Supporting Students in the Literacy of History

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Looking at the Language and Texts in History

Types of Text	Examples*
Recount	Personal recounts such as oral anecdotes, letters, anecdotes, journal entries, biographies, autobiographies Factual recounts such as news extracts, government documents
Explanation	Non-fictional accounts on or evaluation of historical events, encyclopaedia entries about how or why events happen
Exposition	Editorials, speeches, debates, argumentative essays in academic journals
Narrative	Fictional stories, myths and legends, epic poems

Extract from Lower Secondary History Literacy Guide, ELIS, 2013.

Questions to think about:

- What type of text is it?
- How is the text organised?
- What <u>core</u> language features does the text have?
- How do these core language features aid understanding of the text?

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Example 1:
A Factual Recount of Singapore's Development after 1824

Task: In what ways did Singapore develop after the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824?

Analysis of a Factual Recount
The table shows, in the left column, the focus of each paragraph of the text. The middle column shows the text, and the specific language features are highlighted in the right column.

Example 1: A Factual Recount of Singapore's Development after A.D. 1824

Focus of paragraph	Text	Language Features
Topic sentence Orientation: The ways Singapore developed as a British trading settlement following the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824	**The signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824** meant that Singapore could **develop**[2] as a trading settlement without interference from the Dutch. Trade **became**[2] **the lifeblood of the island**[1]* once again. Singapore was a free port where trade **flourish**.	[1]Noun phrases [2]Verbs (for cause-effect)
1st phase of development	Singapore **quickly**[3] **became**[2] the centre of British trade with China, the Dutch Indies, Siam, Annam and Cambodia. It served as an **entrepot**[1] for British and Indian products, for Chinese tea and silk, as well as for Straits-produce collected from the Malay Archipelago. **During the** first **20 months**[4] of the settlement's existence, some 3,000 ships called at her harbour.	[3]Adverb (for manner of development)
2nd phase of development	**By A.D. 1832**[4], Singapore had **replaced**[2] Penang as the political centre for the Straits Settlements and there were 16, 000 inhabitants.	[4]Time phrases (for sequence)
3rd phase of development	**By A.D. 1850**[4] the population **exceeded**[5] 80,000, more than half of whom were Chinese immigrants. *the lifeblood of the island means the most important source of income.	[5]Verb (for impact)

(Adapted from CPDD 2013c, *Singapore: The Making of a Nation-State, 1300-1975.*)

Extract from Lower Secondary History Literacy Guide, ELIS, 2013.

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Scaffolding the Language

Questions closely linked to text to focus teacher / student attention on language:

What language features highlight **the content** of the text?

What language features show **the ways in which Singapore developed** after the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824?

What language features identify **the key phases of Singapore's development?**

Examples to clearly illustrate features:

Noun phrases: "an entrepot"

Adverb of manner: "quickly"

Verbs for cause-effect: "became", "replaced"

Time phrases: "during the first 20 months"

Extract from literacy guide on next slide ➲

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Scaffolding the Language

B)   Scaffolding the language

Core language features are highlighted in the boxes.

1.   What language features highlight the content of the text?

> Noun phrases for subject-specific content (e.g. *the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, an entrepot*).

2.   What language features show the ways in which Singapore developed after the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824?

> Adverb for manner of development (*e.g. quickly*)
> Noun phrase for the state of development (*e.g. the lifeblood of the island*)
> Verbs for cause-effect (*e.g. became, replaced*).
> Verb for impact (*e.g. exceeded*).

3.   What language features identify the key phases of Singapore's development?

> Time phrases (e.g. *during the first 20 months, by A.D.1832, by A.D.1850,*).

Extract from Lower Secondary History Literacy Guide, ELIS, 2013.

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B) Scaffolding the requirement of writing

1. What are the command words in the question?
2. What can you infer about the lives of the Europeans in early 20th century?
3. What evidence in the photograph supports your inference?

Analysis of Written Response

The table shows, in the left column, the focus of the segment of text. The middle column shows the text in response to the task, and the specific language features are highlighted in the right column.

Focus of segment	Text	Language Features
Statement of inference Support of evidence	I can **infer**[1] that the life of the Europeans was very comfortable. I can **see**[2] from the photograph that these European men lived in a huge house and they had more than one servant serving them. **This is evidence of a very comfortable lifestyle.**[3]	[1]Verb (for inference) [2]Verb (for details) [3]Concluding sentence.

(Adapted from CPDD 2013b, *Lower Secondary History Specimen Questions and Mark Schemes*)

Extract from Lower Secondary History Literacy Guide, ELIS, 2013.

Example 3: Structured Question –
Requiring Explanation of Reasons

Analysis of Text
The table shows, in the left column, the focus of each paragraph of the text. The middle column shows the text in answer to the task, and the specific language features are highlighted in the right column.

