

## Recommended Reading for High School History Teachers

**Please note:** the titles and annotations listed here represent my short list of recommendations. These titles have had a profound impact on how I think about the art of teaching history, and I want to share them with you because they are worthwhile given demands on our time. If you find some suggestions "dated", please realize that as a historian, I reject the notion that only the most recent publications are the most worthwhile. Do not allow the tyranny of timeliness to discount some of the titles below. As time passes, this list will evolve. *LMSB-July 2010*

Bain, Robert. "Into the Breach: Using Research and Theory to Shape History Instruction." In *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*. Eds. Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg, 331- New York: New York University Press, 2000, 331-352.

Bain brings together the experience of teaching high school history with the advanced study of educational psychology and history. He shares how he introduced the nature of historical knowledge to his students during the academic year. In doing so, he was able to get his high school students to think about history as something more than a series of facts to be memorized.

Evans, Ronald J. *The Social Studies Wars: What Should we Teach the Children*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2004.

Is teaching history different from teaching social studies in your school district? Knowing the historical context in which social studies has developed allows you to explore a number of essential questions. Should history be taught to promote citizenship? What makes a good citizen? Should history or social studies focus on memorization or problem solving? Does history become marginalized by teaching social studies? These topics and many others are explored by Evans through an exploration of the history of social studies since the late nineteenth century.

Gerwin, David, and Jack Zevin. *Teaching U.S. History as Mystery*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2003.

Gerwin and Zevin provide examples of how mysteries can be created to teach history: problematic individuals and topics can easily be turned into a mystery; create mysteries out of primary and secondary sources; and develop open-ended questions around often misunderstood topics. Examples in this volume will provide the reader with many great ideas that they can utilize or adapt. By the way, Gerwin and now have a book on *Teaching World History as Mystery* published by Routledge (2010). Zevin is a major proponent of teaching history through inquiry- or problem-based learning.

Holt, Tom. *Thinking Historically: Narrative, Imagination, and Understanding*. New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1995.

Relying heavily on Carl Becker's notion of everyman is a historian, Holt questions conventional approaches to teaching history as memorization and encourages high school teachers to get students thinking like historians. I found the preface through chapter two most useful.

Kobrin, David. *Beyond the Textbook: Teaching History Using Documents and Primary Sources*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann. 1996.

This short, readable book offers several useful examples on how we can go "beyond the textbook" to teach history in K-12. Kobrin argues that in teaching history, we are not trying to create a generation of future historians, but empower students by developing their reading, writing, and thinking skills.

Loewen, James. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008.

Do not be put off by the title. Loewen is not bashing teachers. By studying the instruction of history, instructor reliance on textbooks, and textbook content in K-12 history classes, Loewen's conclusions will cause you to ponder how you use a textbook in teaching. For a variety of reasons, teachers may depend too heavily on textbooks for the content of their instruction and do not realize that the textbooks that they rely upon contain serious factual errors or "lies by omission". Loewen devotes several chapters to explore some of these errors, examines why these developments have occurred, and offers some solutions.

Loewen, James. *Teaching what **Really** Happened: How to Avoid the Tyranny of Textbooks & Get Students **Excited** about Doing History*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2010.

The title reveals Loewen's purpose. After reviewing and updating concepts first introduced in *Lies my Teacher Told Me*, Loewen explores how teachers can raise expectations for their students and encourage increased engagement in the history classroom through several examples. If you have time for only one Loewen book, read this one.

McTighe, Jay, and Grant P. Wiggins. *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008.

Excellent step-by-step instruction on how to create courses according to the backward design model. Backward design advocates that we begin with the end, that is decide what we most want our students to know and remember, determine how we will know that they have achieved the goals, then determine teaching and learning strategies to help our students reach these goals. Within the chapters, you will find numerous examples some of which apply to history classes. This volume is intended for K-12 teachers.

McTighe, Jay, and Grant P. Wiggins. *Understanding by Design: Professional Development Workbook*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2004.

You may find this useful, but it is not essential. Also do some internet searching for examples of backward design.

Selwyn, Douglas, and Jan Maher. *History in the Present Tense: Engaging Students through Inquiry and Action*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2003.

We can increase student engagement in history by making it relevant to their world and lives. Selwyn and Maher argue that historical facts memorized in isolation cannot be recalled or remembered unless we connect them to students' interests, communities, cultural background, and prior knowledge. You will find several useful examples on how you can make history more relevant.

Tomlinson, Carol A., and Jay McTighe. *Integrating Differentiated Instruction & Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2006.

While I am not expert in adapting to special needs, I found this slim volume useful in thinking about how to provide differentiated instruction to a variety of learning styles and special needs.

Wineburg, Sam. *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

Wineburg has studied how high school students learn history, a.k.a. historical cognition. While his research samples are based on small numbers of students, his findings will strike a familiar chord with your own experiences. In the process of examining how history is taught and learned, Wineburg also advocates best practices.