

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study focused on increasing critical thinking through primary source document analysis in an Advanced Placement United States history class. The study was conducted in a small suburban high school in eastern Pennsylvania. The six 12th grade students gained experience analyzing various forms of primary sources including many historical documents, political cartoons, photographs, charts, etc. Students began by analyzing simple documents. These assignments became more difficult as the study progressed. By the end of the study, the students were successfully completing a Document Based Question, which requires the student to analyze several documents and answer a question based on the information collected from the analysis, in addition to outside facts. Data was collected through a survey, interviews, student work, and observations. At the conclusion of the study, the students were successfully analyzing documents critically. However, there were situations where time constraints, student motivation and student frustration became obstacles to the success of the study.