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# Teaching History: Effective Teaching for Learning History - Chronological vs. Thematic Approaches to Student Historical Comprehension

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# Teaching History: Effective Teaching for Learning History - Chronological vs. Thematic Approaches to Student Historical Comprehension

## Abstract

This action research study investigated the effects of different types of instruction on student learning of historical thinking. There are several instructional methods to teaching history but most fall into two major approaches: chronological or thematic. This study used twenty-eight high school students in two sections of a junior-senior World History course. The research project utilized three full eighteen day instructional units: The World War II unit was taught from the chronological perspective, the Cold War unit was taught from the thematic, and the instruction for the globalization unit utilized a blended approach or combination of the chronological and thematic pedagogies. Each unit of instruction ended with a common assessment type that was designed to assess the historical – chronological thinking skills of the students. It was anticipated that the blended or combined approach would prove to be the most effective method of instruction for teaching history -- when one of the objectives is to emphasize historical thinking skills. The results of the study confirmed this prediction; however, all three methods of instruction showed different areas of instructional effectiveness. The data indicate that selection of the instructional approach by the teacher does matter when it comes to the learning objectives of the course. The blended or combined approach is the most effective approach to teaching history to increase the learning of the most number of students. The combined approach strongly appears to better meet the needs of the lower level students to demonstrate their understanding of historical content and historical skills like chronological thinking.

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Chronological vs. Thematic Approaches to Student Historical Comprehension


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Action Research Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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August, 2016

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Abstract

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approaches: chronological or thematic.  This study used twenty-eight high school students in two sections of

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## Preface

Think about the following.  When you are asked simple questions like, "What did you do today?" or "What did you do this week?" our minds tend to internalize those questions to formulate our responses by ordering the sequence of events for that day or week and how it unfolded experientially. How about "sharing your life's significant events?"  When you look back and reflect upon your life or a period of your life--for example, sharing with others your faith journey--you tend to think internally of the sequencing order of events that have shaped your faith until its present view.  When you share your responses, in either of these two scenarios, you tend to pick the key points of the day, week, or your life sequentially, in chronological order.  The various events, even without their context, tend to become synchronized in some organized chronological order or sequence.   Your response will more than likely include, in sequence, some events in your personal life, professional life, events that may have taken place at home, school, with family or friends, at church, on travels, or at work.  Those personal events may or may not have any causation to each other but become correlated into the "causes" of your faith journey and who you are today. However, when you are sharing life events, the contexts of those experiences may or may not be established.  Simply, a basic form of thinking historically, or chronological thinking, was implemented in response to the questions.

One does not have to go beyond the first chapter of Genesis for evidence that God formed everything in an orderly sequence or chronology.  God created chronology and subsequently all humanity within that construct and provided a revelation of who and what He is and why.  How does God's example assist us in the learning of history (His-story) when it is apparent He created both the chronological and thematic (conceptual) approach for our understanding of Him through His word?  The Bible is a chronology of God--not a concordance (but a concordance certainly can allow us to focus on a deeper aspect of God's complexity).  However, can we understand God without the chronology (Bible) of His revelation for us? Would we understand His story from only the concordance?

## Introduction

Teachers of history, or the study of past events, desire to excite and engage students in the learning

of history.  To enhance engagement and active learning of history, teachers have conceptually organized

their history courses from very different perspectives.  History is a very complex arena of knowledge that

requires domain-specific thinking skills (Dynneson & Gross, 1999). History intersects with every knowledge

system and leads to the transference of historical thinking skills into other dimensions of knowledge, like the

historical chronological development of math, science, religion, and language. Whereas other knowledge

systems, like theology (study of faith, reasoning, and religion), utilize historical thinking skills because they

themselves are historical, historical thinking abilities are the essence of history (Drake & Nelson, 2009). The

historical thinking skill of cause and effect and continuity or change is applicable to many of the other

domains.  In an applicable environment, teachers of history need to know the purpose of history and

"teach" it to the educational level of which they are learning history.

**Problem and Statement of the Research Objective**

After understanding the nature of history, teachers need to address how history should be taught.

What approach should be used for students to learn history and gain the skills of historical thinking?  That is,

which approach is most effective in teaching historical thinking?  What this implies is that teaching history

includes historical content but also includes historical thinking skills that go beyond just historical content.

The "ole adage" of depth versus breadth is a debatable but insufficient approach in its understanding of the

intent of history.

This paradox of history's intent and depth versus breadth debates leads to two basic approaches to

teaching history: the chronological approach and the thematic approach.  The approach to teaching history

becomes very significant because the approach should align with the purpose of history, that is, develop the

skills and abilities of historical thinking (Singer, 2015).  Which teaching approach most effectively reinforces

the purpose of history? For a teacher of history, the subject should be centrally focused and appreciated

while honoring the students-- a subject centered approach that allows the instructor and students working

together to understand history and gain critical thinking skills.

**Research Objective and Hypothesis**

Either the chronological or the thematic approach can be effectively used by teachers (Boadu,

2015). Different teachers bring different skill sets and personal preferences to the teaching of history.  The

teacher's worldview of the purpose of history will determine the approach they will most likely implement in

their classrooms along with their own experiences and learned methods.  If the focus is to gain historical

content knowledge in depth at the expense of developing historical thinking skills, the thematic approach

may be emphasized.  If the focus is to gain a deeper application of historical thinking skills at the expense of

historical depth, the chronological approach may be emphasized.  Here is a simple illustration of the

difference between the two approaches; chronology helps organize the teaching of history while themes

help organize the content.  Table 1 (Tew, 2014):

| Advantages of Chronological Approach | Disadvantages of Chronological Approach | Advantages of Thematic Approach | Disadvantages of Thematic Approach |
|---|---|---|---|
| <ul><li>Framework is already in place</li><li>State Curriculum and Standards employ this approach.</li><li>K- 12 Scope and sequence better organized. Transition from grade-to-grade</li><li>Smooth Unit-to- Unit Transition</li><li>Clearer starting and ending points – Periodization</li><li>Develops chronological Thinking</li><li>Develops historical thinking skills, like cause-effect</li><li>Textbooks aligned with chronological approach.</li></ul> | <ul><li>Becomes too linear</li><li>Limited depth of content</li><li>Content coverage, exclusion of perspectives or point of views</li><li>Content is rushed to get from "point A to point B."</li><li>Aligned textbooks support "teaching the textbook"</li><li>Periodization interferes with long-term patterns, concepts, and themes.</li><li>Teacher Centered</li><li>Limited student learning flexibility</li></ul> | <ul><li>Emphasizes perspectives or points of view.</li><li>Not restricted by "time" (periodization)</li><li>Student – Centered – increased interest level.</li><li>Relevance to present easier established.</li><li>More open ended.</li><li>Thematic combinations are not restricted.</li><li>Themes can focus on and emphasize continuity and change</li><li>Emphasizes themes and concepts</li></ul> | <ul><li>Themes struggle to incorporate cause and effect, especially between historical events/themes.</li><li>Deemphasizes chronological understanding.</li><li>Unit-to-Unit design could be dis-jointed.</li><li>Does not emphasize the purpose of history.</li><li>Extensive preparation, research and development for teacher.</li><li>Increased teacher biasness.</li></ul> |

With the chronological method's strength of organizing history and the thematic method's strength of organizing the content, this may unintentionally lead our students to different learning results based on the approach implemented by the teacher.  Maybe the two approaches are in fact complimentary (Stearns, 2011).  This does bring teaching history into a "gray area" and complicates the teaching of history for the teacher along with educating and training teachers-to-be. History is tiered in complexity.  The focus of what history is or needs to be is different at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels (Banks & Clegg Jr., 1990).  To elaborate, college history departments focus on producing historians; college education departments focus on producing teachers; and high school history teachers do not focus on producing historians but have broader focus on a universal historical literacy needed for being an educated citizen (Turner, Waters, & Russell III, 2014). These different foci change the method(s) required to achieve them. This means that the method of instruction will obtain different desired results.  For this study, the desired results are for students to gain or improve their historical thinking.  Again, the question is:  which teaching method or approach to history is most effective to achieve improved historical thinking, particularly chronological thinking?  Despite historical thinking being a purpose of history and an objective of teaching history, students' chronological thinking is not good and appears to be declining (Maddison, 2014).

If the chronological and thematic approaches were merged into a well-structured history course, that would eliminate many of the disadvantages of both approaches and utilize the advantages of each. It is conceivable that students can explore individual interests or deepen their understanding of certain themes or concepts within a period or era of history.  My argument with the identified disadvantages of the two approaches by Daniel Tew -- Table 1 (page 2), is that the disadvantages are more rooted in individual teacher decision-making and/or training of the teacher more than a problem with the pedagogical methods.

When the two teaching methods are merged, one approach will still be emphasized or employed more than the other.  That is, a chronological teacher still employs themes to organize content and the thematic teacher will employ chronological approaches within the thematic method.

During the course of this fifty-four-day instructional study (three eighteen-day units), the chronological instruction unit did utilize themes for content organization and during the thematic instructional approach the themes were taught chronologically.  The objective was to instruct the unit's historical content the best way possible utilizing each of the assessed approaches to teaching history to determine the effectiveness of instruction on students' historical thinking.  Student assessment score data was utilized to determine the effectiveness of the instructional approaches to students' proficiency in demonstrating their level of historical abilities in chronological thinking.

To reiterate, both of these approaches can be effective to achieve their purpose and this is why understanding the purpose of "why we study history" becomes paramount. The benefit of studying history will be elaborated further, but the basic purpose of history for this study, is to gain the skill of historical thinking by learning about history.  That provides us with a hint towards the approach that "should be" the most effective in teaching history to learn historical thinking, i.e. Table 1 (page 2).  For example, ignoring chronological thinking is not going to meet the objective of historical thinking literacies like causality and periodization.

After reading the books *The Courage to Teach* by Parker Palmer and *A Mind at a Time* by Mel Levine along with numerous other sources on teaching and history pedagogy, I have found these past five years transformational to my instructional approach to merge the two history teaching methods.  This certainly has been a twenty-year journey in learning how to "effectively" teach history so that students can learn history.  History can be the "center" of study between a history teacher and his students individually. History is both understandably communal and individually personal (Palmer, 2007).

