

# Writing About the Past is Essential for the Future: Fostering Student Writing for Citizenship in K-12 and Community College Classrooms

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WRITING may be one of the most effective ways to engage high school and community college students in the discipline of history. Good historical writing forces one to articulate and defend a particular position. Further, writing for history can help dispel the common perception of what Luckhardt calls “memory history,”<sup>1</sup> which is the dominant perception among high school students and early college students that the study of history comprises only the rote memorization of facts. Brooks notes that despite the little consensus on what the teaching of K-12 history should look like, a plethora of content standards, assessments, and standardized tests have descended from school boards and state capitals over the last two decades which reinforce the memorization view.<sup>2</sup> This memorization view is also increasingly prevalent at the community college level as well. These static measures only reinforce the perception among students, as well as many laypeople, that history is nothing but the memorization of facts. This misperception is troubling. A true understanding of history, based on evaluation of ideas and critical thinking, is one of the foundations of citizenship, which was argued by Thomas Jefferson over two centuries ago.

Student writing at the high school and community college level in a variety of forms has been shown as an effective tool to break this misconception of history and foster the notion of historical consciousness.<sup>3</sup> Historical consciousness or understanding is an awareness of the past in the present and the interconnection between events in the past and the present.<sup>4</sup> Further, the ideas of historical significance, continuity and change, progress and decline, use of evidence, and historical empathy are all part of a historical consciousness. If high school and community college students can learn to foster this type of thinking, they can engage more fully with the discipline of history and ultimately utilize the discipline of history as one of the foundations of citizenship.

Yet the connection between learning history as a discipline and fostering citizenship is not automatic and must be brought forth by teachers. Teaching historical consciousness is necessary, but may not be enough to link history to citizenship. This paper utilizes the method of self-authorship to accomplish this task.<sup>5</sup> Self-authorship calls for the fostering of critical evaluative capabilities within the student so the student does not uncritically accept the norms and external formulas of wider society.<sup>6</sup> By grounding the notion of self-authorship in the backdrop of historical consciousness, K-12 teachers and community college instructors can make self-authorship that much more powerful by giving self-authored individuals a much wider and more expansive base of knowledge to draw on when critiquing external formulas.

### **Self-Authorship**

Robert Kegan argued that most teenagers and early college students make meaning of the world by trying to align their ideas and thought systems with existing social norms, influential individuals, and customs.<sup>7</sup> At this stage of mental development, which Kegan called the socialized mind, the mind does not generally create, but rather conforms. The teenage mind (and many adult minds!) usually accepts truth from an outside source and does not examine the validity of these “truths.” Typical examples of outside truth sources are parents, teachers, social trends, religious figures, and political doctrines. Rather, Kegan argued that it is the job of teachers, professors, and coaches to create holding environments where students can transition to a higher stage. This higher stage is that of self-authorship.

Kegan described self-authorship as when a student no longer defines herself by the norms and customs of society—she uses these ideas, but constructs her self-image according to internal standards; she does not seek the approval of others. Outside authorities are no longer taken as absolute, but rather understood as fallible sources—sources that must be scrutinized and examined. The self-authored individuals can evaluate and weigh these outside dogmas by an internal value system and choose what is right for themselves. High school students and undergraduates may not be able to effectively reach a self-authored state, but they can at least be put in what Kegan called a holding environment. A holding environment is a transition stage, where individuals are guided by “good company”—mentors and coaches who help the individual get to the self-authored state.<sup>8</sup>

Kegan argued that third-order consciousness was sufficient for citizenship during most of the twentieth century because, in the third order, a person can understand the mind of others, as well as the expectations of a community. Essentially, a person can align themselves with something outside of themselves, such as patriotic values. Now, as the twenty-first century ensues, however, Kegan argued that a more complex level of citizenship may be needed to deal with the pressures and demands of modern life. James Barber follows Kegan, and argued that citizenship in the information age requires new skills.<sup>9</sup> Information literacy is at the heart of these new skills. Self-authorship is centered on the critical examination and evaluation of external formulas, such as religious dogmas, political creeds, or other dogmatic maxims. The fourth order of self-authorship is not merely a new skill, but a new way of organizing and creating meaning. Following Kegan and Barber in calling for a new vision of citizenship based on an individual’s critical capabilities, this paper specifically links the practice of historical writing and historical consciousness to self-authorship. Instead of just being able to critique external dogmas with limited knowledge, with a historical consciousness, students could bring new capabilities to self-authorship. The ability to evaluate outside dogmas could be augmented substantially with the historical consciousness and all that it entails. Further, historical writing is the vehicle to accomplish this task because, through writing, students can learn to articulate and defend the very complex notions of historical consciousness and self-authorship. I have attempted to link historical consciousness,

historical writing, and self-authorship in my own classes. Yet, as I have learned, this is not an easy process. Below, I briefly detail how I have implemented these processes in my classes.

