



Teaching Reading Video Companion

The Big History Project course provides you and your students with a lot of challenging reading, so we provide a variety of resources and a particular instructional approach to help ensure that your students understand the course material and improve their overall reading skills. This strategy is about helping your students develop good reading practices in general; it's not just a guide on how to teach reading history.

The Big History Approach to Reading: Three Close Reads

To help your students prepare to discuss each text, complete Investigations, and master Big History Project's essential skills, we have mapped out a deliberate approach to reading that we call "three close reads." This technique has been borrowed from long-established methodologies and best practices for teaching reading.

We urge you and your students to go over each text three times and we've linked each of the three close reads to a section of every reading activity: the Preview section of each reading activity corresponds to the capturing gist read; the Key Ideas to the factual read; and the Conceptual Thinking section to the third read for comprehension and extension. While three close reads may sound like a lot, in the end it will save you and your students time. It will help ensure that students can decode and fully comprehend the article, which will allow them to access the information that will help them be successful in the course.

Reading 1: Preview – Capturing Gist

The first reading isn't really a full reading; rather, it's a skim that helps students capture the general idea of what the piece is about. When reading for gist, we encourage you to follow this format:

1. **Title and headings** – Have students read the title of the text and all headings to make predictions about the content of the article: What do they think it's going to be about?
2. **Resource quality** – What type of document is this? Opinion? Primary source? Research report? Is the author trustworthy? Have students use their knowledge of claim testing to assess the quality and veracity of the source and how that might impact the types of information they may encounter.
3. **Summarize** – Ask students to briefly summarize what this article is about. A fun way to do this is to ask students to "tweet this." In 140 characters or less, they provide what they believe to be the gist of the article. This should point to the main theme or premise. This works as an assessment of how well they comprehend the importance of titles, authors, and other high-level elements of a text.

Preparation

ARTICLE PDF / 10 PAGES

Jane Goodall



WORKSHEET PDF / 3 PAGES

Three Close Reads



Purpose

As strange as it may sound, we can actually learn a great deal about our early ancestors by studying primates. Jane Goodall, the pioneer of primatology, closely studied communities of chimpanzees in Tanzania and elsewhere.

Process

Preview – Capturing Gist

Jane Goodall's interest in animals led her to contact Louis Leakey while she was working in Africa as a secretary. Leakey believed that Goodall would be the perfect person to study chimpanzee behavior in the wild, which was a something that no one had attempted prior to this. Goodall's work changed the scientific world's perception of primate behavior and led to the discovery that these animals shared many social and behavioral traits with humans.

Key Ideas – Factual

By the end of the second read, students should be able to answer the following questions about Goodall and the study of primates:

1. What do scientists in the field of primatology do?

Sample answer: They study primates to find clues about human and animal evolution.

2. What are some surprising discoveries that primatologists have made about primates?

Sample answer: Primates use tools, display brutal behavior, display compassionate and sharing behavior.

Conceptual Thinking

How exactly did Goodall's work contribute to our understanding of both primate and human behavior? Do you trust that the fields of anthropology, archaeology, and primatology are reliable sources of evidence?

Summary

Goodall is now recognized as a pioneer in the field of primatology. Her work has become the basis and the standard for other scientists who study animal behavior. The patience and dedication she employed while studying chimpanzees led to amazing discoveries about their social groupings, use of tools, and the similarities between primate and human behavior.

Reading 2: Key Ideas – Factual

Informational reading is the type of reading that students are most used to doing. This type of reading helps students pull out key terms, main ideas, and ask important questions.

1. **Vocabulary** – As students begin to read, introduce them to any difficult vocabulary they may encounter. You might give them a list of words and definitions, or have them look up the words they don't understand.
2. **Annotation** – At the end of each paragraph, have students stop and think about the content of that paragraph. Encourage students to make margin notes to pull out the facts or to ask questions if they don't understand something.
3. **Retell and rank** – Either through writing or discussion, at the end of a reading have students share the key points from the article. Then, have them rank what they learned, from most important to least important. This will help them remember the contents of the text as well as provide you with a formative assessment to gauge their understanding.

Reading 3: Conceptual Thinking – Comprehension and Extension

The final read is when students will think “big,” and this is the read that is probably the most important for understanding how the text connects to Big History concepts and the Big History narrative. However, in order for students to succeed in making these connections, they must first understand the basics of each article from the first and second readings. In the lessons themselves, we have included a Conceptual Thinking question at the end of every article and video. The questions in this section prompt the exploration of big ideas; help compare, contrast, and explore contradictions; lead to deeper disciplinary and interdisciplinary understanding; and encourage analysis and application. We encourage you to ask these types of questions throughout the course and create questions of your own to help students continue to deepen their understanding.

Big History Course Reading Resources for Teachers

Multiple versions of readings with a range of Lexile levels – Newsela, a group that provides nonfiction news articles at varying reading levels, has edited our readings and provided three or four versions of each, ensuring that your students can access a Lexile level that is appropriate for their reading ability.

Vocabulary – Vocabulary activities are suggested throughout the course to help your students memorize key words. Understanding these words should increase comprehension of the course readings.

Teaching tips – As you move through the lessons, teaching tips are provided to help approach readings with your students.