

USING MULTIPLE TEXTS TO TEACH CONTENT

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WHY MULTIPLE TEXTS?

We are all, daily, bombarded with multiple messages (texts, broadly defined)—in the news, over the Internet, in our workplaces and during leisure activities. Often, these multiple messages are contradictory and confusing. Take for instance, the contradictory information we receive regarding our health and the kinds of food we eat. Should we eat fat and eschew carbohydrates, or is it the other way around? Yet, making sense of the world, despite the confusion, is part of what is expected of us as citizens. Think of how we decide which candidate to back in an election. We listen to sound bites, watch attack ads, read position statements and editorials, observe debates, and possibly even talk to candidates. These various conflicting sources of information represent unique perspectives and biases, communicate different purposes, and have varying levels of credibility. Yet, somehow, we must sort out all of the information in order to make an informed choice. Making sense of the world in the face of multiple messages is required of us as citizens, consumers, students, parents, and experts in our respective disciplines.

Indeed, being an expert historian or scientist requires one to make sense of multiple perspectives. A historian, for example, searches for documents from a variety of sources on a single topic and then constructs an interpretation of the topic. She makes this interpretation even though she has gathered information from texts with varied perspectives and levels of credibility that are written for different purposes. How she selects sources and interprets them is a function of a number of factors—her preconceived notions, biases, search skills and historical training, the political climate in which she lives, the monetary resources she has, the richness of the data she finds, and so on. When she writes her interpretation, she is, in a sense, making an argument for her interpretation. If her story is coherent enough, and thus persuasive, her interpretation may become the dominant one that is adopted by other historians and learned in school. She traditionally writes it, however, as a unified story rather than as an argument or attempt to persuade. The piecing together of that story across multiple texts is hidden from readers.

Without being taught how to do it, students have a great deal of difficulty making sense of multiple messages. A number of research studies have found that middle and high school students read multiple texts as if they were separate from each other, gathering facts from each text in turn (as if they were gathering a basket of facts), not noticing contradictions and complexity see (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 1998; Wineburg, 1991). There are several possibilities as to why this is such a difficult task. One reason may be that, because each text represents a unified story, students may not understand that they should question it. Students may need to be taught to question the texts they are reading.

Another reason may be that making sense of multiple texts requires **disciplinary** knowledge: that is, an understanding of how knowledge is constructed, shared, and evaluated in a given field (Hynd & Stahl, 1998). Disciplinary knowledge includes knowledge of the task in which disciplinary experts engage. If a student knows how a historian goes about his work, if he understands that some sources are regarded as more credible than others (e.g., an article in *The New York Times* versus the *The National Enquirer*), or if he understands the tradition of historical writing, it should be easier to evaluate the credibility of multiple, contradictory texts than it would be for a student who did not have that disciplinary knowledge.

Students may also need **strategic** knowledge, or an understanding of the processes used to construct knowledge (Alexander, 1997; Alexander & Judy, 1988). If students are reading various documents about the same historical event, engaging in cross-textual strategies such as comparison-contrast charting would help them sort out the different perspectives. Often, reading teachers teach students strategies for interpreting single texts, but they fail to teach students how to engage in cross-textual interpretation. Hartmann (1995) found that high school students were likely to make ties within texts and with texts and their prior knowledge, but they made fewer cross-textual ties. To make these ties requires cross-textual strategic knowledge.

Students need to alter their **purposes for reading** when multiple texts are involved. Conflicting texts require resolution. Thus, reading becomes an opportunity to figure out what to believe, or an opportunity to learn information that may change one's current beliefs. This purpose for reading is entirely different than the purpose of gathering a set of discrete facts in order to pass a test. For one, it changes the relation of the student to the text, making the student responsible for understanding and forming opinions, and for this reason, it is inherently engaging (Hynd, Holschuh, & Hubbard, in press).

Making sense of multiple texts also requires **critical thinking**. If students engage in cross-textual comparisons and contrasts and evaluate sources to decide what to believe, they are using analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, the kinds of knowledge in Bloom's (1956) taxonomy that are considered critical thinking. Finally, making sense of multiple texts requires epistemological shifts, shifts in beliefs about knowledge and learning. Perry (1968) described students' ideas about information as ranging from naïve, evidenced by notions such as "information is either right or wrong," or "authorities know the truth," to more mature stances evidenced by notions such as "knowledge is contextualized." When students have to make sense of conflicting documents, their right/wrong orientations are challenged.

