control students who studied under more traditional instruction.

Specific technological innovations and instructional scaffolds that could support students’ historical reading and learning in online, hypertext, or multimedia learning environments. These include writing prompts and argumentation templates (Li & Lim, 2008), embedded annotations (Lee & Calandra, 2004), and different forms of textual representations...

More research is to be done.
**Historical Writing (5 techniques for improved student writing)**

- Monte-Sano administered **pre and post essay assessments and identified teaching practices that coincided with students’ growth in historical thinking and argument writing.**

- Monte-Sano concluded that writing practice, without explicit instruction or attention to the nature of the reading and writing opportunities, was not sufficient to foster historical writing.
Historical Writing

- Beaufort’s (2004) case study examined one college student’s history writing over 3 years and found that, although the student’s factual and thematic knowledge improved over time, his interpretive thinking and critical analysis lagged, making it difficult for him to construct evidence-based arguments.
- These studies call for better understanding of the process by which students become immersed in the discourse of historical writing.
- Monte-Sano’s work suggests that teachers who present history as evidence-based interpretation, and who support students’ reading comprehension and thinking, may improve students’ disciplinary writing.
Historical Writing (5 Techniques)

Certain instructional techniques characterized those classrooms with marked growth in student writing, including:

1. teaching students to annotate sources,
2. providing feedback on students’ interpretations,
3. assigning informal writing prompts that focused students’ attention on the author and that called for synthesis and argument,
4. creating repeated opportunities for students to read multiple historical texts,
5. engaging in explicit instruction through a cognitive apprenticeship approach.
Language Demands in Historical Writing

- Key linguistic features in students’ historical writing. (pg.287)
- History writing in Australian secondary schools. She found that students are asked to write three particular genres over the course of their secondary schooling—recording, explaining, and arguing—each of which has its own purpose, structure, grammar, and lexis.
LARGE-SCALE STUDIES

- they found that students in the condition that used multiple documents to learn content learned the most content, followed by the group that used multiple documents to learn about historical thinking heuristics.

- "Reading Like a Historian"
  - outperformed their counterparts on four measures: historical reading, general reasoning, factual recall, and generic reading comprehension.
  - (a) presentation of relevant background knowledge;
  - (b) independent or small-group analysis of historical documents; and
  - (c) whole-class discussion.
Large Scale Studies of writing and historical thinking

- De La Paz (2005) and De La Paz and Felton (2010) tested self-regulated strategy instruction, a form of cognitive apprenticeship, which maintains that cognitive acts like writing strategies remain invisible unless they are brought to the surface and named.

- **SCAFFOLDING** The approach emphasizes a gradual shift of responsibility over time, as students begin to practice disciplinary writing with teacher guidance, in small groups, and ultimately, individually.
The school curriculum and historical understanding

- Recent research has also highlighted the school curriculum’s powerful role in shaping students’ understanding of the past.
- In some ways, school curricula obstruct or limit historical consciousness.
- (pg.289) National history dominated their understanding of their country’s origin, and that they had little awareness of competing narratives.
  - This can create a false/limited perception of history of country and of self. Limited awareness of other voices/narratives that contribute to the larger understanding of national history. Creates a false sense of understanding, because far more information is missing from the bigger picture. Creating blindspots. Unawareness.
The school curriculum and historical understanding

- Bekerman and Zembylas (2011) examine how teachers in an integrated bilingual school in Israel delegitimized certain emotional responses by students when discussing a controversial historical event, thereby privileging units of peoplehood/nation over individual, personal experience.
  - How teachers respond to emotional responses of students shapes the learners' perceptions. Who they're able to empathize with. Whose story elicits an emotional response is given more legitimacy and weight/interest/care.

- Study where researchers tried to assess student awareness of how the past is used in the present, Seixas and Clark (2004) analyzed essays written by 53 twelfth-graders who responded to a contemporary debate about a historical monument: what should be done about a series of murals depicting the origin of British Columbia that include images of Aboriginal people that many found offensive?
The school curriculum and historical understanding

- These students equated the morality depicted in the representations (created in the 1930s) with the moral order of the colonial past

- The authors suggest that historical instruction should prepare young people to “engage knowledgeably in debates about continuities and critical breaks in moral sensibilities over time”
  - Use competing/differing narratives of lived/experienced life during that time period.
Integrating school and lived experiences in support of historical understanding.