This perspective is a shift from the first twelve years of my teaching, where both the chronological and thematic approaches were tried and utilized to connect students with history.  During my career, the rhetoric has been student-centeredness, but my tendency has been teacher-centered instruction of history. My own learning experience through high school and college was the chronological approach.  The first real exposure to the thematic approach was not until the start of my teaching career. Trained in one approach

while the field of history teaching was trending towards a different approach led to my first frustrations in teaching history.  This propelled me to study for several years the principles of teaching thematically and eventually implement a thematic approach to teaching history.  Despite an instructional shift to the thematic approach, my instruction never completely lost my chronological pedigree. This has led to my most recent attempt at becoming a better history teacher over the past five years.

In order to merge the two approaches, which appears to be the "new" trend for teaching history, the thematic approach has shifted to become more conceptual and broader to better emphasize "big ideas," while the chronological approach has employed a more "patterns of periodization" focus to better students' understanding of cause and effect, continuity, and change (Grant & Gradwell, 2010) (Lindenberg, 2004) (Saldana, 2012). In my classes and when working with student-teachers, I often refer to this as instructional "chaining" or creating links.

Since this escalated change in pedagogy is currently happening over the past 5-10 years, the research data of students' historical literacy as a result of these instructional shifts is limited in determining the effects of these pedagogical shifts.  Another issue, unfortunately, is that this transformation is more than likely to be slow due to the fact that very few teachers are familiar with "big history" concepts, most college history teacher education programs are still preparing history teachers in either the chronological or thematic approaches, and college history departments do not see themselves preparing potential teachers of history since often their main purpose and focus is on producing historians, not teachers (Boadu, 2015). This is a major flaw in preparing history teachers for K-12 teaching (Steeves, 1998)

At first, my original research was intended to assess only the chronological and thematic approaches to determine which method is the most effective for students to improve their historical literacy in chronological thinking.  As my review of the two methods began, the rational arguments for both methods were satisfactory, their strengths and weaknesses were understandable.  Neither of the two methods separately, in my classes, felt overly effective in overcoming the student weaknesses in chronological thinking.  As mentioned, the thematic design is a more recent history pedagogy.  The thematic approach was

a response to the chronological approach's weaknesses and appeared no longer effective to post-modern

students. (Dynneson & Gross, 1999).  The thematic approach probably 'unintentionally" overcompensated

with our post-modern humanistic perspective, creating the weaknesses found in the thematic approach.

We may be emphasizing the "student" and deemphasizing the subject knowledge too much.  This is why

Parker Palmer's perspective in the *Courage to Teach* is greatly appreciated and has a profound impact on

preparing future teachers in this "post-modern" world that Neil Postman describes in *Technopoly.*

Since our pedagogical instruction of history is not matching the purpose of history in many of our

classrooms and if this fundamental truth of history is not instructed to our teachers-to-be, this may explain

why students (and now adults) having gone through history education over the past several decades

demonstrate a limited (or declined) historical literacy despite the greatest access to history than any other

time in history.  Neil Postman's *Technopoly*, a great book just mentioned, discusses this dilemma and

inspired his more focused book on education, *End of Education*. It would be curious to see if our nation's

popular transition to thematic teaching of history corresponds and correlates to American students' decades

of decline in historical literacy.  The infamous 1984 report, *A Nation at Risk*, might be the fulcrum to this

inquiry.  Personally, I have had several correspondences with teachers since they began to teach in which

they have said they do not "teach" dates in their history classes.   My assumption has been that the

deemphasizing of chronological thinking in students is due to the lack of teaching chronology on the part of

teachers.  This, is sure to make college professors of history, who prepare historians, pretty frustrated with

secondary history teachers. We are sending them students ill prepared for collegiate history classes that use

the chronological approach despite the fact the students have been learning history in a different way.

However, the pendulum may be shifting in history education once again--the United Kingdom has reversed

its country's focus back to emphasizing the chronological approach during the past decade  (Lindenberg,

2004).  It would also be interesting to see the percentage of college professors that utilize each approach to

teaching history and how many history books are written from either the chronological or thematic

approach. One could even compare the post-secondary pedagogy to the teaching of history at the

secondary levels.  This is actually more relevant than most would think.  This certainly would impact the

history education of prospective history teachers.

In my classroom, over the years, some students have exceled in one method over the other, some

exceled in both, and unfortunately some in neither.  To evaluate my own effectiveness of teaching history,

this study question emerged -- would merging the chronological and thematic methods be more effective

for student learning of historical literacy in chronological thinking?  It was my anticipation that the merging

of the chronological and thematic methods would be the most effective instructional method of the "three"

approaches to teaching history to gain proficient ability in chronological thinking.  This merged or hybrid

approach is not a new innovation to teaching history; as mentioned earlier, both approaches utilize each

other to strengthen their effectiveness of teaching historical content for student learning.

### Definition of Terms

*Chronology vs. Chronological Thinking*

*Chronological thinking* is at the core of historical reasoning.  Chronological thinking is more than

*chronology* – which is simply a sequencing of events in context of time, to include an understanding of cause

and effect relationships and continuity and change over time relationships.  In turn, chronological thinking is

a periodization framework that assists us in reference to patterns of historical duration and succession.

Simply, *chronological periodization* is chunking history into segments of time as a result of identifying

patterns of historical duration and succession due to comparing continuity and change and identifying and

analyzing cause and effect.  For example, the period after the "fall" of Rome in the 5$^{th}$ century to Columbus'

"discovery" of America in the 15$^{th}$ century is known as the Middle Ages. It is important to note that the

beginning and ending of the Middle Ages varied around the world along with its causes and effects and its

intensity of influence upon the various regions.  In some regions of the world, the Middle Ages did not

happen, thus my example is referring to the European Middle Ages. This example and explanation is a result

of chronological thinking.

Chronological thinking is used to distinguish the characteristics that continued and changed from the

Classical Era of the Roman Empire through the Middle Ages. Chronological thinking also includes

understanding the causes to those changes or even the causes to the continuity and also the effects of the

continuity or change in what can be clearly identified as a new period in history as a result of using

chronological thinking.  Identifying patterns is very complex, and it is important to understand that history is

not linear.

*Concept vs Theme*

Many educators synonymously use concept or theme, but there is enough difference between the

two to clarify the distinction.  A concept is more abstract or theoretical and often the result of experiential

learning rather than a definition to be learned.  Different experiences, settings, and contextual relationships

constantly change and expand a meaning of a concept.  Conflict, values, beliefs, identity, power, and

paradox are examples of concepts; while a theme is an element of a concept (Erickson, 2007).  Concepts are

made up of themes, and this is why most will use them universally. Simply, a concept is an idea; whereas a

theme happens to be an idea centered on a specific concept (or topic) --more detail to the idea.  For

example: power is a concept; while war would be a theme of power.

The problem this causes when comparing the chronological approach to the thematic approach is

that the "conceptual-based" approach is found thrown into the thematic approach. An example of a

conceptual framework used in this study were the forces in history known as INSPECT. Historians often

make it a goal to INSPECT the forces or dimensions of history. I.N.S.P.E.C.T. is an acronym that represents

conceptual forces in history. The forces of history are similar to other acronym categorizing tools like

G.R.A.P.E.S., P.E.R.S.I.A., or S.P.R.I.T.E. The "I" represents *ideas*, the "N" represents *natural*

*environment/geography*, the "S" stands for *social,* the "P" refers to *politics*, "E" is for *economics*, "C" is

*cultural*, and "T" signifies *technological / scientific concepts*.  By way of comparison, G.R.A.P.E.S. refers to:

geography, religion, achievement, politics, economics, and social (Bernier, 2010). The forces of history are

actually referred to as themes by many history educators (Falkner, 2010). Whereas the thematic approach

(conceptual) organizes the course around central ideas rather than chronological (sequential) dates and events (Conner, 1997). It is important to note that most thematic teachers still teach chronologically within those themes either diachronically or synchronically and the chronological approach utilizes concepts and themes to organize its content.

*Thematic: Diachronic and Synchronic*

The *diachronic approach* simply takes one theme or concept and traces it with reference to some starting and ending points. For example, a key concept in world history is humanism. The diachronic approach would trace the genesis of humanism to the present. While the *synchronic approach* examines several themes within a particular time period. For instance, the teacher focuses on the ideas, geography, social, political, economic, cultural, and technological aspects of the Middle Ages in Europe. The synchronic allows for the understanding of the relationships and connections between the themes (Drake & Nelson, 2009).

It really does not benefit us to dissect the subtleties of the terms too much for this study. For simplicity, this report will deem the concept-based and thematic-based approaches as "close enough" to refer to them as the same approach. The *World History for Us All* curriculum, which was formulated from the *National Standards for World History,* includes this statement about **thematic history** that may add clarity to this debate *(italics added for emphasis)*:

> Here students identify and explore particular historical issues or problems over determined periods of time. For example, one unit of study might be concerned with urbanization in different societies from ancient to modern times, a second with slavery through the ages, and a third with nationalism in modern times. This approach allows students to explore a single issue in great depth, often one that has contemporary relevance. *Teachers may want to consider, however, the hazards of separating or isolating particular phenomena from the wider historical context of the times. A useful compromise may be to choose a range of themes for emphasis but then weave them into chronological study… model*.
>
> The teaching and learning framework of World History for Us All is fundamentally chronological. A premise of the curriculum is that *historical learning works best when students begin their studies with remote eras and move forward, connecting patterns of cause and effect over time. Whether the scale of investigation is large or small, students*

*are encouraged to analyze and understand the chronological relationships among events and to think about the full range of possible causes and effects of historical developments* (Schools, 2016).

What is important to know for this study is the basic difference between the chronological and thematic approaches and the basic "approach" to history instruction they emphasize.  In addition, for the sake of this study, both approaches were each utilized in the instruction of a historical unit and then merged together to form a third unit of instruction that will be addressed further in the design section of this report.