### **Starting from the Beginning**

At the time of writing, I taught a dual enrollment United States history course. This course was taught at a high school to high school students, though the course was organized and administered through a local community college. As the instructor, I had to follow the community college's protocol, including the requirement that the instructor must have a Master's degree in history. Thus, these are high school students, but they are simultaneously college students. As college students, students are to be challenged and treated like adults because they are ultimately earning college credit. That is why I chose to implement the theories of self-authorship and historical consciousness into these specific classes.

In order to promote historical consciousness among high school students, its facets must be modeled for them. Specifically, Monte-Sano argued that modeling of annotating written sources is an excellent method to promote historical writing.<sup>10</sup> I follow this method. As a class, the students and I will read a historical source aloud. At various points, I will stop and model how to ask questions of the text. These questions include analyzing word choices, discussing the author's meaning and point of view, as well as summarizing passages. Monte-Sano noted that these are effective ways to show students how to properly annotate a text. The purpose of these historical investigations is to get students thinking like historians and to not simply accept a text, but to investigate it. This investigative bent is the heart of self-authorship.

These exercises cannot simply be done once; they must be repeated with variations at different intervals in the course. In addition to parsing texts as a class, students are also given group work where they have texts and are to outline them, look for main points, and argue with points they find objectionable. From small groups, we then have a class discussion. Another variation of this is for students to survey either the textbook or primary sources and write mock theses. As they craft their mock theses, I help them create arguable points. Here, I have found that it is important to counsel

with each student and group individually, so no student “gets lost” in the class discussion.

Perhaps one of the most effective methods to get students to think like historians however is source evaluation. As mentioned earlier, Barber argued that students must be judicious and learn to evaluate the many sources they have access to; this may be a new requirement of citizenship.<sup>11</sup> Following Barber, I teach my students how to evaluate sources. This is a crucial step in learning to think like a historian and understanding exactly what historians do, aside from just remembering dates. Source evaluation is a crucial component to constructing historical arguments and interpretations and aligns with the notions of promoting a historical consciousness. I arrange for each student to have access to a computer, usually in the library. I have created a class activity which is given to each student. It is shown below in **Figure 1**.

The source evaluation activity is an individual, but not a silent activity. Students are encouraged to talk to each other about their sources and compare notes. I walk around and talk to each student as they evaluate their sources. This individual conferencing with each student is imperative because it gives the assignment a personal element. I can talk with each student and help to understand their thought process, because each student will be in a different place regarding their abilities. Another crucial element at this stage is to highlight how historians are not in agreement. This I have found to be a powerful illustration of how supposed outside sources are not infallible. When students begin to see that authorities have different viewpoints, they can begin to realize that there is no one “Truth.”

At this point, students are most likely ready to tackle writing their papers. Students have participated in a variety of exercises and assignments that were meant to foster their sense of historical consciousness, understanding the discipline of history as more than a static collection of facts. Now, this understanding must be linked to citizenship. Self-authorship can provide this link.

### **Self-Authorship and the Writing Process**

Kegan applied this sentiment of self-authorship to his students’ writing, albeit very briefly.<sup>12</sup> Kegan sought to make his students write something they could own, not something that simply fulfilled

### Source Evaluation Activity

There is no doubt that we live in the information age. Our access to information is unprecedented, mainly because of the Internet. The only other comparable time in history was during the Renaissance, with invention of the printing press. Yet with this new access to information comes new challenges. One of the most pressing challenges is how to evaluate good information from less reputable information.

As you write papers and do research in high school and college, you will need to become experts in information evaluation. That is the purpose of this activity. You will write a summary of three topics from Chapter 8 using the textbook and Internet sources.

