

Unit 1 Assignment: Challenging Old Notions with New Evidence

The essay *1491* discusses the difficulty of understanding the past and then transmitting that knowledge to students. For example, for the longest time scholars believed there was only ever one migration from the Old World to the New. However, there are at least six lines of reasoning (supported by evidence) suggesting the one migration model needs to be re-examined. For some reason this new information is not making it into primary or secondary classrooms.

Procedure

- Turn to page 1 of the essay *1491* and find the list that suggests multiple migrations took place.
- Select **any one** piece of evidence (except for point #6, see example below) to research and explore further.
- Use at least two scholarly reputable online sources to conduct research into your chosen topic.
- Create a Google Doc. Title it Unit 1 Assignment. Share it with the teacher granting them full-editing privileges.
- Use this doc to write a paragraph exploring developments related to the chosen topic. Find and communicate what scholars are currently saying about the topic. Try to use the most recently published scholarly sources and papers. In your exploration, consider answering the following questions: are there any new and noteworthy developments? What are the arguments (and evidence) for and against this evidence? How has the scholarly community responded to this evidence? Is this information making it into classrooms? What are your thoughts on the topic? What questions remain unanswered? **Paragraphs must be a minimum of 100 words in length (and no longer than 500).**
- Beneath the paragraph include the URLs of the sites you used to complete the assignment. **Please note that *Wikipedia, Quora or Yahoo Answers* or any kind of encyclopedia are not acceptable sources.**

Example:

6. The population of the so-called "New World" prior to Columbus actually numbered in the tens of millions as opposed to the tens of thousands.

For a long time historians and archaeologists believed the population of North America was in the tens of thousands at the time of first contact with Europeans in 1492; however, over the past forty year developments in both archaeology and history suggest North America's overall population at this time must've been much higher. There are at least two pieces of evidence suggesting this is the case: firstly, archaeologists continue to find and unearth large settlements (cities) that had populations in the tens of thousands. A single site in the United States called Cahokia (in Illinois) is estimated to have had as many as 20,000 residents. Cahokia is not unique. There were cities in Mexico that had populations in the hundreds of thousands. Some Iroquoian "towns" in New York numbered in the tens of thousands. Likewise similar sized settlements were written about by early Spanish explorers who travelled up the Mississippi River in the mid-1500s. Another piece of evidence is baptismal certificates. Catholic missionaries converted Indigenous peoples to Christianity in the 1500s and 1600s. When Indigenous people were baptized their Christian names were recorded at the churches (parishes) where the baptism took place. Churches are found all over Mexico, New Mexico, California, Arizona and Texas. Historians count the baptismal certificates of the churches and then add them up. From this information historians get a rough idea of the *minimum* population of this part of North America; and then from this number they extrapolate what the minimum population of the entire continent must've been. The population of North America's various Indigenous peoples must've numbered in the tens of millions (definitely not tens of thousands).

Source 1: Mann, C. C., & Mann, C. C. (2006). *1491: The Americas before Columbus*. Granta.

Source 2: <https://www.history.com/news/native-american-cahokia-chaco-canyon>

Unit 2 Assignment: Using OPVL to Evaluate a Primary Source

Unit 2 presents a description of four colonial conflicts between France and England and their respective Indigenous allies. For this assignment students use the OPVL method of evaluating source reliability to critique the historical value of a short diary entry written during the French-Indian Wars by Robert Moses.

Both historians and students of history must measure the reliability of information. There are many reasons why measuring the value and reliability of a source is so difficult: firstly, the historian or history student is affected by motivated reasoning and confirmation bias; secondly, there's so much information "out there" on the Internet it's difficult to tell the difference between what's true and what is false; and finally, most people generally lack the expertise and knowledge to discern what is and what is not trustworthy. For this reason it's useful to use a systematic approach (like OPVL) to evaluate a source. OPVL stands for Origin, Purpose, Values and Limitations. Below are questions scholars ask/answer in order to measure a source's value and overall usefulness.

Origin: this refers to the setting, time, and personality (or culture) that created a source. Some potential questions a student could ask exploring a source's origin are:

- When was the document created?
- Who created it?
- Where did it first appear?
- Are there any special cultural considerations to take into account when reading this document?
- Is it a primary or secondary source?
- What was the historical context in which it was created?

Purpose: this focuses on the intention or purpose behind the creation of the source in the first place.