In addition to teaching units in each of the three approaches myself, I had a student teacher teach from each of the historical instructional perspectives to assist his development as a history teacher.  See Appendix 6 - page 45, this was a student teaching questionnaire after having him teach units over World War II and the Cold War.  The questionnaire has the student teacher's reflective responses and analysis of the approaches from his perspective.

## A Brief Literature Review

In relation to determining effective conceptual approaches to teaching history, a basic understanding of the objectives of history is needed as well.  We may ask questions like:  What is history? What is the purpose of history?  Why study history?  What are the benefits of learning history?  How do we learn history?  or How do we know?  All these questions are legitimate and fair.  Most students either ask or think about these questions in many of the classes they attend.  In fact, my course typically starts with tackling these questions.  To paraphrase the historian James Sheehan, learning history is learning lessons that are relevant for both the present and future.  Sheehan states, "What we learn from history depends entirely *how we do it*."  For my application, how we teach history is just as relevant as what we teach.  The positive of our diversity of approaches to history and numerous perspectives of history make an amazing panoramic view of history or "collective" memory that we experience and humanity shares.  The negative would be if we all learn different "histories" and do not venture to learn other worldviews, we lose our "community connecting history" which means the "collective" history is not going to form and unite us.

To really dig into these questions, one could refer to most historians, as they address these questions to legitimize *what they do* and *how they do it*. However, one historian in particular does a masterful job of tackling these questions for the inquiry of any historian or teacher of history. Peter Stearns' book, *World History: The Basics* is an excellent starting point to understanding the purpose of history.

Once one has the basic understanding of history under our belt, the second tier of questions may be; "Is history a unique way of thinking?" or "What are the elements of thinking historically?"  These second tier of questions, in fact, drive deeper into answering our original question, "Why history?"  The specific key elements of historical thinking will lead an inquiry into key historical concepts of "chronological thinking," "cause and effect," and "continuity and change" (Sterns, 20011; Wineburg, 2001; Barnes, 2002; Nash, 1998; Mandell & Malone, 2007).

What does it mean to think historically? In *Historical Thinking and other Unnatural Acts,* Sam Wineburg suggests that thinking historically utilizes the essential concepts of causality, context, complexity, contingency, and change over time (Wineburg, 2001).  According to the *National Center for History in Schools* and their web-based curriculum history resource *World History for Us All*, historical thinking can be broken down into these interconnected elements or dimensions: chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and comprehension, historical research, historical analysis and decision making. To narrow our focus further -- to the focus of the dimension of historical thinking that this study addresses--chronological thinking allows us to distinguish between past, present, and future times; allows us to identify historical narrative and construct historical narrative (temporal order – causality); measure, calculate, and interpret time; identify and reconstruct patterns, and understand various modes of periodization (Schools, 2016).   To asses where we are, one of the purposes of studying history is to gain the ability to think historically.  This of course draws us to the next question – How do we teach students to think historically?

The "how to teach" or the "approaches to teaching" history can basically be oversimplified into either the chronological approach or the thematic approach to teaching history.   There are other teaching

approaches to history, like "Backwards Chronology" or "Flashback" (Khazzaka, 2015).  The comparative

history approach allows for comparative study of two historical contexts or circumstances, like a

comparative study of feudalistic Europe with feudalistic Japan or The American Empire with the Roman

Empire (Drake & Nelson, 2009). These approaches should be considered nothing more than "change-up"

approaches.  According to Khazzaka, this approach "may be considered a viable and valuable alternative

[approach] to traditional chronological approach for specific units or sections…" in history courses.  This

approach may be better suited in a "current events" type of course where the present is at issue and the

instructor desires for the student to understand the historical background to the present situation.  In a

wonderful piece of luck, my inquiry led to a manual produced by the Council of Europe and funded by the

European Union--History *Teaching Today: Approaches and Methods*.  This manual addresses the question of

the purpose of history along with educators striking a balance between skills and content.  The third piece of

the manual that is relevant to this study was the chapter designated to "multiperspectivity" and chapters

focused on developing critical thinking (Black, 2011).

Several of the other sources that contributed to the genesis of this study have been specifically

mentioned in various locations in this text. However, there are three more sources that warrant specific

mentioning.  Besides about any book written by Peter Stearns, one of the best books read over the past

couple years over organizing historical content into a manageable chronological approach to history was

written by David Christian, *This Fleeting World*.  David Christian is a historian and author who has been a

part of the "Big History" movement.  Christian's book *Maps of Time* (2008) is a little lengthy but still a

worthy source.   The second relevant source to this study was *A Practical Compromise to Teaching World*

*History: Thematic Bridges, Standards, and Technology* written by Maritere Lopez and Melissa Jordine from

California State University at Fresno.   This text focused on the combining of thematic, regional, and

chronological approaches to studying history into one instructional approach referred as a composite

approach. This source is excellent in general for any history teacher and me assisted in the development of

the globalization unit.  Even though this text does not refer to the third approach in this study as a

composite approach, it is the instructional approach to teaching history that best translates to the instructional method implemented for the globalization unit.

The most applicable and specific resource for this study came from Daniel Tew from Western Oregon University.  Tew's honor thesis research project was a comparison study between the chronological and thematic approaches to teaching history.  Tew's research scholarship, *Pedagogy of Teaching History: Comparing the Chronological and Thematic Approaches,* served as the idea and model for this particular study.

When exploring the topics of thematic and chronological history instruction, most of the inquiry led to "either or" research on the instructional methods.  After a quick inquiry into either "teaching history thematically" or "teaching history chronologically," a researcher can find numerous sources on the chronological and the thematic methods.  These sources are certainly beneficial in understanding the methods but one would be wise to be skeptical about research that is just a promotion to support one method without comparisons of other methods.  For example, Mary O' Connor's arguments for the thematic approach to teaching history are convincing salesmanship (Conner, 1997), in which she assessed the students' learning from the thematic approach to determine the instructional effectiveness of the thematic approach.  What this means is that most research focuses on the strengths of the method and assessing them in the content from the strength of that method.  Research on the effectiveness of the thematic approach towards a chronological-historical thinking concept was not found – apparently did not dig deep enough.  In generalizing the research when the thematic approach is taught by an effective teacher: Is the thematic approach engaging? Yes. Do students learn history well in the thematic approach? Yes. Do students learn historical thinking well utilizing the thematic approach? We do not know, there was no evidence found that supports this advantage to the thematic approach.

We need to stress that both methods are effective when you test within the strengths of the method.  This makes sense--teach thematically then test them about the thematic content that was taught.  Teach chronologically and assess them in their knowledge of chronology.   However, it has been established

that the purpose of history and the study of history is to gain specific historical thinking skills that involve

chronological thinking. This implies a leaning toward the chronological method as being more effective in

developing historical thinking, but it does come with its weaknesses too – see Table 1 on page 2.   Student

engagement is obviously important to learning, but this does not fall on the method of instruction more so

than the teacher themselves.

Research comparing the two pedagogical approaches was found to be very limited.   Tew's

bibliography does not assist in the research in comparative data either but mostly in the descriptions and

characteristics of both the chronological and thematic approaches.  The rationale for not extensively

referencing these two methods in this study is due to the fact that this study's focus is not on the

comparison between the two methods but rather on which method specifically is more effective at teaching

students chronological-historical thinking. Earlier on pages 15-16 of this text, several sources are identified,

cited, and are found again in this texts' bibliography as references to historical thinking (Sterns, 20011;

Wineburg, 2001; Barnes, 2002; Nash, 1998; Mandell & Malone, 2007).

However, Tew's research was the best source found that specifically focused on the comparison of

the two methods that this study could utilize.  Tew's *Pedagogy of Teaching History* comparative research

served more as an idea for this study instead of a model for this research.  This study did not duplicate or

desire to duplicate his study.  This study utilized his literature review that led to his study of the advantages

and disadvantages of the chronological and thematic approaches to history instruction.  A summary of Tew's

analysis was provided in Table 1 – page 2 of this text. The majority of his paper dealt with the comparison of

the two methods.  The actual trial performed was only a one-day lesson using the chronological approach

and a one-day lesson using the thematic approach and assessing the students' learning after the lessons.

Tew's results and conclusion were inconclusive –

> "The comparison of the two shows that there is no right way to teach history but
> instead that a teacher can apply either approach to their class and successfully engage
> students in history…. students would be able to make meaning out of either one of
> these approaches given a teacher dedicated to making lessons and the content
> engaging…While this makes it more challenging to teach a history class through themes,

> I believe it is still possible…. Regardless of the approach a teacher takes the most
> important component of teaching in general is to ensure that it is engaging for students.
> (Tew, 2014)"

The problem with Tew's design was that his experiment only allowed for a one-day lesson using each approach. The effectiveness of the instructional approach cannot be determined from a one-day lesson.  The study did nothing more than evaluate the effectiveness of that one-day lesson.  By contrast, this study utilized each historical instructional approach for eighteen class periods, with sixteen designated instructional days for each lesson.  Secondly, the error existed that was mentioned earlier, since Tew's determination of instructional effectiveness was focused on content versus a common skill, both instructional methods appeared effective, thus making his data less conclusive to the effectiveness of the approaches.  Tew should have focused on a skill rather than content.  The two errors of Tew's experiment design were the two that this study specifically addressed – lengthen the instructional time in each method and utilize a common external assessment to compare the two approaches.  At the end of each of this study's instructional units, the end of unit tests included matching, multiple choice, and other content specific questions along with a test question designed to specifically allow students to demonstrate chronological thinking.  Can the student demonstrate cause – effect connections? Can the student demonstrate chronological thinking by properly explaining the sequence of events?  Students may forget the details of history but the goal is for students to still sustain a chronological understanding of history.

## Summary

Each person in all human history carries the contributive burden to history, and each era of periodization creates its own worldview as a result. Research on the purpose of history or interpretations of historical thinking can never be exhausted; new interpretations, perspectives, and methods are innovated and created every year.  It would benefit teachers to stay current in the research every year.