1. Identify three topics that interested you from the chapter. Give a very brief summary of them and cite your textbook.
2. Next, browse the school homepage and use the available information to add to your summaries. Make sure you cite your sources.
3. Lastly, perform a Google search on your three topics. For each of your three topics, find three sources (so nine in total). For each source, consider:
  - a. Who wrote it? (look for position, e.g., professor, journalist, some random guy, etc.)
  - b. Where is the information located? (e.g., journal, book, website, etc.)
  - c. Is the piece political? (conservative, liberal, etc.)
  - d. Is there any contradiction between your sources? Do they all agree? What points are left out of the various pieces?
4. Add the information from Step 3 to your summary and cite it.

**Figure 1:** Source Evaluation Activity student handout.

the assignment. Writing to fulfill a mandate is akin to the socialized mind stage because one is not writing for themselves, they are writing because they were instructed to by a higher authority. Kegan,

however, did not give any specific instructions on how to accomplish this state of self-authorship in the context of student writing. This paper expands of Kegan's ideas. The most logical place to begin to apply the theories of self-authorship may be to the thesis or research question of a paper.

The thesis or research question is arguably the most important part of any paper.<sup>13</sup> This is especially true for historical writing, which is centered on critique and interpretation of historical ideas. In order to apply self-authorship to the writing process, it makes sense to begin at the thesis or research question. It is the thesis or research question that frames the argument and direction of a paper.

A thesis or research question is a claim made by the writer. The writer then must back up this claim with reasons and evidence.<sup>14</sup> This framework is meant to judge a student's thesis or research question and encourage the student to write theses or research questions that are more indicative of democratic self-authorship. In order to encourage self-authorship and the internal voice, writers can be guided by professors to formulate claims that are acts of judgment, evaluation, and, ultimately, creation, instead of claims that are merely repetitions of existing works. Of course, a thesis must also be grounded in evidence; it cannot be fantasy.<sup>15</sup> The framework is not meant to be rigid and can apply to any course where students must defend an argument with evidence.

### *Phase 1: Content (Socialized Mind)*

In this phase, the student's thesis demonstrates an event; it aims to describe how an event took place, what its causes were, and what resulted from it. The end goal is to inform the reader. The thesis is really a repetition of existing facts. An example of this type of thesis could read: "Three events that helped trigger the American Revolution are the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, and the Intolerable Acts." This type of thesis can almost always be compared to an existing authority, such as a textbook or scholarly article. This is the overarching rationale for equating this phase with Kegan's socialized mind. As mentioned earlier, the basic premise of the socialized mind stage is deference to an outside authority.<sup>16</sup> Here, the student's thesis shows deference to an outside authority. Without the outside authority, the student's thesis cannot be validated. The

thesis is really a reiteration of an existing argument or sequence of events. This also resembles Perry's dualistic phase of knowing. In this phase, knowledge is seen as black and white, as either/or: there is only one correct solution and an authority has it.<sup>17</sup> This authority can be a church figure, a professor, a parent, or a scholarly text. However, it must also be stressed that this is a necessary phase of writing, because students must be fluent with evidence.

### *Phase 2: Judgment/Evaluation (Holding Environment/Crossroads)*

The student's thesis is an evaluation of existing facts and/or interpretations of those facts. The student has moved from merely describing an existing phenomenon to arguing for a defined position. An example of this type of thesis may read: "The British had the right to tax the Americans, and the Americans, instead of being cast as patriots, should be seen as trying to obtain British military protection without paying for it." The student has evaluated alternative ideas and is arguing, with evidence, that one of those positions (or a combination of them) is superior to other positions. This position aligns with the holding environment of Kegan. At this stage, the writer defers to an authority, but only to make an informed argument about existing facts or interpretations. The student begins to question external ideals and formulas that were once seen as natural and unquestionable. This also resembles William Perry's relativistic stage. At this stage, a thinker understands that knowledge is contextual, that multiple solutions can exist. More than this, a thinker can evaluate or defend a particular solution.<sup>18</sup> This is equated with a holding environment because the student is being led to understand that there are different interpretations, and these interpretations must be backed with evidence.