Thus, there are a number of reasons that it is important for teachers to teach students how to deal with multiple messages. The reading of multiple documents is a common activity in everyday living. Teaching how to do that means our students will understand the nature of knowledge creation in various disciplines, develop authentic purposes for reading (to decide what to believe), employ strategies that are useful for those purposes, engage in critical thinking, and develop more mature ideas about the nature of knowledge and learning. All of these benefits are concomitant with higher achievement and improved disciplinary learning.

HOW DO EXPERTS INTERPRET MULTIPLE MESSAGES?

Wineburg (1991) compared a group of historians with a group of high school students as they read multiple conflicting historical accounts of an event. He found that both the historians and the students learned the information in the texts, but the historians engaged in strategies that were different from the students—they treated the texts as though they were attempts to persuade. That is, they recognized that the texts were written by authors who had various levels of competency, bias, purposes for writing, and so on, and that the authors were engaged in getting readers to accept their particular interpretation. So, in addition to reading what the texts said, the historians also evaluated the credibility of the accounts.

Social psychologists who study persuasion have found that there are two kinds of features that readers pay attention to when they confront persuasive arguments: the central features of a text (the arguments themselves) and the peripheral features of text (Chaiken, 1980; Chaiken, 1987; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Peripheral features are those features outside of the message, such as the author, the date of publication, the genre (editorial, news story, etc.), the purpose, the structure (refutational, two-sided versus one-sided), and the tone. Wineburg's (1991) historians paid attention to both kinds of information. They *corroborated* each source with the others they read, looking for agreements and disagreements across sources, and they noted the reasonableness of the arguments. These are central features. But they also used *sourcing* (they evaluated the credibility of the author and source) and *contextualization* (they thought of the time period and all of the sociopolitical elements in place that might factor into the credibility of the source). Thus, the historians viewed the historical documents as arguments rather than as facts, and they viewed their purpose for reading as one of evaluating credibility. That is, they read each text as an attempt to persuade, even if the text was not what one would normally consider within the genre of persuasion (Hynd, in press).

In schools, we often ask students to pay attention to the central features of a given text, and some research shows that students who do so understand the message better than those who pay attention only to the peripheral features of text (Sinatra & Dole, 1998). However, paying attention to the central features does not preclude paying attention to the peripheral features. Indeed, paying attention to both may be facilitative when the purpose is figuring out what to believe (Hynd, in press). I contend that teaching students to do so will enrich both their understanding of the texts and their ability to critically think about them. I offer as evidence for my contention a study my colleagues and I did with a group of college students.

MULTIPLE TEXTS—THE CASE OF HISTORY

In a study of multiple texts use with college students (Hynd, Holschuh, & Hubbard, in press), my colleagues and I asked students at a large Southeastern university to read various documents about the Tonkin Gulf incident of the Vietnam War as part of a unit on history in a “Learning to Learn” course. (In this paper, I discuss this study, but for the full description of it, please refer to the source cited above.) The students had enrolled in the class because they wanted to develop reading and study strategies to make them more successful in their college courses, and the instructors (two of the researchers) used psychology, history, and biology units as contexts within which to teach strategies.

We chose the Tonkin Gulf incident because it was, and is, controversial. Historians disagree about what actually happened, and they also disagree about whether or not President Johnson acted forthrightly in using the incident to broaden his power to increase our engagement in the Vietnam War.

We chose several conflicting readings about the incident. One was by a military historian, a former CIA agent in Vietnam. Another was by Dean Rusk, secretary of state at the time of the incident. A third was by a university historian who wrote an editorial about the incident for the *Washington Post* 20 years after it occurred. The fourth reading was from a college-level history text written by experts.

Before the students read those texts, we asked them to read a two-paragraph background statement about the Tonkin Gulf incident and a piece about how historians read, which discussed sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration.

As part of the unit, students watched a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) documentary on the Johnson years. It dealt with the Vietnam conflict, but not the Tonkin Gulf incident, and it provided a rich context for interpretation. At the end of the unit, students also read an excerpt from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara’s book *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, which described the incident. Students constructed a comparison-contrast chart as part of their strategy instruction for the unit. The various positions of the authors who wrote about this incident are described in Table 1.