In my mind, this study is not a conclusion but a contribution.  History is not the only subject that teaches chronologically, thematically, or uses a composite approach of the two.  Art, math, science, and literature are all subjects that could benefit from the clarity of effective instructional design.  Instructional

methods are constantly being created and innovated. The questions that drive us, "What is History?" "Why

History?", "How should we teach History?" will never fade.   Which instructional approach to use and the

method that is most effective for someone to teach and learn historical thinking will always remain relevant.

It is in this scope and hope that this study contributes.

## Methodology

### Participant Design

The participants selected for this study were two sections of high school juniors, all within the ages

of sixteen to seventeen, enrolled in a Modern World History course.  The two class sections had a total of

twenty-nine students.  Both sections were taught in the afternoon and the two sections were distributed

fairly evenly at sixteen students (section 1) and thirteen students (section 2).  The Section 1 class met

immediately after school lunch period, approximately at 12:30 p.m. and Section 2 class met during the last

academic period of the day, approximately at 2:00 p.m. Class duration for each section was forty-two

minutes in length. It is important to note that student age, time of day, length of class, or section sizes,

though possibly relevant, were not considered as variables in this study.  Since the two class sections

combined for a population of twenty-nine, random sampling was unnecessary for this study.

This study collected data on four different student demographics: gender, learning disability

identification, English language learner identification, and socio-economic income identification.  This data

was more or less collected out of curiosity for this study and to provide background information on the

study's participant population. Understandably, the four student demographics certainly are highly

discrepant variables to be considered for further inquiry and study.  However, the focus of this study was to

create a baseline of data collection on the differences between history teaching methods as they related to

the students' learning of history and their demonstration of chronological thinking skills.

As shown in Table 2 (page 19), the participants included nineteen males and ten females.  Table 2

identifies seven of the twenty-nine students as having had learning disabilities and were under an I.E.P. or

504 academic plan.  Of the seven LD students, four were male and three were female.  Two male and two

females in Section 1 and two males and one female in Section 2.  In addition, Table 2 (page 19), identifies

five students as English Language Learners; one Ukrainian and four Hispanic.

Race/ethnicity is another discrepant variable and should be included in data gathering for future and

large-scale research but exceeded the scope of this study.  The break-down of the Hispanic students were

three female and one male along with one Ukrainian male.  No other ethnic data was collected besides the

students that were identified for academic differentiation of instruction.  The final participant demographic

collected for Table 2 (page 19) was the socio-economic status of the student.  School data on free or

reduced federal assistance in a school lunch program provided us with a baseline of the students' socio-

economic status.  Population demographic data was retrieved from the school's gradebook system.

Socio – economic status has a very powerful and influential set of factors affecting student learning.

However, these students' circumstances vary greatly and are complex (Jensen, 2009).   Parental marriage

status, financial status, and educational obtainment are all viable and variable factors into their child's

(student) performance (Jensen, 2009).  According to our office records, over half (52%) of the twenty-nine

students qualify for Federal assistance in the school hot lunch program.  Fifteen students may or may not

have this factor influencing their learning of history in the classroom.  Eight of the fifteen students were

female and seven were male. Student background information is certainly a key instrument in any significant

study, however, assessment data analysis broken down by population demographics was not considered.

These factors certainly become more relevant in a large-scale study that would exceed one instructor,

school, and or district.  This study was narrowed to the assessment of learning data after the tested

instructional approaches to teaching history were completed. However, in the conclusion discussion of this

research paper, reflection upon the influence of the participant demographics is revisited.

The study took place during the 3rd quarter or the first quarter of the second (spring) semester,

approximately forty-five school days. The overall semester course content covered Modern World History's

20th Century.  In this study, it was not necessary to request permission from the participants due to the fact

that the data was simply collected from assessment scores.  Student scores from assessments were

summative evaluations of the student's learning of the historical content and demonstration of their

historical chronological thinking.  The study did not include a survey of student learning preference prior to

the three teaching units under study or a survey of preference after instructing the three units of study.  It

would make sense to do the survey prior to the three instructional approaches. The post-survey would be

interesting to see if students still maintained their original preference but could easily change due to the

simple knowledge of their assessment scores.  However, the gathering of this information could have been

used for good feedback about the three units taught but not necessary to determine student learning

results.  In hindsight, this variable factor is significant, not regarding the results of student learning in each

unit of teaching but for shedding light on particular student's score results.  Since the focus of this study was

overall level of collective learning, individual learning, though relevant, was not necessary for consideration

of this study.

**Table 2:  Participant Demographics**

| Student demographics were retrieved from Infinite Campus (online) Gradebook - | Gender | Learning Disability | English Language Learner (ELL) | Socio – Economic Income Status Free / Reduced Lunch |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student 1 | F | | | |
| Student 2 | M | | X | |
| Student 3 | F | | | X |
| Student 4 | M | | | |
| Student 5 | F | X | | |
| Student 6 | M | | | |
| Student 7 | M | X | | X |
| Student 8 | M | | | X |
| Student 9 | M | | | |
| Student 10 | F | | | X |
| Student 11 | F | | | X |
| Student 12 | M | | | |
| Student 13 | M | X | | |
| Student 14 | M | | | X |
| Student 15 | F | | | X |
| Student 16 | M | | | |
| Student 17 | M | | | |
| Student 18 | M | X | | X |
| Student 19 | M | | | |
| Student 20 | M | X | | |
| Student 21 | M | | X | X |
| Student 22 | F | | X | X |
| Student 23 | M | | | |
| Student 24 | F | X | X | X |
| Student 25 | M | | | X |
| Student 26 | F | | X | X |
| Student 27 | M | | | X |
| Student 28 | M | | | |
| Student 29 | F | X | | X |
| Male, 19 – 66% Female, 10 – 34% | | 7/29 24% | 5/29 17% | 15/29 52% |

**Material Design Instruments**

The instruments used for comparison and analysis were unit summative assessments (tests).  In all three unit summative assessments the students were given a map, list of words (word bank) they could use, and one or two content corresponded writing prompts for their chronological thinking demonstration. More information on the assessments is found in the *data collection plan and results* section of the study, and examples of the assessments can be found in Appendix: Artifacts 2 – 3.

**Research Design and Procedures**

The need for a pilot study was felt unnecessary for this particular study since the instructor has

seventeen years of observation and experience in instructing through the approaches. Trying a study like

this was an experiment for the instructor, but the study itself was a correlational one because a correlation

in the effectiveness of different instructional approaches was being evaluated compared to the skill of

chronological thinking.

The research design included three history units utilizing three different instructional methods while

utilizing a similar formatted assessment over chronological thinking appropriate to the unit's historical

content.   The focus was to determine which instructional method would be most effective in developing

the student's critical historical thinking skill of chronological thinking. It is important to remember that the

historical thinking skill of chronological thinking includes understanding chronology along with cause and

effect connection and comparative understanding between continuity and change.

The study began with the chronological approach to teaching World War II.  The two preceding units

leading to the eighteen-day World War II unit were an eighteen-day unit focused on World War I and a

twelve-day unit over the Interwar Years.   The World War II's unit's instructional outline followed the

chronology of World War II from the war's long-term causes and immediate causes, through World War II's

year-by-year overview, and concluding with the Paris Peace and San Francisco Treaties after Germany's and

Japan's surrender. The unit lessons utilized a timeline graphic organizer of the war in the Pacific and war in

Europe for the students to record the general sequence of critical events of World War II from 1931 through

1947. Along with the timeline guide, the student study guide did include key people (ex. Adolf Hitler), places

(ex. Germany), terms (ex. European Eastern Front), and battles (ex. Stalingrad).  <u>See Appendix: Artifact 1</u>

In the unit's instruction of World War II, the synchronic thematic approach was used in selecting the

critical instructional content for the student's understanding of World War II.  Emphasizing and organizing

content into categories of key people, places, terms, and battles are examples of topical themes.  Still

utilizing the chronological approach, key ideas, geography, social, political, and economic events along with

the important scientific and technological advances/use were selected in "I.N.S.P.E.C.T.ing" the war. It is important to note that the selected themes were not emphasized during the chronological instructional method because they were not introduced to the students thematically. As explained earlier, this is unavoidable, when all significant events naturally fall into one or more of these themes. An illustration - the Declaration of War by the United States to enter World War II was emphasized as a key event in 1941 and was introduced chronologically after the previous key events of World War II and preceded the teaching of the events of World War II in 1942. The instruction taught that the declaration of war was a political, economic, and social event of World War II but was not instructionally chained into a series of other political, economic, or social events that took place in World War II. The student skill of inference would have had to be used to make the thematic connection. As with all the other unit's selected events, people, and places – the students learned why the event was significant to World War II.

For the second instructional approach to teaching history of the Cold War, the thematic approach was used. Despite the change in instructional method, the objective was to assess how effective the thematic instructional approach would be in the student's historical thinking skill of chronological thinking. The instructional format to the Cold War (1945 – 1991) was to utilize the thematic acronym I.N.S.P.E.C.T. Students were distributed a series of graphic organizers that overviewed the ideas, natural environment/geographic, social, political, economic, cultural, and technological/scientific concepts of the Cold War. Once again, the synchronic thematic approach was utilized but it was taught diachronically. Instruction began with the overall main ideas of the Cold War utilizing the I.N.S.P.E.C.T. concepts: Ideas like brinkmanship and containment, geographical maps showing the NATO/SEATO countries and Warsaw Pact nations, map of democratic nations and communist nations – along with Christian countries and non-Christian countries, capital countries versus command economies, and introducing first order, second order, third order countries to the students. The introduction built up to teaching the INSPECT themes diachronically. Each theme was designated as a two –day lesson and the total Cold War unit consisted of eighteen days. It is important to remember that despite the thematic approach, chronology was still used in two ways. First, within the theme itself, the themes were taught sequentially as much as possible. Secondly,

significant events and the dates in which they took place still should not be ignored.  The differentiation of

instructional methods led to the same differentiation in the design of the graphic organizer.  In the World

War II unit, the graphic organizer consisted of a timeline.  However, in the Cold War Unit, the graphic

organizer consisted of a thematic chart.  In both instances, the students, throughout the lessons, filled in

graphic organizers as a result of lessons via interactive lecture, videos, readings, research, group

collaboration, and other visuals.  See Appendix Artifacts 2 – 4 for examples.