### *Phase 3: Ownership/Creation (Self-Authorship)*

In this phase, the student's thesis is original, at least to the student's knowledge. Students may create a thesis that they think is original, though it might have already been argued. This would still count as originality. An example may read: "Drawing on the ideas of Thomas Jefferson, public education may be one of the most lasting effects of the American Revolution." Here, the thesis is a conversation with

authorities, but the authorities only play a secondary role in acting as a stepping stone to a new and higher thought or idea. Thus, the original thesis is not a solitary endeavor without any connection to existing reality or facts, but rather a culmination of the two previous stages. In the fourth order, values and ideas from the third order are no longer accepted uncritically, but evaluated according to one's internal voice.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the thesis incorporates well-known content and argumentative skills to produce a new concept/argument or interpretation. Thus, it aligns with self-authorship because, here, the student is using their own voice to argue—instead of relying primarily on the arguments of others, they are using the authority of others to create a new position. Self-authorship, recast as a democratic activity, must embody synthesis and ownership. New ideas are crucial to societal progress because new ideas can help to solve social problems.

In class, I provide students with a research question handout to assist them in the process. After discussions of the handout, students are then instructed to research various information sources and write three theses; one thesis for each level of the framework. The purpose of the above writing exercise is for students to at least attempt writing higher-level theses and to understand the research process.

Students are required to write two two-page reflection papers based on their assigned readings each quarter (which come from a college-level textbook) as well as a five-page critical essay at the end of each quarter. (Students also have weekly reading quizzes to ensure they are reading the material). There are no prompts. Rather, students are to craft a thesis themselves with my help. (This is more difficult if students have not done the assigned readings!) I dedicate class time at various intervals to writing. There is also a standardized test at the end of the year, but since my students are higher-level students, the test is not that much of a concern for me, whereas it could be in other classes with lower-performing students. Therefore, I can dedicate ample time to writing. After the initial thesis writing activity and prior to the due date for the five-page critical essay, I schedule class time for students to write a thesis and draft an outline. I encourage but do not mandate the writing of higher-level theses. Some students are not comfortable or do not have the mental capacity yet to write higher theses, and so they cannot be penalized

<b>Grading Rubric for Reflection Papers and Critical Essays</b>				
Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Above Average	Outstanding
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Reflection Papers</i>				
Reflection papers are to be no more than two pages. This is not a traditional thesis paper, but you do need to have an organizing statement. Instead, you simply reflect on any aspects of the readings you found interesting or with which you want to argue. The goal is not to incorporate every detail from the readings, but to focus on one or two details and intellectually engage with them. Below is the rubric I will use to grade your papers:				
Is there an organizing statement at the beginning of the paper?				
1	2	3	4	5
Does the paper reflect the pertinent topics of the readings?				
1	2	3	4	5
Does the writer engage with the ideas by agreeing, supporting, or contesting them?				
1	2	3	4	5
Is the material cited correctly? Are there any typesetting considerations?				
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Critical Essays</i>				
Critical essays are to be approximately four pages. <b>These papers must include a thesis statement.</b> You can write your own thesis statement based on the readings and the materials we studied in class, or I can supply you with a thesis. Below is the rubric I will use to assess your work:				
Does the essay exhibit a strong, clear, and arguable thesis?				
1	2	3	4	5
Do the points in the essay support the thesis?				
1	2	3	4	5
Are the paragraphs logically ordered and do they follow a sequential logic?				
1	2	3	4	5
Is the material cited correctly? Are there any typesetting considerations?				
1	2	3	4	5

**Figure 2:** Grading Rubric for Reflection Papers and Critical Essays.

for this. The only way to actually ascertain this information is by simply talking to each student individually. Again, this takes class time and some instructors may not want to give up this time, but I have found that with historical writing, personal attention is highly effective. I am more lenient on the grading for students who opt for higher-level theses. As an example of leniency, a student who attempts a level 2 or 3 thesis and receives an 85-89 by the rubric will be bumped up to a 90/A.

My role here is as facilitator. I find what students are interested in, engage them in dialogue, and brainstorm with them. I use my own knowledge of sources and material to help them create a thesis. I am careful, however, not to force a thesis upon them, but rather let an idea organically develop which they can pursue. I should also note here that papers written by 16-year-olds usually lack polish and style. So, when assessing the writing of 16- and 17-year-olds, instructors would do well to look past awkward grammar and wording and toward the underlying ideas. I do not simply neglect these mechanical errors, however. I mark them, but do not take credit off. A grading rubric is featured in **Figure 2**.

