

Creating Clarification:

Using Document Walks to Collectively Navigate the Historical Process

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What is a Document Walk?:

A Document Walk is a student-driven activity that prompts students to act as historians by generating their own historical narratives while improving literacy skills. Working collaboratively and rotating through the classroom, students analyze various primary sources and leave their interpretations for the subsequent groups to build upon. This approach engages students with the ambiguity of historiography process as they grapple with the transition from interpretive murkiness to clarity to construct a point of view.

Document Walk Process:

A Document Walk is a "students as historians" activity that promotes literacy skill development in the social studies classroom. Here is how it works: Six to eight stations are in the room. At each station is a primary source pertaining to the topic and supporting the Guiding Question. Each station has a different source and an analysis sheet. Students are instructed to read the source and analyze it with the Guiding Question in mind. Then, students move clockwise to a new station. Because the documents are arranged chronologically, the students will be moving to the next event (except the last group, which will move to the first event). As students rotate through the stations, they incorporate information gleaned from the previous documents. As a result, as students move through the stations, they will continue to build a deeper and deeper analysis. The result should be that the students are able to construct a narrative to answer the Guiding Question. Document Walks mimic the work of historians. Historians rarely start with the first document and move through to the last as they conduct research. A group starting in the middle of the cycle will take time to see the whole picture. Document Walks can be arranged to support any number of social studies standards.

Document Walk Collection:

To save paper, we have posted additional Document Walk material on a wiki for you to access. Go to...

www.LearningWithDocuments.WikiSpaces.com

...and look under "Document Walks." The collection online includes Document Walks discussed in this presentation. Available by email are Document Walks for the American Revolution, Civil War, World War II, American Foreign Policy, the Fall of Rome, environmental issues, and more. Document Walks have been used with students from grade-level to Advanced Placement, seventh grade to college. Also on the wiki is a discussion board for you to share how you utilized and modified the strategy in your classroom.

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