**Identifying and Generating Strong Historical Questions**

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| **Content Objectives for Lesson**  *What will students know, understand, or be able to do at the end of the lesson?*  SWBAT understand the difference between a strong and week historical question.  SWBAT develop a strong historical question from a narrative source. |

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| **Evidence of Objectives Achieved**  *How will you assess whether or not your students have met your learning goals?*  Collect and assess the “Do Now.” Assess student answers during the share out, as well as the suggestions they make for others. |

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| **Warm Up (approx first 3-5 mins of lesson)**  Read the brief description of a strong historical question. Next, read the two historical questions in the worksheet and identify whether they are strong or weak and the reason why.  The following guidelines were taken from http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/history  1.) A good historical question is broad enough to interest you and, hopefully, your classmates. Pick a topic that students in the class and average people walking down the street could find interesting or useful. If you think interracial relationships are an interesting topic and you find the 1940s to be an equally fascinating time period, come up with a question that incorporates both these interests.  2.) Avoid selecting a topic that is too broad: "How has war affected sex in America?" is too broad. It would take several books to answer this question.  A good question is narrow enough so that you can find a persuasive answer to it in time to meet the due date for this class paper.  3.) After selecting a broad topic of interest, narrow it down so that it will not take hundreds of pages to communicate what happened and why it was important. The best way write a narrow question is to put some limitations on the question's range. Choosing a particular geographic place (a specific location), subject group (who? what groups?), and periodization (from when to when?) are the most common ways to limit a historical question.  4.) A good historical question demands an answer that is not just yes or no. Why and how questions are often good choices, and so are questions that ask you to compare and contrast a topic in different locations or time periods; so are questions that ask you to explain the relationship between one event or historical process and another.   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Historical Question | Strong or Weak Historical Question | Reasoning | | "What happened on Thursday, Dec.12, 1943 at the Boeing bomber plant in Albany, California?" |  |  | | Why was Thomas Jefferson opposed to slavery? |  |  | | How has the U.S. government changed their policy towards Native American tribes? |  |  | |

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| **Explanation**  *What skills or contents do you need to teach your students?*  Discuss the responses as a class and explain the importance of developing a strong historical question when approaching a topic. Ask students for suggestions to improve the questions that are deemed “weak.”  Explain that when approaching a historical narrative, historical questions might arise from contradictions, comparisons, cause and affect, decision-making, or missing information. |

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| **Application**  *What will your students do with this new content or skill in order to begin to master it?*  Break students into groups of 4. In the group, have students independently read a passage on the number of casualties that occurred during the Civil War during (or any brief, narrative passage related to the content). As they read, students should underline points of interest in the text that they think would lead to a strong historical question. Students will then compare the parts of the passage they have underlined with the rest of a group. Next, the group will decide on a historical question generated by the text, keeping the criteria from the warm-up exercise in mind. |

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| **Synthesis**  *How can you make sure your students understand the connection between the Explanation to the Application?*  The teacher should emphasize to the class that creating a good historical question is difficult and often requires revision. The teacher should also emphasize the best way to improve writing skills is to workshop ideas with peers or teachers.  Next, students share their questions with the teacher who will write/ project them on the board. The class will give constructive feedback on how on how the question can be improved. The teacher will modify the question on the board until the class is happy with the result.  Next, have students answer the following question: What did you find most difficult about finding historical questions? What did you find to be easy about finding historical questions? |

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| **Homework**  *What can your students work on independently to solidify their learning?*  Students will chose one of the historical questions from the class discussion. For homework, students will find an additional source that will help them answer the historical question and create a thesis statement. |

Source: Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering.* Cambridge. New York: Vintage Books, 2008. Excerpted and Adapted

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the United States embarked on a new relationship with death. The Civil War proved bloodier than any other conflict in American history. The war that would foreshadow the slaughter of World War I's Western Front and the global bloodshed of the 1900s. The number of soldiers who died between 1861 and 1865 is estimated at 620,000. This is nearly equal to the total American fatalities in the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War combined. The Civil War's rate of death, in comparison with the size of the American population, was 6 times that of World War II. A similar rate in the United States today would mean six million fatalities. Confederate men died at a rate 3 times that of their Yankee counterparts. 1 in 5 white southern men of military age did not survive the Civil War.

But these military statistics tell only a part of the story. The war killed civilians as well. Battles raged on farms and fields close to homes, encampments of troops spread disease, guerrillas brought violence upon women and even children through reprisals, draft rioters targeted innocent citizens, and shortages of food in parts of the South brought starvation. No one attempted to document these deaths, and no one has created a method of for counting the dead of the Civil War today. The well-known Civil War historian James McPherson has estimated that there were 50,000 civilian deaths during the war. He has concluded that the overall death rate for the South was greater than that of any country in World War I and most of that of WWII. The American Civil War produced death on a scale thought impossible without the technologically and inhumanity usually associated with a later time.

Citizen soldiers snatched from the midst of life created responsibilities for a nation defining its purposes and polity through the war. A war about union, citizenship, freedom, and human dignity required that the government attend to the needs of those who had died in its service. Putting these newly recognized responsibilities into practice would be an important step in the growth of federal power, a trend that characterized the postwar nation.