

Lesson 3: Listening Task

Focus: How does power and bias influence historical narratives?

Objectives	<p>Analyze how history is revised over time and what factors drive these revisions.</p> <p>Evaluate the role of power, bias, and perspective in shaping historical knowledge.</p> <p>Practice critically listening and evaluating information.</p>
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction (5 mins): Guiding Question: "Why do historical narratives change over time? Does this mean history is unreliable?" Listening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students watch the video The Ever-Changing Past: Why All History is Revisionist History - YouTube and take notes on the speaker(s)' key arguments and counterarguments. In the interest of time, videos can be assigned as homework prior to the class discussion. During note-taking, students should analyze the strength of each argument presented, relating this to their previous research. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If necessary, students should seek additional sources to support their analysis. Kialo Discussion (30 mins): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In small groups, students create a new Kialo discussion around the central question. Alternatively, if students require more structure, clone and share this ready-made discussion, based on the theses below, and use the suggested claims as prompts for students. Students should use their analysis to ensure they select only the strongest arguments from the listening task. They should add these to the Kialo discussion as arguments, counterarguments, examples, and evaluations. Encourage students to refer to the concepts of power, bias, and perspective in their arguments. <p>Sample Claims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thesis 1: <u>History is always being revised because new evidence emerges.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim: History is a dynamic field where new discoveries (e.g., newly uncovered documents, scientific dating techniques) can change historical understanding. Example: The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls added to our knowledge of early religious texts. Counterclaim: Some revisions are based on interpretation rather than evidence, meaning they may reflect current political or ideological trends rather than objective truth. Thesis 2: <u>History is shaped by the perspectives of those who write it.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim: Historians interpret events based on their own cultural and social backgrounds, leading to bias in how history is recorded. Example: European colonial histories often glorified explorers but omitted Indigenous perspectives. Counterclaim: While perspectives influence history, historians follow rigorous methods (archival research, peer review) to minimize bias. Thesis 3: <u>Power determines which historical narratives survive.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim: Those in power control historical narratives by deciding which events are recorded, erased, or emphasized. Example: Governments rewriting history textbooks (e.g., Japan's portrayal of WWII, China's censorship of Tiananmen Square). Counterclaim: Alternative histories can still be preserved through oral traditions, independent research, and social activism. Thesis 4: <u>Revising history is necessary to correct past injustices.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim: Historical revisionism can bring justice to marginalized communities by uncovering hidden or suppressed histories. Example: The recognition of Tulsa Race Massacre in U.S. history after decades of being ignored. Counterclaim: Some revisions might be politically motivated rather than fact-based, creating new biases instead of correcting old ones. Thesis 5: <u>There is no such thing as a "final" version of history.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim: History is an ongoing conversation, not a fixed record—each generation reinterprets past events in light of new values and knowledge. Example: Changing attitudes toward figures like Winston Churchill—once seen solely as a hero, now also debated for his colonial policies. Counterclaim: Some core historical facts are well-documented and should not be rewritten (e.g., Holocaust denial is dangerous and not a valid "revision" of history).



Reflection	<p>Whole-class Discussion (10 mins): What factors cause historical revision? Does revising history mean previous knowledge was false? Who benefits from historical revision? Who loses?</p> <p>Example reflection questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Should historical revision have limits?</i> • <i>Can some revisions be dangerous (e.g., Holocaust denial, rewriting colonial histories)?</i> • <i>What surprised you about how history changes?</i> • <i>How do power structures determine which historical narratives survive?</i> • <i>Can we ever write a fully "objective" history?</i> • <i>If you could revise one part of history to be more accurate, what would it be? Why?</i>
Resources	<p>Lesson Slides</p> <p>Debate videos:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Ever-Changing Past: Why All History is Revisionist History - YouTube - 1hr 30mins 2. Historical Revisionism and Genocide Denial - YouTube - 1hr 25 mins <p>Supplemental videos:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can History ever be both valid AND reliable ? - YouTube - 11 mins 2. Memory Wars: A podcast exploring how society confronts sin : NPR - Podcast 3. Memory and the Philosophy of History - YouTube - 1hr 48 mins 4. What is the difference between history and memory? - YouTube
TOK Concepts	<p>Perspectives: Who benefits from historical revision?</p> <p>Bias: Can we ever write a fully "objective" history?</p> <p>Power: How do power structures determine which historical narratives survive?</p>
Critical Thinking Concepts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confronting Biases and Assumptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying Perspective Bias: Students recognize how historical narratives are shaped by the historian's perspective, cultural background, and available evidence. • Questioning Objectivity: Students analyze whether history can ever be completely neutral or if all historical accounts are influenced by bias. • Challenging Authority Bias: Students reflect on how institutions (governments, academia, media) shape and validate historical narratives. 2. Exploring Contexts and Expert Opinions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power and Historical Narratives: Students examine how political power influences which histories are preserved, erased, or rewritten. • Case Study Evaluation: Students compare different cases of historical revision (e.g., changing perceptions of colonialism, civil rights movements, or war crimes) to understand how context shapes historical knowledge. • Assessing Historical Methods: Students evaluate how historians determine credibility—through archival research, corroboration, and peer review. 3. Responsiveness and Flexibility of Thought: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting Arguments: Students refine their viewpoints based on new evidence and counterarguments from peers. • Weighing Contradictory Perspectives: Students practice comparing different historical accounts to identify gaps, inconsistencies, and biases. • Recognizing Revision as Necessary: Students debate whether revising history is a search for truth or a distortion of facts, considering the benefits and risks of historical reinterpretation. 4. Extrapolation and Reapplication of Principles:

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applying Historical Thinking to Current Events: Students connect the lessons of historical revisionism to contemporary debates (e.g., statue removals, history curriculum disputes).• Transferable Skills: Students learn to critically evaluate news sources, media reports, and public discourse to identify bias and misinformation in modern knowledge production.• Ethical Reflection: Students consider the ethical implications of revising history—who benefits, who is harmed, and what responsibilities historians have in shaping public memory. |
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