It is important to indicate that despite the difference in the teaching approaches of history

instruction – chronological versus thematic, the students' learning activities were the same.   If different

student learning activities were used for each approach, it is probable that the learning activities themselves

would have been the cause of the learning differences.

For the third instructional unit, the chronological and thematic approaches were both utilized for an

eighteen-day unit on globalization.  In order to achieve this, the chronological approach was chosen as the

base approach.  Again, the assessment of learning was students' chronological thinking to demonstrate their

understanding of globalization, rather than of World War II or the Cold War.  Similar to the design of the

chronological approach, a timeline graphic organizer was used along with a study guide.  The key addition to

the study guide was the addition of an I.N.S.P.E.C.T. study guide similar to the graphic organizer utilized for

the Cold War unit.

Content learned from the previous four units was integrated and tied into the globalization unit.  We

utilized the chronological approach to explain how modern globalization was taking place all over the world

prior to the World Wars and Cold War and instrumental of those historical eras and through those historical

areas.  The instruction went as far back as making connections to all of the units from the entire year.  This is

what can be referred to as instructional "yo-yoing" to chain, or form connective links between previously

learned materials and the new material to be learned.  This is a typical instructional strategy utilized in all my

instruction, so it was not new specifically to this unit. This strategy lends itself to assisting students learning

cause and effect and continuity and change.  However, it has also been found, from my years of teaching,

that it is only revealed when explicitly asked of students instead of getting this level of thinking due to

student inference of these connections.  The information taught in the previous units that was to be chained

into the globalization unit was not intentionally mentioned (foreshadowed) to the students, other than the

occasional statement that "what we are learning now will help us with what we will be learning in the next

unit." Even though previous learning and prior knowledge will impact assessment results and may skew

what the students learned versus what they know, it was decided not to foreshadow too much for this fear

of giving the sequential unit an advantage.  Trying not to foreshadow or "forward" teach was very difficult

because it is critical to establishing chronological thinking skills in the study of history.

The hybrid, or merged, instructional approach was facilitated differently in a few significant ways.

One of the ways was just previously mentioned.  Another difference was that we had students learn about

globalization in a break-out activity by geographical areas – a form of thematic.  Secondly, we designed the

timelines as a graphic organizer to differentiate the history of globalization by region (i.e., continents, except

Asia was broken up into three regions).  The last instructional difference was a collaboration activity that

had the students transfer and analyze all the events that were taught about globalization from their

timelines and had them categorize the events into their INSPECT graphic organizers.  The students' task was

to analyze and synthesize what they learned from their chronological graphic organizers to answer the

following INSPECT organizer questions: "What were the key ideas of globalization?," "What environmental

issues are we facing due to globalization?," "What is the social impact on nations due to globalization?,"

"How is Globalization altering national governments world political organizations?," "How has/is

Globalization changing economic practices and systems?," " In what ways is globalization changing nation

and world culture?," and "How has Globalization led to the dispersion of technology and how is technology

dispersing Globalization?"  These questions were answered to establish the key concepts and themes of

globalization. Since the unit's focus was an understanding of globalization and the perspectives of

globalization, the students' collaborative answers were not necessarily in chronological order nor in the

chronological order in which most people have learned these historical understandings of the significance of

globalization on the world today.  See Appendix Artifact 5 for example.

Data Collection Plan and Results

**Data Collection Plan**

The purpose of this study was to determine which of three approaches to teaching history would be most effective in student demonstration of learning chronological-historical thinking.  The students learned about World War II through the instructor's use of the chronological approach to teaching history. Next, the students learned about the Cold War through the instructor's use of the thematic method to teaching history.  In the last unit, the students learned about globalization through the teacher's instructional procedures that merged both the chronological and thematic methodologies to teaching history.  Each instructional unit was eighteen days, included similar learning activities, and concluded with a content specific common assessment question that was utilized to determine the level of student learning of the historical content and demonstrate chronological-historical thinking.

In the overall study, the design tried to identify the several discrepant external variables that would influence the results of the validity of the data collected.  Most of those design and instructional considerations were mentioned and addressed in the previous section, research design and procedures (pages 19 – 23), while the demographic characteristics of the population are found in the participation design section (page 16 - 18).

Most instruction typically uses daily formative (informal), "live" assessment that does not get calculated into the students' grades.  However, the final unit assessments used for this study were summative, or formal, assessments of the students learning and were calculated into their course grade. When the assessments were administered, the students requiring accommodations were met.   These students were identified on page 19 – Table 2.   These seven students received several different accommodations due their individual needs.  Three students were allowed to be assessed through oral examination.  Those students had the same maps, word bank, and prompt.  Simple hand notes were taken of the key points verbalized by the student and then evaluated.  Two other students were given the exact same exam but were allowed to type and were given extended time under teacher supervision.  All the

assessments were allowed one 40-minute class period.  These two students were given unlimited time but

finished them in about two class periods.  The most significant accommodations were made for one student.

The student was provided extended time, was given the question a period prior to the exam and allowed to

make outlined notes – verbalized and dictated by a teacher-aid, and the accommodation on the World War

II unit had them choose to write about either the European Theatre or the Pacific Theatre instead of both.

In the Cold War and globalization units, similar concessions were made except the student selected to orally

respond to three of the six themes in the Cold War assessment and utilized photos and other visuals to

demonstrate his understanding of globalization.  It was much easier to assess this student's chronological

thinking in the World War II assessment.  For the Cold War the word bank was used to address themes and

had to be put in chronological order then discussed.  For the globalization assessment, the student selected

pictures and put them in chronological order and then explained them.  Several times the student was asked

during the oral interview's chronological type questions: "Did this happen before or after this last event?" or

"Do you know what decade this event took place?" or "Why did you select these photos to represent

globalization in the Middle East before, during, and after the Persian Gulf Wars?"  These questions helped

with assessing the student's understanding of the content and sense of chronological understanding.

   For the rest of the students, the data collected to determine the effectiveness of instruction was a

single open-written response question.   The tests did include other content and other assessment styles,

like matching and multiple choice but those testing techniques were not designed to assess chronological-

historical thinking and were excluded from the study's results but still factored in the student's final grade

scores.  In Table 3, the data scores represent the level of proficiency of the student for the test question and

are represented by one score for each test's assessment of chronological thinking.  A simple 4-point scoring

system was used.

Data Analysis and Findings: Results

**Table 3: Student Assessment Data**

| | Chronological Instructional Approach World War II Student Assessment Data | Thematic Instructional Approach Cold War Student Assessment Data | Combined Instructional Approach Globalization Student Assessment Data |
|---|---|---|---|
| Student 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Student 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Student 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Student 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Student 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 7 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 8 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Student 9 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Student 10 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Student 11 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 12 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Student 13 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 14 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Student 15 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Student 16 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Student 17 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 18 | 1 | ■ | ■ |
| Student 19 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Student 20 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Student 21 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Student 22 | 2 | ■ | ■ |
| Student 23 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 24 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Student 25 | ■ | ■ | 2 |
| Student 26 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Student 27 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 28 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Student 29 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Quick Summative Data | Mean – 2.11 (59 / 28) Median - 2 Mode – 1 12 / 28 Below Proficiency (43%) 4 / 28 Proficient (14%) 12 / 28 Above Proficient (43%) Standard Deviation 1.49 | Mean – 1.81 (47 / 26) Median – 2 Mode – 2 9 / 26 Below Proficiency (35%) 12 / 26 Proficient (46%) 5 / 26 Above Proficient (19%) Standard Deviation 1.27 | Mean – 2.19 (59 / 27) Median – 2 Mode – 2 3 / 28 Below Proficiency (11%) 16 / 28 Proficient (57% 8 / 28 Above Proficient (29%) Standard Deviation .42 |

***Table 2: Note Students 18, 22 and 25.  Students 19 and 22 transferred from the school.  Student 25

transferred into school/course.

A 4-point scale was used to eliminate extreme scores that one would find on a 100-point scale. Also,

since this study was utilizing an assessment of one score, multiple scores and weights of scores due to the

variances of the assessment type were not needed.  The 4- point scale puts all four levels of proficiency on a

10-point scale (4.0, 3.9, 3.8, 3.7, etc.).  The above-proficient range were the 3-4 scores; this is equivalent of

75% or higher; a score of 2 is 50%, score of 1 is 25% and score of 0 is 0%.  These percentages should not be

correlated to or confused with the traditional percentage grading scales.  A score of 4 is a range that

demonstrates excellent mastery and equates to an "A," a score of 3 is equivalent to a "B", a 2 score is

considered average or "C", the 1 rating is a "D," and 0 score is an "F".  In this study, a score of 4 represented

an excellent mastery level of chronological thinking and a score of 3 represented very-strong above-

proficient level of chronological thinking.  If a student earned a 2 score, they demonstrated a proficient level

of chronological thinking, and scores of 1 or 0 were scores below proficiency and did not demonstrate an

acceptable level of chronological thinking.  When determining "proficiency" levels a simple rubric may serve

as the best evaluation system. Starting with an acceptable level of demonstrating – in this case chronological

Thinking should be used.  The criteria or indicators would become your basic master level of proficiency and

equate to a score of 2.  In all honesty, a 3-point scale is all that is needed but the transfer over to the

traditional grading scale becomes completed on determining between "A & B" grades.  However, an "Above,

At, and Below" proficiency levels would suffice.  Since we utilize the A-B-C-D-F grade scale, the 4-point scale

becomes close to following the same scale utilized to determine a students' GPA.