There are some concerns as whether a rubric is a valid tool. Humphry and Heldsinger argued that rubrics with qualitative gradations to measure a skill can fall victim to the halo effect.<sup>20</sup> There is usually no evidence or theory provided to justify these gradations. The topic of rubrics is too big for the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, the assessment of writing is notoriously difficult and subjective. This subjectivity is evidenced by the peer review process. Some reviewers may deem a piece of writing suitable for publication, while another reviewer may not (which I assume has happened to almost every researcher). I created the above rubric as a general tool to help the instructor and the student get a grasp of some of the basic facets of the writing process. Thus, the rubric is also used as a teaching tool in itself.<sup>21</sup> It is not punitive, but rather a method of facilitation and knowledge. It is one more step in the arduous process that is academic writing.

The first part of the framework outlined above is rooted mainly in individual student development. In this framework, the rubrics and the personal conferencing between the instructor and each individual student is meant to foster the personal growth of each student. More importantly, I try to create a holding environment where students

begin to grapple with the idea of knowledge creation and do not simply write to fulfill an assignment. The individual counseling component to active thesis writing is absolutely crucial. The teacher or professor is not a spectator, but a facilitator. For example, a student wanted to pursue the idea that Europeans had been misled by the language used to describe Columbus's exploits, particularly the idea that he "discovered" a "new" world. I helped to clarify her thesis and pointed her in the direction of discourse analysis studies. Similarly, after reading a rough version of another student's thesis, which dealt with leadership issues, I suggested she examine leadership scholarship—which she did. My job is not to create a thesis that I like, but to guide a student to create a thesis that they can take ownership of.

A totally original thesis is virtually impossible to create, even for seasoned scholars. Furthermore, high school students are not history Ph.D.s or doctoral students. They do not have access to or understanding of the vast amount of historical resources. Thus, an original idea created by a high school student is almost never something unprecedented. Rather, it is usually something out of the ordinary. For instance, one student, whose work will be surveyed shortly, essentially created an argument similar to the French philosopher Michel Foucault regarding the classification of sick individuals. I counted this as original because the student had no prior knowledge of Foucault.

I believe that writing should not be a timed or memorization exercise. Rather, I believe that students should be able to access their notes and resources at all times (just like graduate students). In addition, I allow my students to hand in multiple drafts to me until twenty-four hours before the due date. Theoretically, every student can earn a 100 on every paper. Grades should not be an end, but a means to an end. And the end here is citizenship. Developing better citizens is the objective of my course. Some teachers may not agree with this, and that is fine. As a facilitator, I see myself as a counsel and guide for every student. Baxter Magolda called this good company for one's journey to self-authorship.<sup>22</sup> I try to be good company for my students as they develop into citizens. Further, after they are graded, I counsel individually with each student again to explain the rubric and discuss why they received the grade they did and how they can improve next time. At this point, the grade is final, and there are no rewrites.

The next task is to make knowledge evaluation and creation a communal process. Knowledge evaluation and creation is not a solitary endeavor, but, rather, occurs in concert with ideas and individuals. After I grade each paper, I then select a number of theses which I feel fulfill the second and third phase (of course, all writing is kept anonymous). Each selected thesis is retyped and put on a new worksheet, which I then give to each student. Prior to me giving the students the handout, I briefly discuss Booth, Colomb, and William's ideas of Claim-Reason-Evidence-Warrant (CREW).<sup>23</sup> This work can be vexing for graduate students, so when presenting it to high school students or community college students, I distill the main points and keep the instruction simple.

A *claim* is what an author is proposing or arguing. The claim is the core of the paper. It must be stated specifically, and it must be of significant interest. The *reasons* for the author arguing this claim are based on *evidence*. Claims cannot be justified on an author's whims and fantasy. At this point, I try to model for students how I want them to use the required readings to back up their claims. I want them to draw on the readings and use the readings as evidence for their reasons and claims. A *warrant* justifies the connection between the reasons and the claim. In addition, Booth, Colomb and Williams argued that writers should *acknowledge* contending claims and give *responses* to them (A/R).<sup>24</sup> Acknowledging claims contrary to one's own and giving responses to those claims makes a claim more believable.

