

Historical Thinking Module

Historical Inquiry, SCIM-C Method (part 1)

SCIM-C. What is it? Where did it come from? And how will it help you. Here's the plan.

SCIM-C. It's for bright people.

SCIM-C is a model that will allow you to take historical sources given to you by your teacher, and be able to analyze them and think about them and then maybe put the information together to answer a question and create a written narrative.

Summarize. That's the S. Once you've got a primary source – just one – you're handed a primary source you're going to have to analyze it. So what you do is, you start reading it through and the first thing you're going to need to do is S. Summarize. So, tell me what you see. Just the facts. If it's an image, what is there, just immediately, what do you see.

What you do then, you've asked your question, your historical question, about what was life like, say, during the Great Depression, and now what you do is you start to look at the letter, look at the image, look at the newspaper article, and you just tell me what is there. What do you see. Immediately what information can you draw out. Just the facts. Boom boom boom. What is it you're seeing.

The next step is Contextualize. C. What do you do with contextualizing is you look for clues in the document to see where it came from. Location. Where it came from in place, in time. Because it existed in the past. OK – it's from the past. When? It wasn't created today, so you need to contextualize, which means place it in time and space.

I. Inferring. What that really is about is when it starts getting fun. You've done your summarizing. You've done your contextualizing. Inferring is educated guesses time. You've got your big question, now what does the source suggest? What kind of ideas come out of the source? You've already got exactly what's there, you've found that, so what inferences can you make, based on some prior knowledge, say, about the material at hand. So, I. Inferring. I. Inferring.

M. Monitoring. That's the final stage of SCIM itself. Monitoring really gets you to really think through the process you've been through. It's to recap where you've been. So, have I summarized well? Have I contextualized well? Have I inferred? Have I rung the source out as much as possible? M. Monitoring.

Corroborate. The last C. Remember, the question might be something like, "what was life like during the great depression?" The next thing you do is you take all the information that you've gathered from each of these sources and start to C. Corroborate. Corroborate the material. Look for similarities. Look for differences. Look for missing gaps of information. All the things that help you, from the source, answer the question. Not what's just in your head and you're making up. You only can answer the question based on the sources so you corroborate the material and then you've got a historical account.

SCIM-C. Systematic, sophisticated, literacy work. It's quite fun to do at times, once you get the hang of it.