A simple rubric could look like this: **Table 4: Sample Rubric (description)**

| Score Scale → | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Description with indicators | Evidence of Chronological Thinking clearly exists and demonstrates excellent mastery – understanding | Evidence of Chronological thinking exists and shows strong mastery of chronological thinking beyond proficiency but not excellent mastery. | Evidence of Chronological Thinking clearly exists | Some evidence of Chronological Thinking but does not demonstrate proficient mastery | Very Little to No evidence of proficiency in chronological thinking is evident |

The several strengths of utilizing a standard common rubric allowed for consistency between student responses on the same test and student responses between the different tests.   Each rubric could include more elaborative - specific indicators at each level.  For example:  to demonstrate a proficient level, the student identified and explained at least three cause and effect relationships or the student had only slight errors in their chronological explanation of five identified events whereas the excellent mastery indicators could state that the student identified and explained more than three cause and effect relationships that were well explained and elaborated with historical facts or the student's chronological explanation of at least five of the events had no errors. Each rubric should maintain the same integrity but the specific content will subtly change due to the actual content of the historical unit being assessed.   For example: During World War II, it might be the sequence of battles in the Pacific or Europe.  During the Cold War the students' response might be an explanation of the United States containment policy executed throughout the Cold War around the world in chronological order. It was mentioned that both approaches utilize elements of the other instructional approach. The other key element of the rubric is if a common assessment is to be used to determine skill AND content, keep the criterion the same regardless of the unit's content.  Specific indicators as evidence of content historical knowledge is all that changes.  This really plays into the strength of both instructional methods if the skills and content are both kept in mind and the assessment tool used for this is consistent as well.  This improves the validity and reliability of scores and the demonstration of their learning.

**Data Analysis and Findings: Results (continued)**

**Table 5: Summary of collected assessment data (continuation of Table 3)**

|  | Chronological Approach | Thematic Approach | Combined Approach |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Quick Summative Data** | Mean – 2.11 (59 / 28)<br>Median - 2<br>Mode – 1<br>12 / 28 Below Proficiency (43%)<br>4 / 28 Proficient (14%)<br>12 / 28 Above Proficient (43%)<br>Standard Deviation 1.494434 | Mean – 1.81 (47 / 26)<br>Median – 2<br>Mode – 2<br>9 / 26 Below Proficiency (35%)<br>12 / 26 Proficient (46%)<br>5 / 26 Above Proficient (19%)<br>Standard Deviation 1.269269 | Mean – 2.19 (59 / 27)<br>Median – 2<br>Mode – 2<br>3 / 28 Below Proficiency (11%)<br>16 / 28 Proficient (57%<br>8 / 28 Above Proficient (29%)<br>Standard Deviation .421637 |

The following findings and results are derived from Table 5. The Means for the chronological ($M$ =2.11) and combined ($M$ = 2.10) instructional methods were very similar and scored slightly above proficiency.  However, the thematic approach with an $M$ = 1.81 and a -0.38 mean differential to the combined method did not even get to the proficient level.  The median for all three instructional methods was a 2 which is slightly below the means of the chronological and combined instructional approaches. Based on the statistical data, the results were expected.  Most students should be proficient and the mean was also proficient for the two methods that utilized the chronological approach.  The hypothesis was that the combined approach would be the most effective instructional strategy when it comes to student learning and demonstration of chronological thinking.  The data slightly supports the claim for proposing to history instructors to use a more combined approach of chronological and thematic methods in their instruction. Teachers that remain in the chronological method will be effective in building historical thinking but still remain in the weaknesses of the singularity of the approach.  Teachers within the thematic approach will struggle in getting their students to gain key historical thinking skills like chronology.  This is no surprise and the review of literature suggested this outcome as well.  Remember, the assessment was designed to determine students' chronological thinking skills and content knowledge. The chronological approach should be higher than the thematic approach due to the fact that the assessment tested in the method that was taught.  The point to be made here is that it was established that chronological thinking is one of the core purposes of studying and learning history.  Effective thematic instructors will certainly need to address this

issue in their pedagogy if they are going to be to remain loyal to the purpose of history, which goes beyond

student engagement and historical content.

**Table 3 Revisited:  Student Assessment Data**

| | Chronological Instructional Approach World War II Student Assessment Data | Thematic Instructional Approach Cold War Student Assessment Data | Combined Instructional Approach Globalization Student Assessment Data |
|---|---|---|---|
| Student 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Student 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Student 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Student 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Student 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 7 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 8 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Student 9 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Student 10 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Student 11 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 12 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Student 13 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 14 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Student 15 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Student 16 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Student 17 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 18 | 1 | ████████ | ████████ |
| Student 19 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Student 20 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Student 21 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Student 22 | 2 | ████████ | ████████ |
| Student 23 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 24 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Student 25 | ████████ | ████████ | 2 |
| Student 26 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Student 27 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Student 28 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Student 29 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Quick Summative Data | Mean – 2.11 (59 / 28) Median - 2 Mode – 1 12 / 28 Below Proficiency (43%) 4 / 28 Proficient (14%) 12 / 28 Above Proficient (43%) Standard Deviation 1.494434 | Mean – 1.81 (47 / 26) Median – 2 Mode – 2 9 / 26 Below Proficiency (35%) 12 / 26 Proficient (46%) 5 / 26 Above Proficient (19%) Standard Deviation 1.269269 | Mean – 2.19 (59 / 27) Median – 2 Mode – 2 3 / 28 Below Proficiency (11%) 16 / 28 Proficient (57% 8 / 28 Above Proficient (29%) Standard Deviation .421637 |

The first surprise came when the data showed that the mode for the chronological approach was

the lowest of the three scores.  This led to breaking down the scores a little more.  There were 10 scores of 1

and constituted the majority of the below proficiency score and was the mode for the chronological

method.  To balance the high number of students scoring below proficiency (43%), we can see eight scores

of 4 as well.  What is interesting is only a small majority, 57%, of the students were proficient in

chronological skills under the chronological approach.  One explanation for two separate polarizing scores of

1 and 4 could be the students' knowledge about World War II prior to the unit.  Without a pre-assessment,

the amount of learning of the students is unknown and the assessment just becomes an assessment of what

they know.  A pre-assessment should have been used for all three units and using a pre-test would be a

recommendation for further research along the lines of assessing instructional effectiveness.  Background

knowledge could explain the high number of 4 scores, student interest, or perhaps the chronological

method is highly effective for those students. If instruction were the only variable the low scores should

have been higher as a result of the instruction.  What about the 1 scores?  One of the issues that the

assessment had for several of the students is that it was a written assessment. Written assessments will

automatically challenge students with poor language and reading skills. Another explanation is that this was

the first unit and assessment that the students took under this assessment format.

**Table 5 Revisited: Summary of collected assessment data**

|  | **Chronological Approach** | **Thematic Approach** | **Combined Approach** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Quick Summative Data** | Mean – 2.11 (59 / 28)<br>Median - 2<br>Mode – 1<br>12 / 28 Below Proficiency (43%)<br>4 / 28 Proficient (14%)<br>12 / 28 Above Proficient (43%)<br>Standard Deviation 1.494434 | Mean – 1.81 (47 / 26)<br>Median – 2<br>Mode – 2<br>9 / 26 Below Proficiency (35%)<br>12 / 26 Proficient (46%)<br>5 / 26 Above Proficient (19%)<br>Standard Deviation 1.269269 | Mean – 2.19 (59 / 27)<br>Median – 2<br>Mode – 2<br>3 / 28 Below Proficiency (11%)<br>16 / 28 Proficient (57%<br>8 / 28 Above Proficient (29%)<br>Standard Deviation .421637 |

When one compares the results from the chronological approach to the thematic approach what

stands out the most is the major drop of 24% in the Above Proficient range.  A drop is understandable since

the unit was not taught chronologically but tested in chronological thinking.  Despite this drop, there was an

overall increase in proficiency scores up to 65%, which was an 8% increase from the chronological approach.

Two factors may have led to this increase.  The population declined by two students and the students were

more aware and prepared more or less for the assessment. Only five students had improved scores while

ten students saw their scores drop.  With only an increase of 5 improved scores and overall drop in the

mean of proficiency, the best explanation is that the students struggled to answer the chronological thinking

question because chronology was not emphasized during the unit's instruction.  The second attempt at a

"similar test" should have increased all the scores, if familiarity with the test was in effect.  When the

combined approach data is viewed, the result that stands out is the fact that nearly all students

demonstrated proficiency, a whopping 86% or an increase of 21% from the previous assessment.  We saw

an increase in above-proficiency scores as well.  As a result of these increases, the combined approach had

the highest $M$ 2.19 compared to thematic $M$ = 1.81, and chronological $M$ 2.11. The two biggest factors that

may have led to this surge were the use of the chronological instructional approach and the test

expectations were clearly understood by the third unit.

Another view at the data led me to the thought that the thematic approach may benefit the lower

level students.  Remember, the thematic approach's strength is organizing content, in this case historical

content.   Lower level students can more easily remember content but struggle with organization of the

content and struggle with the higher order thinking of making connections in the content and between

content – which is necessary for chronological thinking and fundamental to the learning of History.  If this is

the case, this could also support the need to design history instruction around the combined methodology

of instruction.

## Reflection

In any self-analyzing active research study, the researcher-teacher is the one that benefits the most.

Figuring out and knowing what we are doing or how we are doing it the "best that we can" for the students

is both professionally fruitful and personally satisfying.  Self-analysis studies are beneficial to all teachers, at

all levels.  As professional educators, we all quickly analyze results of the student feedback we get from

them, formative or summative: whether verbal, written, learning activity, or assessment.  However, it is

probably the reflective piece with the data that is the most significant and going to make the biggest

difference in our instructional practices.  The research "out there" supports a lot of pedagogy, instructional

methods, approaches, and strategies.  What is effective for one school or teacher may be different from

what is effective for another school or teacher.  Subject disciplines are focused on different content with

different objectives and both of those vary at different levels.  This study, at the least, helps determine

which approach I am the most effective at teaching.  The external research shows that the chronological and

the thematic approaches are both effective in the apprenticeship of an effective teacher.  It is important to

keep in mind the purpose of the subject.  The course should be subject centered while teacher and student

work together in collaboration to learn the subject.  This approach does free the burden from teacher-

centeredness and student centeredness.  This is better illustrated in Parker Palmer's, *The Courage to Teach*.

To take the next step, if in Christian education, is that History, Teacher, and Student should be in

collaboration because the true subject-center is God.