With the CREW A/R heuristic, students can begin to understand the different facets of a successful thesis. Students can also begin to grapple with knowledge creation at different points. Students can create a claim, give new reasons, and argue with or produce new evidence or warrants. In my classroom, each student is given a worksheet, examples of which are presented in the **Appendix**. The sheet handed to students would have theses filled in, but all other sections would be left blank. In the samples of student work provided in the Appendix, I have taken six of my students' theses to illustrate exactly how the framework and the ensuing knowledge creation piece works in practice. The students in question are high school juniors of middle-class background who attend a high school that is characterized as rural. The framework is not universal and should be refined according to student populations as teachers or faculty see fit. I have filled in the CREW section and the level of

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Writing Self-Evaluation</b></p> <p>First, write your thesis (claim) below:</p> <p>Could your thesis be strengthened? If so, how?</p> <p>Next, write down the Reasons, Evidence, and Warrant (if applicable):</p> <p>Re-read the whole paper. If you had to re-write it, what changes would you make? Or, if you were to continue the paper or make it longer, what directions would you go in?</p>
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**Figure 3:** Writing Self-Evaluation student handout.

thesis/justification for illustration purposes, but would do this after a class discussion to determine the proper CREW points and thesis level. These sheets are compiled into a packet and discussed as a class. Again, the purpose is to highlight how knowledge creation is a communal effort which ensues through reading primary and secondary sources, grappling with existing ideas, and dialoging with other scholars. This is somewhat akin to the peer review process, where multiple people look at a manuscript, build on it, and continually create something new. Disciplines such as history are not a static collection of facts.<sup>25</sup> Rather, disciplines are evolving phenomena which provide a system of understanding for their practitioners and scholars. In the highest sense, disciplines such as history are a testament to the power of the human imagination.<sup>26</sup> It is my belief that students in high school and at the undergraduate level should be allowed to partake in this awesome creativity, not be force-fed isolated fragments of knowledge that are called “history,” but are more fit for a game show than true inquiry.

After each paper, students must perform a metacognitive assessment of their writing. Metacognitive assessment allows for students to examine their own writing objectively. It puts them in the teacher’s perspective. The handout I distribute to my students is shown in **Figure 3**.

The metacognitive portion is a nice way to wrap up a paper. Students can understand why they received the grade they did.

Further, their paper does not simply end with a grade, but becomes a conduit for later ideas which they can build on. Metacognition allows the paper to become this conduit.

### Discussion

Learning how to write and research is an iterative process.<sup>27</sup> There is no set method for teaching or learning it. The steps outlined above are not given in strict sequential order and must be modified for different types of classes. At multiple times during the course, even after papers are due, I will continue to model the annotation of texts and assign source evaluation assignments, which are beginning assignments. These are skills that are never truly mastered. All of the exercises in this paper are processes in scaffolding a proper foundation for student writing in the context of developing historical consciousness. This paper went further, however, and connected the historical consciousness directly to citizenship by way of self-authorship. It is only by learning to critically judge and evaluate the formulas of one's external world—and the information that is contained in these formulas—in light of history and the historical consciousness that one can truly be a citizen. Bringing the skills contained in the historical consciousness to an issue, students can have a formidable array of methods to analyze, dissect, and make meaning of that issue.

### Notes

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Appendix: Sample Student Thesis Worksheets

Student 1

<p><b>Student thesis:</b> The greatest and most important people to influence revolutionary writings and to give way to new ideas and laws were the very people breaking them; insurgent individuals were the most critical piece in creating the government that we have and live by today. Nathaniel Bacon, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the general public are prime examples of people whom, through their resistance, created a great impact on their lives. Their actions opened up a new chapter in history, allowing for contemplation and opportunity.</p>	<p><b>Level of thesis/justification:</b> This thesis is at level two. It takes well-known individuals and argues that their accomplishments impacted society. Yet it recasts the actions of these individuals and frames their actions as contradictory in a sense. Bacon, Henry, Jefferson, and Madison did violate long-held customs of their respective societies and in some sense were traitors. The thesis also argues that it was not merely the actions of these individuals themselves, but their effect on other people of the time which helped to spark the revolutionary mood. This is recognized in the last line as well as in the statement “the general public.” This is crucial, as the student moves away from the “big man” theory and begins to contemplate organizational and systems theory.</p>
<p><b>Claim</b> The greatest and most important people to influence revolutionary writings and to give way to new ideas and laws were the very people breaking them; insurgent individuals were the most critical piece in creating the government that we have and live by today.</p>	<p><b>New knowledge/insights/contending claims...</b></p>
<p><b>Reason</b> Nathaniel Bacon, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the general public are prime examples of people whom, through their resistance, created a great impact on their lives.</p>	
<p><b>Evidence</b> [<i>Implied, not stated.</i>] All are well-known revolutionary writers/patriots.</p>	
<p><b>Warrant</b> Their actions opened up a new chapter in history, allowing for contemplation and opportunity.</p>	
<p><b>A/R</b></p>	