Table 1. The Positions of the Authors

	<i>North Vietnam attacked</i>	<i>The U.S. provoked North Vietnam</i>	<i>The President manipulated Congress</i>
Military historian	yes	no	no
Sec. of State Rusk	maybe	no	no
University historian	no	maybe	maybe
College textbook authors	no	yes	yes
Sec. of Defense McNamara	no	no	no

The authors not only had varied positions, but they had varied levels of participation in the actual incident. Robert McNamara, Dean Rusk, and the military historian all had some involvement in the incident, whereas the university historian and the authors of the college-level history text did not. McNamara and Rusk helped Johnson decide to push for legislation giving him more power to engage in conflict. The military historian was not personally involved in the incident but was involved in the Vietnam War. In addition, he relied on military personnel as a source of much of his information. The university historian had put together a two-volume set of primary source documents about the Vietnam conflict and had written his dissertation on it.

We chose 13 students to participate in interviews before and after the readings. We wanted to find out about their levels of disciplinary knowledge, their strategies for completing the readings, the reasoning they used for deciding what was credible, and their epistemological stances about the information in historical documents. In addition to the oral interviews, we asked students to respond to e-mail queries and to fill out a questionnaire asking for their background in, and knowledge of, history. The profiles of these 13 students are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Interview Participants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Major</i>	<i>GPA/SAT</i>	<i>Race/ Ethnicity</i>	<i>Epist/ Strat.*</i>	<i>Hist. cl.**</i>
Carey	Freshman	Business	3.8/1220	Eur.-Amer.	N	0
Dan	Freshman	Undecided	2.4/DK	Eur.-Amer.	N	0
Bob	Freshman	Undecided	3.2/1200	Asian-Braz.	N	0
Alice	Freshman	Undecided	3.5/1110	Eur.-Amer.	M	0
Leslie	Freshman	Education	2.75/DK	Eur.-Amer.	M	0
Anna	Sophomore	Undecided	2.3/1190	Eur.-Amer.	M	2
Doby	Junior	Management	3.2/DK	Eur.-Amer.	N	0
Jenny	Senior	Management	2.6/950	Eur.-Amer.	N	1
Cory	Senior	Finance	3.6/1200	Eur.-Amer.	N	0
Althea	Senior	Finance	3.0/1290	Eur.-Amer.	M	1
Colin	Senior	Accounting	2.7/1000	Korean	M	1
Jessie	Senior	Sociology	2.1/1260	Eur.-Amer.	M	1
Shelly	Senior	Public Rel.	3.3/1260	Afric.-Amer.	NA	2

* Epistemology/strategy use, as determined by answers to prestudy questionnaire.

Naïve (N) = right/wrong, authoritarian orientation. Mature (M) = relativistic, personal responsibility orientation.

** Number of history classes taken in college.

Findings

We transcribed and coded our interviews, arriving at the following findings:

- **Students change their ideas about historians.**

During the first interview with students, possibly because of our questions, students began to change their ideas about what historians did. The changes in ideas continued through the second interview. At the beginning of the interview, students saw historians as documenters, synthesizers, and arbiters. But when we asked students to give more detail about the kind of work they did, they began to drop the notion that historians are merely documenters. After the readings, they also dropped the notion that historians were merely synthesizers, and began to think of them more as arbiters and even biasers. (Note: Students did not use these particular terms. We use the terms to describe what they said.) Following are examples of what students said in each of the categories:

Historians are documenters.

Doby: “[Historians record events] to keep us up to date about what’s happened so we don’t make so many mistakes about what’s happening.”

Cory: “[Historians] give a description for other people. It’s an important thing to do, so everyone can have the knowledge of the past who doesn’t have the time to do all that research on what happened. We need to know that so we won’t make the same mistakes.”

Leslie: “To study history and then to tell—from what’s going on—the things we could do to avoid past mistakes.”

Bob: “I think historians just look at the past to see the decisions people have made and hope that we can make a better future.”

Historians are synthesizers.

Dan: “I’m sure they know all of the basics. They go into detail about stuff, why it happened, why it didn’t happen, what could prevent it happening in the future.”

Alice: “They are looking for why it occurred or motivations—why they did what they did.”

Shelly: “I think they try to determine our history ... to support their earlier findings to make sure things come together and make sense.”

Historians are arbiters.

Jessie: “To tell things like they happened so to get rid of bias. [Historians look at different perspectives and take a position after] looking for the different sides of it to find out as accurately as they can what took place. [Historians interview people in order to find out] if there’s a different story.”

