sSCIM-C: A Strategy for Interpreting History

(adapted from: Hicks, David; Doolittle, Peter; Ewing, Tom; *Historical Inquiry*. Virginia Tech.)

As you first engage with a source you will move through four phases – summarizing, contextualizing, inferring, and monitoring – and after you have analyzed several sources you compare the sources collectively – corroborating.

**Summarizing**

Quickly examine the text for information or evidence that is explicitly available within. Identify the sources subject (content), author, purpose, and audience. Look for facts, dates, ideas, opinions, and perspectives.

* What type of historical document is the source?
* What specific information, details and/or perspectives does the source provide?
* What is the subject and/or purpose of the source?
* Who was the author and/or audience of the source?

**Contextualizing**

Locate the source within time and space. Words, images, and their meanings may have been different in different points of time – these should be noted and defined. Meanings, habits, customs may be very different and students should be careful to avoid treating the source as a product of today.

* When and where was the source produced?
* Why was the source produced?
* What was happening within the immediate and broader context at the time the source was produced?
* What summarizing information can place the source in time and place?

**Inferring**

Revisit initial facts, read subtexts, and make inferences based upon a deeper understanding of context and examination of the source. Explore the source and examine the source’s perspective.

* What is suggested by the source?
* What interpretations may be drawn from the source?
* What perspectives or points of view are indicated in the source?
* What inferences may be drawn from absences or omissions in the source?

**Monitoring**

Question and reflect upon initial assumptions in terms of the overall historic question being studied. Examine the credibility and usefulness or significance of the source. Reflect upon the use of SCIM-C, the questions, and the source itself.

What additional evidence beyond the source is necessary to answer the historical question?

What ideas, images, or terms need further defining from the source?

How useful of significant is the source for its intended purpose in answering the historical question?

What questions from the previous stage need to be revisited in order to analyze the source satisfactorily?

**Corroborating**

This only begins when you’ve analyzed a series of sources. Compare evidence from each source as they aid in answering the guiding questions. What are the similarities and differences in ideas, information, and perspectives that exist? Are there gaps in evidence that need addressing? If there are contradictions, there must be deeper evaluation of the credibility of the sources. Once the comparison of sources begins students may develop their own conclusions and historical interpretations.

* What similarities and differences between the sources exist?
* What factors could account for these similarities and differences?
* What conclusions can be drawn from the accumulated interpretations?
* What additional information or sources are necessary to answer more fully the guiding historical question?

Each of these stages helps us to perform a strong evaluation of sources within the IB framework of OPCVL.

Answering the questions within each stage provides a solid groundwork from which to evaluate values and limitations of sources based in their origin, purpose, and content.