**Student 2**

<p><b>Student thesis:</b> [<i>prior introductory sentences</i>]...However, the Louisiana Purchase was also exceedingly contradictory due to Thomas Jefferson’s want to expand democracy and experiment with small governments. By expanding the U.S. democracy, he would inadvertently sanction genocide among the Indians.</p>	<p><b>Level of thesis/justification:</b> This is a level three thesis. Here, the student has taken a well-known event, the Louisiana Purchase, and argued not only the negative aspects of it, but went further to link this event to the Indian genocide. Of course, many may dispute the claim that genocide occurred in the United States. Nevertheless, the student has taken a stand and argued for a long range implication; Thomas Jefferson’s action sanctioned a later genocide. This thesis looks at indirect and long-term causality in historical study, which is a critical thinking skill.</p>
<p><b>Claim</b> However, the Louisiana Purchase was also exceedingly contradictory due to Thomas Jefferson’s want to expand democracy and experiment with small governments.</p>	
<p><b>Reason</b> By expanding the U.S. democracy, he would inadvertently sanction genocide among the Indians.</p>	<p><b>New knowledge/insights/contending claims...</b></p>
<p><b>Evidence</b> [<i>Implied, not stated.</i>] The treatment of the Indians is a well-known historical fact.</p>	
<p><b>Warrant</b> [<i>Implied, not stated.</i>] The expansion of the United in the Louisiana Territory, a generally positive thing, had some major negative implications. This also links genocide with treatment of Indians.</p>	
<p><b>A/R</b></p>	

**Student 3**

**Student thesis:** The nation’s first hospital, contrary to modern beliefs about hospitals, was far from helping the patients in the colonies, but instead used as a form of social control within the colonies; however, there are still elements of social control in modern medicine today.

**Level of thesis/justification:** This is a level three thesis. It touches upon Foucauldian themes of power/knowledge and the use of classification systems to exercise domination over certain groups. The student considers the idea that knowledge can be used as a means of power and repression, even well-intended and necessary knowledge such as medical knowledge. Knowledge is power. The student then applied this idea to the current Ebola outbreak and panic (Fall of 2014).

**Claim**

The nation’s first hospital, contrary to modern beliefs about hospitals, was far from helping the patients in the colonies, but instead used as a form of social control within the colonies; however, there are still elements of social control in modern medicine today.

**Reason**

*[Not stated in introductory paragraph, but in next paragraph; should have been stated in introduction.]* The reasoning behind the founding of the first hospital was to benefit the citizens who were not being kept as patients.

**Evidence**

*[Same as above.]*

**Warrant**

Certain citizens benefited, because the hospital was keeping the sick and ill away from them.

**A/R**

**New knowledge/insights/  
contending claims...**

### Student 4

**Student thesis:** As Ronald Reagan, a former United States president, once said, “The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things” (Reagan qtd. in Haden). All throughout history, the truths of these words have proven evident for our nation’s greatest leaders. Because as Reagan implied, the greatest achievements of our nation have come as a direct result of our leaders and their abilities to create and sustain a powerful union. With this in mind, this paper will argue that particularly from pre-revolutionary times up until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the strong leadership of John Smith, the founding fathers and Thomas Jefferson was crucial to the development of the nation that was to become the United States.

**Claim**

...particularly from pre-revolutionary times up until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the strong leadership of John Smith, the founding fathers and Thomas Jefferson was crucial to the development of the nation that was to become the United States.