In God's creation, as mentioned in the preface, God created chronology.  His creation was perfectly

orderly and sequenced, i.e. Chronology.  The laws that govern this creation of chronology organize its

"content," i.e. thematic concepts.  It is when our instruction utilizes and includes the design that God uses,

our instruction is bountiful for the student and fruitful for the teacher.  When the chronological approach

utilizes the strengths of the thematic approach, students learn both the content and historical thinking skills

they need.  This study differentiated the effectiveness of instruction to a common assessment and the

results of this study support this analysis.

In several instances many people may get caught into two kinds of mindsets.  The first is an "either –

or" mindset.  In this case, it is either the chronological approach or the thematic approach that is effective

instruction.  The other mindset has us view the world with relativity.  Everything is relative or up to

individual preference.  Each teacher, "to each their own," chronological approach and the thematic

approach are equitable and the approach used only matters to each teacher.  The teacher prefers to "do it"

this/that way and the students prefer to do it this/that way.  Each becomes focused on their own preference

and not necessarily on the purpose and intent of the subject and how the learning and study of its majesty

benefits us and the world around us.  Becoming a more knowledgeable citizen not just benefits the individual but the community and nation as a whole.  In becoming a better Christian, doesn't it benefit both the individual and others?

If our instruction blends the "either – or" into one, the students benefit from the focus being off them and on the subject and puts the burden and accountability on the teachers and learners together.  The blended/combined approach clearly benefitted the students that struggle in either of the one-dimensional approaches.  The blended approach is the instructor's first differentiation for all learners.

The implications of this study and the benefit for other history teachers is to reflect upon their own practice and from their approach to teaching history, could they implement into their instruction the strengths of the other instructional approach.  It is in blending we differentiate and reach the largest number of our students.  Understandably the study's focus question might have been better served to state, "what approach to teaching _____ (history) am I most effective delivering to have students more effectively learn _____ (history or historical thinking)?"  This is a question that should be asked by all history teachers.

The results of the study confirmed this question, however, all three methods of instruction showed different kinds of instructional effectiveness.  The selection of the instructional approach by the teacher does matter when it comes to the learning objectives of the course.  The blended or combined approach is the most effective approach to teaching history to increase the learning of the greatest number of students.  The combined approach certainly better meets the needs of the lower level students to demonstrate their understanding of historical content and historical skills like chronological thinking. The reasons behind why the combined approach is effective for the lower level students requires more study.  However, the results in the learning outcomes of the lower level students is positive and should be considered in instruction.

This study is a contribution to the question and not a conclusion.  The effectiveness of instruction in history, or any subject for that matter, should always be self-analyzed and compared to the findings of others.  What have I learned – What have we learned?   This study certainly could have been broken down

more with a different focus towards learning disabled students or students that are "at-risk" due to socio-

economic factors. Which approach is more effective for those students?  Does gender play a role into which

method is most effective, etc.?  The study would benefit from these follow up questions.  The study would

have benefited from the students taking a pre-assessment of the content.  This would clarify the difference

between "what was learned" versus "what is known".   Assessing what students know is fine if the focus is

on the student but that variable can invalidate the effectiveness of the study, if the study is the teacher and

their instructional effectiveness.  Since the study utilized a common assessment of chronological thinking,

the piloting and validating the reliability of the assessment should be clearly established.  Despite these

areas that were not addressed in this study, the study was a good starting point to analyze the instructional

approaches we use in the history classroom and shed light on our effectiveness as instructors.

One other significance this study has is the importance of training future history teachers.

Apprentice teachers need to become exposed to the multiple approaches to teaching history.  Real exposure

would be beneficial during their student-teaching experience.  Over the past several years, student-teachers

have been in the classroom under my supervision and I have required each one to teach from all three of

these perspectives for this reason.  To gain perspective of the importance of this teaching experience, read

through Artifact 6, page 45 of the Appendix.

## Ethical Observations

The "light" ethical concern in this study and similar studies is the fact that each teaching approach

teachers use affects the learning of the student.  Despite the intent of teachers trying to positively impact

the learning of all students, the learning of the student may in fact be influenced more positively or

negatively by the teaching method being employed.  Thus, the teacher is not only impacting the student's

learning but other aspects of the person, like interest, confidence, or self-esteem.  In the case of

instructional methodology experimentation, the purpose is to identify more effective strategies.  The ethical

situation enters the equation if the student learns less effectively in one method compared to another

method of instruction and the teacher knowingly selects the method in which the student may not most

effectively learn the material.  Is this negligence or can instructional experimentation be viewed as being a

"good Samaritan?" The challenge arises when every student has a best instructional method for learning

and a worst instructional method.  This study could have analyzed individual learning preference quite easily

with the use of the assessment data and a simple questionnaire that the student completed before and then

again after the three units.  This feedback also would have been useful for the teacher as well.

Appendixes

# WORLD WAR II TIMELINE

## Phase 1: "Axis Aggression and Advances

| European Theatre / INSPECT | Year | Pacific Theatre / INSPECT |
|---|---|---|
| | **1931** | |
| | **1932** | |
| | **1933** | |
| | **1934** | |
| | **1935** | |
| | **1936** | |
| | **1937** | |
| | **1938** | |
| | **1939** | |
| | **1940** | |
| | **1941** | |

# World War II Timeline – Modern World History II

## Phase 2 – "Stalemate and Turning Point"

| European Theatre INSPECT | Year | Pacific Theatre INSPECT |
|---|---|---|
|  | **1942** |  |
|  | **1943** |  |

# World War II Timeline – Modern World History II

## Phase 3 – "The Big Squeeze"

| European Theatre INSPECT | Year | Pacific Theatre INSPECT |
|---|---|---|
|  | **1944** |  |

# World War II Timeline – Modern World History II

## Phase 4 – "The Final Drives"

| European Theatre INSPECT | Year | Pacific Theatre INSPECT |
|---|---|---|
|  | **1945** |  |

**Appendix Artifact 2:** Sample assessment design to assess chronological thinking

# WORLD WAR II ASSESSMENT

## Part 1 – How was World War II fought in Europe?

    a.   Explain World War II <u>chronologically</u> in the European Theatre.  Begin with Germany's invasion of Poland.

    b.   General Dates (year) are very relevant but proper chronology is imperative.

    c.   Use as many of the terms from the word bank as possible in your explanation but not all necessarily need to be used.

    d.   Explain the actions of World War II using a <u>cause and effect</u> relationships.

    e.   Be sure to relay <u>historical significance</u> in your explanations

    f.   You can write/label on the map if it helps you to express your knowledge of the material.

### Word Bank

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Adolf Hitler | Benito Mussolini | Franklin D. Roosevelt |
| Winston Churchill | Josef Stalin | Erwin Rommel |
| Dwight Eisenhower | Bernard Montgomery | George Patton |
| Appeasement | Isolationism | Lend-Lease Act |
| Blitzkrieg | Operation Barbarossa | Holocaust |
| Battle of Britain | Stalingrad | Battle of the Bulge |
| Berlin | El Alamein | Sicily |
| Normandy | Munich Conference | Southern Front |
| Leningrad | Eastern Front | Western Front |
| V-E Day | | |

## Part 2 – How was World War II fought in the Pacific?

    a.   Explain World War II <u>chronologically</u> in the Pacific Theatre.  Begin with Pearl harbor

    b.   General Dates (year) are very relevant but proper chronology is imperative.

    c.   Use as many of the terms from the word bank as possible in your explanation but not all necessarily need to be used.

    d.   Explain the actions of World War II using a <u>cause and effect</u> relationships.

    e.   Be sure to relay <u>historical significance</u> in your explanations

    f.   A comparative explanation to the differences of the way the war was fought between Europe & Pacific could prove beneficial.

    g.   You can write/label on the map if it helps you to express your knowledge of the material.

### Word Bank

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Franklin D. Roosevelt | Harry S. Truman | Hideki Tojo |
| Douglas MacArthur | Hirohito | Admiral Chester Nimitz |
| Appeasement | Isolationism | Island Hopping |
| Manhattan Project | Kamikaze | Pearl Harbor |
| Okinawa | Coral Sea | Iwo Jima |
| Leyte Gulf | Hiroshima | Midway |
| Guadalcanal | Nagasaki | |