Carey: “[Historians need to get] multiple views. They have to incorporate that into not what they think is correct but what they see is the consensus. [They describe by] getting lots of information and getting broad consensus if there is conflict—there is in everything—there are many takes in the same thing—sometimes you don’t know who wrote it or what their background is. I think that makes it harder. They are looking for different views, factual information, and then tie it together.”

Historians are biasers.

Bob: "I think history is not so much how we keep from making mistakes now as it is a tool. You need to know how to use it to interpret what is important. You use the knowledge and incorporate it ... but the flaw in that is that you may have a different mentality than the author or professor. It depends on the time they live. Maybe 1990 is way different than 1920, but if I interpret the 1920s in a negative way because of the way we think now, I would be wrong."

Colin: "I guess it is a tough task for historians to do. I think historians—even though they try to be as neutral as possible—there's some bias that is there as a human being. I guess you could try, but it is hard. When historians research a topic, that topic interests historians to begin with, and that interest comes from their parents, maybe. They are unaware of it ... not even having a good solid reason, you automatically have some stance. And I guess that influences partially what they research on and the stance they take. I don't think there's 100-percent neutrality. That's impossible."

Note that the move from thinking of historians as documenters to thinking of them as biasers reflects an epistemological shift from a "right/wrong" truth orientation to an understanding of the contextualized, relative nature of knowledge.

- **Students struggle with subjectivity/objectivity, and relativism.**

We found that students wanted very much to believe that involvement in the incident proved one's credibility. They were conflicted, however, as they thought about issues of credibility. These conflicts were seen during the second interview, after reading the texts.

Colin: "I thought the Rusk one was pretty credible because he was there and he had experience with Johnson. All of the others, they didn't really have actual experience other than the third one—the newspaper article—he may have studied for a long time, but he didn't have firsthand experience."

Researcher: "So being there makes it credible?"

Colin: "I think so, but you also have to consider potential bias because they were involved. They may be dealing with emotions."

Jessie: "The person who is there with that firsthand experience might be concerned with defending their actions, but they're also in a situation to describe what happened, whereas historians would or should take a more neutral stance, but they wouldn't have the—they couldn't actually portray the in-depth happenings."

Shelly: "[I take into account] who they are and what role they had and who they know in Vietnam and if they had any involvement because one of them was involved, so you have to take that into consideration. I think experience gives you more of an edge about what's going on. You know it happened if you're there, but I don't know—I don't know—that gives you a firsthand thing. I don't know—people who have involvement, they're going to make themselves or the people who are affiliated with them look, you know, not look as bad, so they're a little sketchy in terms of reading what they put down so, I don't know. Historians, they can have biases, too."

In these conversations, you can see that students are thinking about credibility and the role of firsthand experience—some of them seemingly for the first time. Their conflicts show again that they are experiencing epistemological shifts towards relativism.

- **Students change their strategies for reading.**

We found that all but one of the students changed the way they read as a result of the reading. We felt that these changes were likely due to the change in the *purpose* for reading—from reading to gather isolated facts to reading to decide what to believe. In the following excerpts, note the evidence of critical thinking and cross-textual strategy use.

Before

Anna: "I approach reading the world history text like any other text, read the pre-questions, read the sections, and put the book down."

After

Anna: "I like the way I am thinking as I am reading. I'm reading and analyzing all these things I've read before and comparing them while I'm reading. It's kind of weird, but it's cool. My brain is working overtime and extending its capabilities, so that's good. I like things that really make you think, and this subject does just that. There is no real answer, so you have to analyze everything yourself and come up with your own conclusions."

Before

Leslie: "[I'd do] nothing but just reread it. And he'd give us questions and I'd do those. But I didn't really read it as much as I should have."

After

Leslie: "I'd probably [make] flashcards and charts and that sort of thing. And I wouldn't be focusing on dates but what I believe and don't believe and how they coincide with each other. I'd be focusing on what they have in common and what they differ on."

- **Students change their ideas about the task of learning history.**

Finally, students in the study showed increased motivation for learning history. Alice had been in a class as a high school student where multiple texts were used but didn't understand the purpose for them. After the study, she said, "I didn't realize then that he was really doing it right. I can see now what he was trying to do. I understand things better now." Althea said, "Life isn't like school; there usually isn't a textbook that tells you what to think, so learning how to come to a conclusion when presented different sides of the same story will be useful. I do like having different points of view to read. I never liked having information spoon-fed to me in grade school. It's nice to be able to form my own opinion."

