“Facts are mastered by engaging students in historical questions that spark their curiosity and make them passionate about seeking answers.” (Wineburg, v)

It is because so few students pursue a degree in history that it is crucial to teach the skills of thinking as an historian and reading like an historian in our schools.

#1 Let’s look at the different ways that students & historians look at primary source documents: many students start reading the article right away and don’t do the preliminary check-up like historians and experienced readers.

The Historian approaches a document in the following steps:

- Begin analyzing a document by glancing at the title and subtitles

- Next they go to the end of the article/document and check the source
  - seeing who wrote it
  - would the author be bias towards any particular group
  - the date the document was written/created
  - the intended audience

- This action is referred to as sourcing the document

‘For historians, the act of reading is not about gathering lifeless information to repeat on a test, but engaging a human source in spirited conversation.’ (Wineburg, vi)
#2 Next we will examine the second ‘pillar of Reading Like a Historian’ contextualization – the idea that events need to be located in the proper time and place in order to be understood.

Both Sourcing and Contextualizing are important to Reading like a Historian and are the skills referred to as ‘discipline-specific literacy’

This approach is a break from reading the textbook to get answers or just answering worksheets. Instead - students need repeated practice across topics & different eras to benefit from this approach.

#3 Finally we ask students pull-in specific information from the sources close reading in order to provide supporting facts for their argument.

Struggling readers will benefit most from this approach:

- Remember – primary source documents are the place to teach students to slow down and read closely; to think about word choice and subtext.

- When needed, provide a word bank to assist students in definitions of words and with vocabulary that is unfamiliar in the 21st century.