**Appendix Artifact 3:** examples of maps that to use for chronological assessments. Maps shrunk to fit
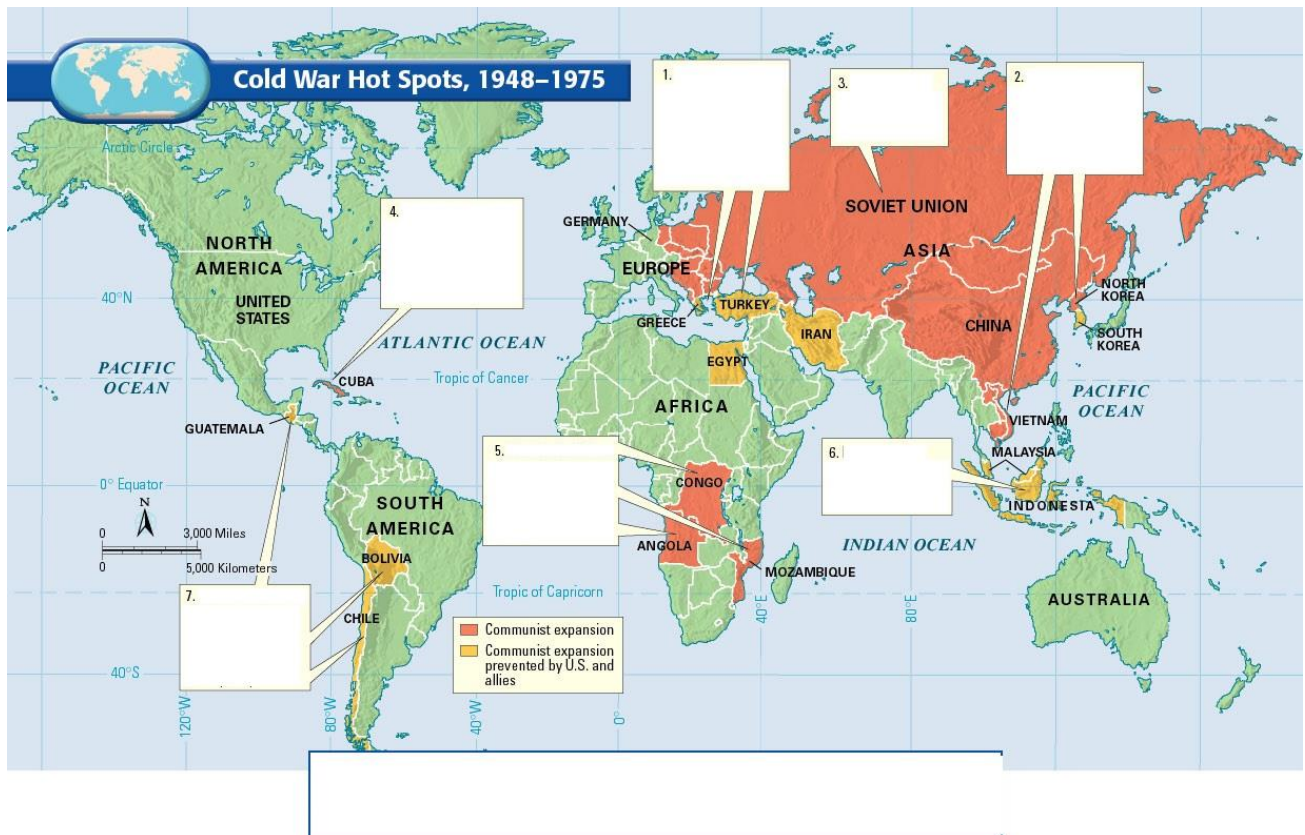
## Pacific Theatre of World War II
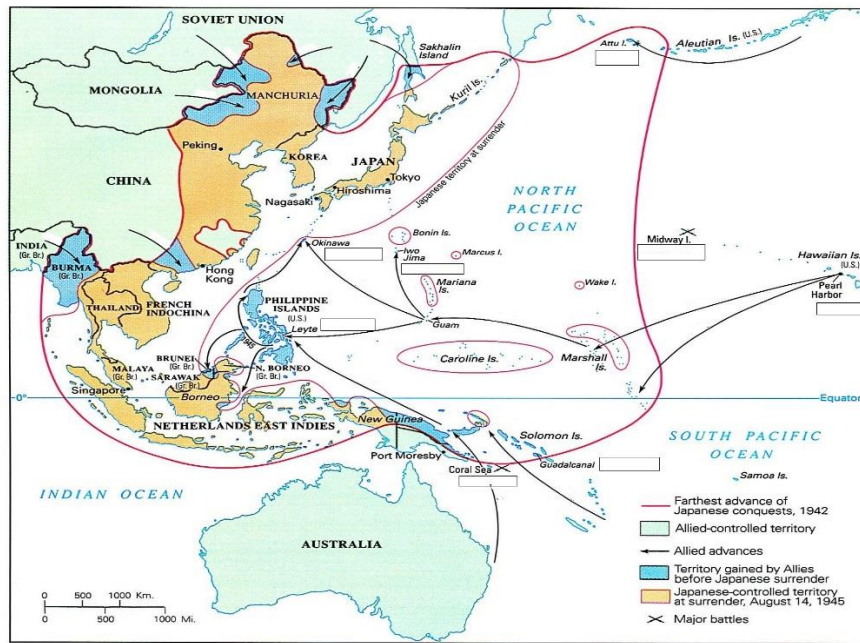
81   World War II in the Pacific

## Cold War Hot Spots, 1949 – 1975

**Appendix Artifact 4:** Sample example of thematic graphic organizer. Graphic Organizer shrunk to fit.

### *ESPN* COMPARISON

Groups (Student) Names: _____

| COUNTRY | ECONOMIC (E) | SOCIAL/CULTURAL (S) | POLITICAL (P) | NATURAL ENVIRONMENT (N) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Appendix Artifact 5:** Sample example of Chrono – thematic graphic organizer. This Graphic Organizer was shrunk to fit onto this page.

| GLOBALIZATION What events from these decades can you use to answer these questions? | 80'S | 90'S | 00'S | 10'S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| IDEAS What were the key ideas of globalization? | | | | |
| NATURAL ENVIRONMENT What environmental issues are we facing due to globalization? | | | | |
| SOCIAL What is the social impact on nations due to globalization? | | | | |
| POLITICAL How is Globalization altering national governments world political organizations? | | | | |
| ECONOMIC How has/is Globalization changing economic practices and systems? | | | | |
| CULTURE In what ways is globalization changing nation and world culture? | | | | |
| TECHNOLOGY / SCIENTIFIC How has Globalization led to the dispersion of technology and how is technology dispersing Globalization? | | | | |

## Questions for Student Teacher – JD Boer

**Post teaching reflection**

**What were the strengths and weaknesses of the chronological approach?**

One of the strengths of the chronological approach is that the textbook that we work with is usually set up in a similar fashion. This allows for the teacher and students to refer to the textbook for information more easily. I feel like part of learning about history is understanding that all sorts of things were all going on at the same time, and this is easier for the students to understand by going through the chronological approach. Another strength of the chronological approach is that it is the standard way of studying history. Students are used to learning things chronologically, and teachers are generally more comfortable approaching things chronologically.

Weaknesses of the chronological approach are that sometimes It can be hard to really stop the chronological approach to the unit to really explore a certain person, event, or theme. A disruption like this can really slow down the general pace of the unit. Another weakness is that, depending on the subject, it might require bouncing around from one idea or theme to the other. This can make it harder for the students to sort out and organize all the learning that has taken place in the class.

**What challenges did you face in teaching the chronological approach?**

Doing the World War II unit in chronology, I struggled with the idea of teaching all aspects of the war in chronological order. There was just so much going on that I felt like I was interrupting one aspect of the war to focus on another aspect just because it made sense for chronology. I was challenged by the idea of trying to order all these events chronology even though sometimes that may be difficult because certain events or themes in history don't really have much of a start or end to them. It can be difficult. Also, if an important thing is left out, it makes it difficult to go back and include it.

**What were the strengths and weaknesses of the thematic approach?**

One strength of the thematic approach is that it offers the teacher more flexibility to take a more in-depth look at one aspect of the unit being taught. It allows the teacher to pick and choose interesting things and better adapt the material to the students' learning styles and interests. Another strength is that it makes it easier to cover details that may not be covered by the chronological approach. With chronology, there might not be much detail paid to aspects such as social changes, cultural, or technological ideas of the era, so these things can get covered better with the thematic approach.

A weakness of the thematic approach is that it can be a little harder for the teacher to wrap things up towards the end of the unit. At times, it feels like a bunch of random things were being taught to the students, so it is important to continually remind them where we have been and where we are going. In that sense, it takes more planning and preparation on the part of the teacher. Another weakness is that students really lose that sense of chronology. They have a hard time understanding

Appendix: Artifact 6, page 2

that all these different things were all going on in this time period. It disrupts the general way that they have learned history in the past, so they have a harder time making sense of the entirety of the unit.

**What challenges did you face in teaching the thematic approach?**

A challenge I faced with the thematic approach was getting the students to make sense of everything. They had a hard time ordering the events in their minds. It took a little more time than expected to wrap things up. Another difficult aspect was deciding what events and people fit into what theme. Because of this, I think I missed out on some important aspects of the unit. I think that the thematic approach may take the teacher and students a little longer to get used to.

**What approach appeared to best allow students to demonstrate chronological thinking? Cause-effect thinking? Continuity – Change Thinking?**

I think certainly the chronological approach helped students to better understand all these things. They could better understanding how one event would then trigger another event and so on. They perhaps weren't able to get as involved and in-depth with some of the material, but they were better able to grasp the big picture of how things actually played out. I think it helps the students to really put themselves in that time period and think about what life would have been like back then. Because of that, they can get a better feel for the broader changes and cause-effect events that were going on in the historical time period.

**Which method did you feel was the most effective method to teaching history to secondary aged students – why?**

Quite honestly, I think it depends on the unit and the kids that are in the class. Also, I think it is entirely possible to do a mix of both, even within the same unit. However, if I had to choose one, I think I would choose the chronological method. I think this strategy helped the students to organize the learning. Because the thematic approach sometimes just felt like a bunch of information thrown at them, they had a harder time making sense of it all and organizing it in a chronological aspect. History is about telling the story of the past and exploring the past, and the better way for the students to understand how all these things actually took place is through the chronological method.

**What did you learn about teaching history from using these approaches that would be relevant advice to give to history education professors responsible for preparing future history teachers in social studies methods course?**

I think it is important to perhaps try both methods, understanding that there are different ways to explore the topic of history. I think generally students are only given the chronological approach, but there certainly are some benefits to trying the thematic approach and finding out which units this might work a little bit better than others. Also, I think the INSPECT model works well because it helps a teacher

Appendix: Artifact 6, page 3

to think about all the different aspects of a historical time period that they might be looking over if they were just simply doing a chronological approach. Also, I think it helps us as teachers to critically study the textbooks that we have to determine what approach they use. Lastly, I think that understanding the variety that history teacher can use can help us get away from the textbook a little bit. History textbooks can sometimes be a little simplistic when it comes to the lessons that we want the students to learn from history. Trying different things can help us as teachers to think of different aspects of history that we might not be used to.

**How did teaching these approaches to history help shape/form your intended approach to teaching history?**

I think it was beneficial because it helped me to think outside the box. I learned different ways of teaching history, and it allowed me to try some creative ideas that I might not have come up with otherwise. I think going forward, I will try to implement a little bit of both approaches because I do really think it depends on the type of unit and type of class that I have in the future. Both ways of teaching history can be effective, but there certainly are better ways to approach certain situations. Before trying both approaches, I would have leaned more towards the chronological approach. After, I think I still like the chronological approach better, but I think I will look for more ways to include thematic ideas within the chronological approach because of the benefits that offers to the students as well.

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