**Reason**

Because as Reagan implied, the greatest achievements of our nation have come as a direct result of our leaders and their abilities to create and sustain a powerful union.

**Evidence**

[*Implied, not stated.*] All are well-known leaders.

**Warrant**

Reagan quote: “The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things.”

A/R

**Level of thesis/justification:** This thesis is level two, but could possibly be seen as a level three. While the student is arguing for the achievements of well-known leaders, the student has reframed the notion of leadership. By drawing on President Reagan’s quote, the student has argued exactly how the actions of these leaders have inspired other members of society. Like Student 1, this student recognizes that history is not made solely by the work of great individuals. Rather, notable individuals inspire other individuals to work hard. This is the essence of leadership. It is also the essence of social action. Social action is the result of a complex web of actions and motivations and the historian—and more generally the concerned citizen—gains a much greater insight into leadership in a republic with this mindset.

**New knowledge/insights/  
contending claims...**

**Student 5**

**Student thesis:** The power of language and word choice made the discovery of America more than it actually was. The overstatements said by Columbus and his crew have had a huge impact on what the world is today. Columbus was idolized for discovering a new route to India, then when he realized that it was not India he is still remembered for discovering a “New” world even though it was not new at all. Due to the fact that Columbus did believe he was in India he called the people there “Indians.” People saw the native Americans as threats because they were being called the word “Savage.” These simple words painted a picture of the world that is not accurate. The main words are “New World”, “Savage”, and “Indian”.

Discourse has more of a grip on the human mind than any dictator, religion or law ever manifested. Discourse is written spoken word, usually word that implies an important idea.

<b>Claim</b> The power of language and word choice made the discovery of America more than it actually was.
<b>Reason</b> Columbus was idolized for discovering a new route to India, then when he realized that it was not India he is still remembered with discovering a “New” world even though it was not new at all.
<b>Evidence</b> Due to the fact that Columbus did believe he was in India he called the people there “Indians.” People saw the native Americans as threats because they were being called the word “Savage.”
<b>Warrant</b> These simple words painted a picture of the world that is not accurate....Discourse has more of a grip on the human mind than any dictator, religion or law ever manifested.
<b>A/R</b>

**Level of thesis/justification:** This thesis is level three. The student argues against the common signifiers associated with the Age of Discovery such as “new world” and “savages.” The student further links the power of discourse to the power of perception. Human perception and behavior is shaped in part by discourse, and the student explores these issues.

<b>New knowledge/insights/contending claims...</b>
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## Student 6

**Student thesis:** Many arguments can be made about the origins of the American Revolution. Some people believe that it was a result of England trying to tighten control of the colonies, and others will argue that the revolution was a result of the distance between England and North America. These are two of many accepted theories about the causes of the war; however, one cannot truly understand the origins of the war if they do not trace its roots back to the origins of colonization. In the initial days of colonization, England was forced to make a decision about how they would maintain control over their American colonies. Their decision was to institute British governors in each colony (Brinkley). The role of these governors was to ensure that the colonies would remain true to England and to keep British rule a prominent part of colonial life. In the early days of colonization, the governors succeeded in this; however as time went on, colonies grew, and England and the colonies became more and more different, it became harder for the governors to play the same important role that they had before (Ladenburg). As a result, the colonists were able to institute their own governments without the influence of England. Although this is not typically considered, the main cause of the American Revolution was the lack of strong governors in the colonies, and the allowance of colonies to create their own colonial legislatures without the restrictions of British rule. Two examples of weak governors that will be discussed in this paper include Thomas Hutchinson and James Murray.

### Claim

Although this is not typically considered, the main cause of the American Revolution was the lack of strong governors in the colonies...

### Reason

The governors continually grew weaker and eventually the title of "governor," meant little to nothing to the majority of the colonists. [*Not in thesis above.*]

### Evidence

Two examples of weak governors that will be discussed in this paper include Thomas Hutchinson, and James Murray.

### Warrant

...the allowance of colonies to create their own colonial legislatures without the restrictions of British rule.

### A/R

### Level of thesis/justification:

This is a level three thesis. As the student mentioned, this idea is not usually given as one of the main causes of the American Revolution. Thus, the student has created a thesis which is original in the fact that it is not usually given as a reason for the American revolution.

### New knowledge/insights/ contending claims...