- Relationship between student identity, group membership, and historical understanding can change in the face of an opportunity to learn about the topic through engagement with multiple perspectives and class discussion.
- “Living” and less “dormant” present in the nation’s collective memory.
- Second study (Goldberg et al., 2011), the authors examined the interaction between students’ ethnic background and their learning of a controversial historical topic.
  - Sixty-four Israeli twelfth-graders of Ashkenazi and Mizrahi backgrounds were assigned to one of two conditions—a textbook or argumentative-disciplinar condition.
  - Students who read and collectively discussed various positions on the issue were more likely to change their stance to a more favorable one, especially if they were Ashkenazi.
The authors argue that the peer discussion in the argumentative-disciplinary condition promoted deeper historical understanding and an appreciation of evidence, and mitigated against anachronistic thinking (e.g., decrying 1950s policy makers for their lack of pluralistic thinking).

Kolikant and Pollack (2009) conducted another study designed to shift students’ incoming notions about history.

- worked within groups to analyze and write about multiple historical sources with different perspectives about the Balfour Declaration.
- Students arrived at ethnocentric interpretations of the event, highlighting the impact on their own group and portraying the other as passive. However, after critiquing each other’s essays and discussion, students co-wrote essays that demonstrated change in their perceptions and recognition of different perspectives about the historical event.
- These studies suggest that, while lived experience certainly influences one’s historical consciousness and thinking, this influence is not fixed; through careful instruction with texts that portray multiple perspectives, students’ thinking about the past can shift.
Assessing Historical Understanding

- Limited research on assessment in history education critiques standard assessments of factual recall, and promotes measures that capture deeper learning.
  - Think-alouds with tenth-graders as they answered multiple-choice questions from the New York Regents exam and discovered a significant misalignment between the standard the test claimed to measure.
  - Reich concludes that selected response items do not capture more complex learning goals such as historical thinking and analysis.

- Ercikan and Seixas (2011) explain the challenges involved in assessing historical thinking:
  - The inextricability of factual knowledge and higher-order thinking in history.
  - The complexity of discipline-specific tasks.
  - Different components of historical thinking (e.g., continuity and change, historical significance).
Assessing Historical Understanding

- One recent effort by Wineburg and his colleagues assesses historical reading strategies such as sourcing and contextualization using “Historical Assessments of Thinking” (HATs).
  - HATs serve as quick, formative assessments that measure students’ ability to transfer specific historical thinking practices to new documents and unfamiliar historical topics (Breakstone, Smith, & Wineburg, 2013).

- Hartmann and Hasselhorn (2008) demonstrate how complicated it can be to measure historical perspective taking.
  - The researchers created a scenario focused on whom to vote for in the 1930 election in the Weimar Republic
    - rated certain responses according to the likelihood that a given imaginary historical actor would have found them plausible.
    - possible actions ranged from presentist (least plausible) to historically contextualized (most plausible).
    - researchers translated students’ selection of the contextualized responses as high scores on historical perspective taking.
Assessing Historical Understanding

- students’ history grades correlated strongly with their selection of contextualized responses to the scenario, it remains unclear whether their high scores on the measure indicated mastery of historical perspective taking or some other factor related to academic success.

- Monte-Sano and De La Paz (2012) assessed high-school students’ evidence-based argument writing, perspective recognition, and contextualization in response to four different kinds of essay prompts to see which tasks would best elicit historical thinking in students’ writing.
  - writing task explained 31% of the variance in students’ overall historical reasoning.
  - tasks that directed students to source, corroborate, or engage in causal analysis were the most effective, especially in prompting students to recognize and reconcile historical perspectives.
  - Students’ historical reasoning was weaker in response to writing tasks that prompted students to imagine themselves in a time/place and write from that point of view.
Assessing Historical Understanding

- **Germany**: an effort to translate the largely theoretical work on historical consciousness into performance standards, or measurable competencies.

- Körber (2011) shares a model of historical understanding that includes three procedural competencies and a basic competence:
  - (a) an inquiring competence, which captures the ability to turn uncertainty into a question and investigation;
  - (b) a methodical competence, which pertains to the process of investigation, the analysis of evidence, and the construction of a narrative;
  - (c) a competence of historical orientation, which refers to the ability to use historical information “for personal or collective orientation in the present and the future”
  - (d) a declarative or subject matter competence, which refers to the “case knowledge” required to reason historically.
A mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches will allow the field to both identify trends and make valid inferences about what students’ performances indicate about their learning.

The ultimate goal should be to understand better the conditions and environments that foster meaningful history learning.

Harris (2012) suggests that learning world history may be significantly different than learning the history of any one country. Such studies highlight how much more we need to know about students’ historical understanding at varying developmental stages.

- What levels of text complexity are manageable for fifth-graders as opposed to eleventh-graders, for example? And how would a written argument constructed by a fifth-grader compare to that written by a tenth-grader?

Greater attention to discussion and discourse more broadly has the potential to support students’ historical learning and clarify how students navigate the complexity of the past.