- Why did the author or culture create the document?
- Who is the source's intended audience?
- Is the document intended specifically for fellow scholars or for regular people?

Values & Limitations: although these two attributes are treated separately they cover essentially the same ground: values relate to the beliefs of the source's creator while limitations refer to any potential problems affecting a document.

- What information was available to the author that might not be available elsewhere?
- What important information was *not* available to the author? For example, consider when the document was created and if any subsequent scholarship has revealed something new about an event or personality.
- Did the author get their information from a reliable source?
- Does the author have reasons to emphasize certain facts over others? Would the author present the story differently to a different audience?
- What specific information did the author leave out?
- Does the author concede¹ a certain point that is inconvenient to him/her to admit to?
- How might the historical context in which the document was created influence the author?
- How might the document's original historical context affect our own understanding of the document's reliability?
- Could the document's author have made use of better, more reliable sources?

¹ The word *concede* literally means to "admit that something is true or valid after first denying or resisting it."

Procedure

a). Visit the *Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History* website by going here:

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/glc04944>.

b). Read Robert Moses' full diary entry.



c). Create a *Google Doc*. Title the document Unit 2 Assignment. Share it with the teacher granting them full-editing privileges.

d). Answer all of the OPVL questions to the best of your ability; it makes sense to organize your answers using headings.

e). Once all the OPVL questions are completed, write a paragraph discussing the potential benefits and/or drawbacks of using Robert Moses' diary to try and understand what life was like during the French-Indian War period. In your conclusion, fully explain your reasoning. Don't just generalize and say something like "The diary helps us understand what life was like during the French-Indian War." Instead, be specific and provide reasoning for why or why this source is not useful, e.g. The diary helps readers understand the French-Indian war because of X, etc. etc. **The concluding paragraph must be a minimum 100 words in length and no longer than 300.**

Unit 3: Exploring the Differences between British and American Political Culture

This unit covers the American Revolution while also exploring the consequences of this important event for the history of Canada, Britain and the United States. One of the major features of the unit is an examination of Britain's and America's political differences. Below is a chart listing some of those major political differences.

 Great Britain (Old School)	 Thirteen Colonies (New School)
The British believed tradition (<i>status-quo</i>) promoted a sense of continuity.	Americans generally believed progress could only be achieved through change.
Members of upper class have privileges not enjoyed by all, I.e. Rich ugly noble dudes do pretty much what they want when they want.	Equality for all, I.e. All people treated equally regardless of birth or inherent ugliness.
Authority exists in the king and the aristocracy (because "that's how we've always done it in the past").	Authority exists in the people (because "there are more attractive poor people than there are ugly rich people").
The government is not accountable to the common people (king cannot be removed from office for doing a bad job or being corrupt...well, I guess you can chop his head off).	Politicians are <i>elected</i> and directly accountable to the common people; that is, if a politician seeks re-election he/she must do a good job.
Institutions like government, etc. are established the way they are by God; therefore, you should not change or challenge them.	Institutions like government, etc. are established by and for men; therefore, change should be seen as a path to improvement.

Procedure

- Create a *Google Doc*. Title the document Unit 3 Assignment. Give the classroom teacher full-editing privileges.
- Use the chart above to write a compare and contrast paragraph of Britain and America's political differences. The purpose of a comparison is to show how two elements are similar. The purpose of contrasting is to show how two or more elements are different from one another.
- Write a second paragraph, answering the following paragraph: which political culture—the American or British—do you prefer? Explain.

Political Culture: a shared and historically-based set of beliefs, feelings and values about the nature of political systems.

Bonus Mark Opportunity: write a third paragraph exploring how Canada's political culture is a mixture of the American and British systems.

Unit 4: Examining and Appreciating Canada's Political Culture

The fourth unit explores Canada's evolution from colony into country. Canadian political culture certainly combines elements from both the American and British; however, Canada's political culture is also unique and distinct. In this assignment, students explore these differences.

Procedure

- a). Use Unit Four's readings to identify a minimum of three distinctly qualities/belief that are distinctly Canadian.
- b). Create a *Google Doc*. Title it Unit 4 Assignment. Grant the teacher full-editing privileges.
- c). Write down the three qualities/beliefs you identified in the document.
- d). From this short list select the one quality/belief you feel is either the most important or personally interesting.
- e). Write a paragraph explaining and exploring why you selected this quality/belief. **The paragraph must be a minimum of 150 words in length but no longer than 500.**