In summary, these students were taught to approach history in a different way using multiple texts. They experienced epistemology shifts and changed their strategy use from low-level, general strategies to discipline-specific strategies. They learned to make cross-textual comparisons rather than viewing each text as a single entity, and they engaged in critical thinking about the discipline and the nature of historical interpretation. These changes are important for disciplinary learning and achievement.

APPLICATION TO OTHER CONTENT AREAS

Although the research described here shows how the use of multiple texts can benefit the study of history, multiple texts can be used in other disciplines as well. In **science**, for example, scientists use different methods and come to different conclusions about the phenomena they study. They also disagree about the ethical dimensions of science. What we know about scientific topics changes over time as scientists use different instrumentation, embrace new theories, and so on. Indeed, debate over scientific findings is at the heart of the discipline, and debate over the public policy those findings generate is at the heart of a democracy (Holliday, Yore, & Alvermann, 1994). Yet, in schools, science is often taught as the accurate depiction of reality. Students often learn the “facts” of science in an isolated, decontextualized way. *The National Science Standards* (National Academy of Scientists, 2003) specify that students learn the process of science as well as have an understanding of current scientific knowledge. The processes of science are truly laid bare when students have to grapple with multiple perspectives.

What kinds of multiple texts should science teachers instruct their students to read? Students could read texts about a single topic over time. For example, they could read about what scientists believed about cholesterol 25 years ago, 10 years ago, and what they believe today. They could read about a study in a science journal, along with the various interpretations of it in the media, and interpretations by other scientists. Or they could read various stances on one of the ethical debates that occur among scientists.

In **English**, critics make comparisons across texts and engage in lively debate of what texts mean given the different perspectives they take. Students need to understand different perspectives to engage in the processes of interpretation honored by experts in the field. In fact, the knowledge of different perspectives is central to the making of informed written arguments, an essential part of the English curriculum.

What kind of multiple texts should English teachers instruct their students to read? Students could read the conflicting interpretations of critics, debunking the notion of one correct interpretation. They could read different versions of the same story written to reflect different time periods, and engage in comparing and contrasting their various elements. They could read the book version and watch a movie version and engage in the same kind of critique. Or, they could read historical fiction and compare it to the “true” historical accounts. There are numerous ways to engage students in the interpretation of multiple texts in English class.

In **civics**, learning how to make informed decisions in the face of multiple conflicting messages is central to the development of democratic behavior. Democracies demand that citizens take into account multiple perspectives, think critically about them, evaluate their credibility, and make decisions about what stance to take. Elections offer rich sources of material to read, as do supreme-court decisions (often with dissenting opinions), congressional debates about key issues, newspaper editorials, and op ed pages. Following an issue in the newspaper over the course of a semester offers many chances for students to encounter multiple contradictory messages about which they should take a stand.

STRATEGIES FOR ACCESSING AND READING MULTIPLE TEXTS IN HIGH SCHOOL

Even though the study described here took place with college students, work with high school students suggests that they can be taught to read critically from multiple sources. Seixas (1993) shows that students in middle and high school in Great Britain are capable of sophisticated critical readings of history when they are taught how to read from multiple conflicting sources. Also, consider Strop's (2003) work with a high school multimedia class. In this class, students saw video-taped interviews of participants and read a variety of documents about the killing of civilians in the Vietnam conflict. These students became highly engaged in reading and writing, even if they had been reluctant readers before. Below, I offer several guidelines for developing a unit that engages students in reading multiple documents.

Start small. It is not necessary and it may even be counterproductive to make every unit one about conflicting multiple documents. Once students get the idea texts need to be read as arguments, teachers can easily engage students in discussion about all of the texts they normally read in and outside of class. So, teachers should start with one or two units that lend themselves to controversy in powerful ways.

Choose texts that will invite critical thought. If this is a first attempt to provide students with multiple source documents, then text choice is critical. The documents teachers choose (and teachers *should* choose these first ones) should take a stance on the highlighted controversy or add a rich context in which the controversy can be interpreted. It is important to choose texts that represent a finite range of perspectives, expertise, and genres for this first unit, and to expand the task slowly as students become ready for more complexity. Considering students' reading levels, teachers may want to choose texts that are easy to read and, if they are providing students with an excerpt rather than an entire text, then they should make sure that the excerpt could stand on its own. It is difficult to critically think about text that is too hard to read.