Extract from Lower Secondary History Literacy Guide, ELIS, 2013.

Focus of paragraph	Text	Language Features
Focus of paragraph Para I Topic sentence: states the main reason for the need for proper public housing	People in Singapore needed proper public housing to be built for them in the 1950s and 1960s *because*[1] living conditions in the shop houses and squatter areas had become very terrible by then.	[1]Connectors (for reason)
Elaboration of main reason: reason I Specific details	There was *severe*[2] overcrowding in the shop houses in the city area, which housed the majority of the people living in Singapore. As many *as*[3] 10 to 20 persons were crowded into the same living space. These places were like slums *because*[1] the shop houses were in *dilapidated*[2] conditions.	[2]Adjectives [3]Adverbial (for emphasizing extent of overcrowding)
Para 2 Elaboration of main reason: reason 2 Specific details	*Furthermore*[4], there was a lack of proper sanitation and utilities in the shop houses and squatters. People had to share common toilets and water pipes. There was no clean water supply. This meant that diseases could spread easily. *For example*[5], tuberculosis was rampant in the slums.	[4]Connector (for additional point) [5]Discourse marker (example)
Statement of conclusion: explains how provision of proper housing would solve the problems mentioned.	*As a result*[6], people needed proper housing to be provided for them, *so that*[6] they would live in less crowded conditions and have access to proper sanitation and utilities.	[6]Connector (for cause-effect)

(Adapted from CPDD 2013b, *Specimen Questions and Mark Schemes*)

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Reading and Writing in History

Essays and Source-Based Questions are performance tasks/assessments

- There is a tangible, written end-product.
- Rubrics are used in marking.
- The requirements for the end-product and expectations of what constitutes good writing should be conveyed to the student.

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Processes Involved

This "knowledge transfer" involves more than just the process of writing. It also involves:

- Reading (e.g. content)
- Levels of comprehension
  (e.g. literal understanding, inferential)
- Metacognition (e.g. thinking about the content, the relevant concept, the requirements of the question).
- Knowledge construction, not just transfer.

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Scaffolding and guiding the processes of knowledge construction and transfer.

- Teacher modelling of reading and comprehending a text.

- Crafting of structured guiding questions that guide students to attain the same understandings.

- A framework for conveying the qualities of a good written response.

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Teacher Think Alouds

Teacher verbally articulates and models his or her process of reading, analysing and comprehending a historical text.

- Makes explicit the thinking and analytical process.

- Teacher can articulate challenges encountered during the reading.

- Teacher can articulate how the challenges are resolved.

- Teachers realise their own "shortcuts".

Structured Guiding Questions

'Backward design'

- Craft a set of structured, guiding questions that seek to help students attain the same comprehension of the teacher;

- Generate the 'think aloud';

- Then derive the set of questions;

- Begin with questions that probe literal comprehension;

- Then move onto inferential comprehension.

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T.A.C.K.L.E.D. Mnemonic for Writing

Developed as an alternative to P.E.E.L.

– Teachers raised issues about PE.E.L. during our PD workshops.

- What is the "Point"?

- Does E stand for Elaborate? Explain? Evidence? Evaluate? Everything? How many E's do we need?

- What does it mean to "Link" to the question? Shouldn't every sentence in the essay be "linked" to the question in any case?

- So what is expected in good writing?

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Using T.A.C.K.L.E.D.

Adapt as necessary, depending on what you want students to attain.

- T: Topic sentence that states the causal factor, consequence, policy, historical event, etc. / Thesis statement that states the overall argument.
- A: Answer to the question / state the Argument
- Clarity (precision) / Criteria for success
- K: Keywords [or CK for contextual knowledge]

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Using T.A.C.K.L.E.D.

(continued from previous slide)

- – L for Logic. E.g. what is the causal logic, the logic of the government policy? Or the logic of how a particular source analysis skill helps you uncover the purpose/reliability/utility of the source?

- – E: Are students to Explain the causal factor or policy? Provide supporting Evidence? Evaluate a set of factors?

- – D: Details matter in Developing a well-supported response. Or just "D" for Describe.

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Giving Formative Feedback

Strengths and weaknesses, e.g.

- Topic sentence is (not) Clear.

- How the Argument can be strengthened.

- What verbs, adjectives, connectors, etc., can be used to state the argument more strongly and clearly.

- Details from the text could be used to support the Explanation.

- Why the Keywords matter.
  What the Keywords mean.

- We can do better than the vague "You did not link to the question".

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Could We Use T.A.C.K.L.E.D. in Literature?

- Thesis statement? Topic Sentence? Thematic understanding?

- Argument/Analysis

- Clarity (or C for Characterisation?)

- Keywords of the question

- Literacy techniques/devices

- Textual evidence/details

- Effect of a particular literary device?

- [okay, maybe not such a good fit!]

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