Find out about the source and the context of each text. Finding this information may take some doing. In the case of books, some of the information is on the book jacket, but it is not true for all texts. Teachers will need to go to the library and/or use the Internet to find out about the author and the context. Further, they may need to refer to a history book to find out about the period in which a particular text was written. Later, or with sophisticated readers, the students themselves can search for source information.

Engage students in discussing the role of experts. Once teachers have gathered their materials and are ready to teach the unit, they need to discuss how experts in their field create information and how critical reading is a part of what experts do. I explicitly teach students to engage in the kind of reading that historians do. That is, I teach students to consider the *source* and the *context*, and to *compare and contrast* information across sources.

Define the purpose for reading as deciding what to believe. Students need to understand that they have the power and ultimate responsibility to interpret meaning. They will understand that only if teachers let them wrestle with drawing their own conclusions. That means that teachers themselves will have to give up the notion of right answers, opting instead for well-supported ones. It also means that teachers will have to accept that a well-supported answer may be one with which they do not agree.

Help students gain disciplinary knowledge. Students do not know all of the things that experts do about judging credibility. For example, most high school students do not know what makes certain journals and newspapers more credible than others. Rather than telling students what to believe, teachers can play a key role in helping students understand how experts' creations are judged and how importance is determined.

Use discussion as a mediator. In our study, we were fairly certain that students would not have engaged in changing their thinking if we had not asked them to discuss their thinking and to explain their opinions. Students explored the nature of knowledge and truth, the role of historians in creating knowledge, and issues of objectivity largely because we engaged them in reflection about those issues.

Teach students strategies for comparing and contrasting ideas. In the study and in my own teaching, I teach students to construct comparison-contrast charts to help them make decisions about the texts they are reading. In one chart, across the top, they write the issues they are comparing and contrasting. Down the side, they write the names of the various sources. In another chart, they write the authors of the text down the side and issues of sourcing and contextualization across the top. As they read each of the texts, they fill in the appropriate information. (Examples are included in the Appendix.)

When students finish reading and making the charts, I also have them engage in discussion with their peers. Using a modified Discussion Web (see Alvermann and Phelps, 2002), students first get together in pairs to discuss the evidence and to try to come to consensus about what they believe, noting their best arguments for that consensus. Then they join another pair and try to reach consensus once more, again noting their best arguments. Finally, they engage in whole-class discussion. I have also used a procedure called *corners*. In this procedure, students gather in a corner of the room with others who have come to the same conclusion about a particular issue. They discuss their support for their opinions, and then share it with students in other corners. Students are allowed to change their opinion at any time based upon the arguments they hear and can signal that they have done so by physically moving into another corner.

Expand students' reading. Once students have engaged in their first multiple-text unit, then teachers can slowly increase the students' independence by showing them how they can think about the credibility of the other texts they read. It is especially important for students to engage in critical evaluation of sources when they are doing Internet searches, for example. Students can be taught to engage in sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration with Web pages as well as other texts. I use Kathy Schrock's (1995) *Guide for Educators* (<http://discoveryschool.com/schrockguide/>) for a number of Web evaluation guides and tools. For example, in one such guide, students get into groups of four and evaluate one of four aspects of several Web sites (content, design, credibility, and purpose), then get together to determine which sites they would depend on for reliable information in research. Students who engage in this exercise are then taught to use those strategies to evaluate all of the Web sites they access.

CONCLUSION

This paper argues that teachers need to teach students to think critically about the varied and often confusing array of information they experience. This kind of thinking is best taught through the use of multiple conflicting documents. But merely providing students with multiple sources of information is not enough. Students need to engage in thinking about and discussing the way knowledge is created, shared, and evaluated. They need to change their purposes for reading. They need to be taught strategies for making cross-textual ties, and they need to consider issues of credibility that take into account not just the central arguments themselves and their ability to be corroborated, but also the peripheral characteristics of those arguments in terms of the sources of the information, and their contextual elements. Through instruction using multiple texts, the students in our study developed more sophisticated notions of what it means to know and develop strategies that engaged them in critical thinking. These changes bode well for increased achievement and learning.

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APPENDIX: COMPARISON-CONTRAST CHARTS

Credibility Comparison

	Author's Background	Text Genre/ Publication Data	Date/ Context	Author's Data Sources	Other	Credibility (Rating and Explanation)
Source 1						
Source 2						
Source 3						
Source 4						

Issue Comparison

	Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3	Issue 4
Source 1				
Source 2				
Source 3				
Source 4				
My opinion				

