

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN (DRAFT: APR 2010)

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Timeframe:

The curriculum changes and assessment methods outlined in this document will go into effect fall semester 2010. History majors enrolled as sophomores in fall 2010 will be the first class to complete the full range of history department QEP courses.

INTRODUCTION:

HISTORY AND THE PURSUIT OF SYNTHESIS

The study of history directly supports the objectives identified in Western Carolina University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), in particular the pursuit of synthesis. History is, by its nature, a synthetic and integrative discipline, since it takes as its proper subject the human experience, itself. History teaches an appreciation for human complexity and thus encourages one to draw connections among different realms of knowledge. It erodes the division between education and the "real world," since it is precisely the "real world," the actual people and events, that historians investigate. And as a discipline dedicated to explaining and interpreting change over time, history promotes the kind of critical thinking and problem solving skills essential for success in any career or endeavor beyond the university.

The History Department at WCU embodies these principles in practice, as demonstrated by faculty and student participation in team-taught courses, comparative and interdisciplinary courses and research, travel courses and field experiential courses, internships, public history work, and public presentations, both local and national. The QEP allows us to continue and expand the interactive and intentional learning activities that we already provide our students. We believe that it also represents an increased university commitment to the liberal arts and to interdisciplinary and integrative studies.

DEPARTMENT MISSION

Faculty of the History Department are professional scholars whose primary mission is to provide effective teaching and advisement to undergraduate and graduate students, produce significant research and publication, and to provide appropriate service to the University and region. The History Department encourages effective teaching and scholarship, collegiality, competent and timely advisement, and integrity.

As one of the traditional liberal arts, History is a discipline that provides knowledge vital to the creation of an educated citizenry. Without an understanding of the past, the present is incomprehensible. The lives of our recent and remote ancestors have shaped the modern reality for all inhabitants of the United States and the rest of the globe.

The History Department plays a major role in the University's mission to interpret the history of western North Carolina and the southern Appalachian region. The History department believes in the value of scholarly community and encourages its members to work together within the department, the university, and more widely in the community and region. Faculty members have participated in a wide variety of academic and public programs across the region, as well as internationally. Through our program in Social Science Education the department maintains close contact with public schools throughout the western counties of North Carolina. Through our program in public history the department maintains ties with many cultural institutions in the region.

ALIGNMENT OF PROGRAM MISSION WITH UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE MISSION

Complementing the missions of the University as well as the College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of History strives to create engaged learners who are historically literate, intellectually acquisitive, and academically proficient. For both majors and non-majors alike, the Department achieves this goal through rigorous adherence to the principal of sustained excellence in teaching, research, and service. By means of the assessment vehicles established in the departmental QEP and in order to ensure personal and professional success, history faculty remain vigilant in the monitoring of both individual and collective performance. All the while they remain open to adaptation to the ever changing nature of the *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*.

DEGREES

Western Carolina University offers Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees in History, and the History Department supervises the BSED program in the social sciences. The department also offers an undergraduate certificate in public history. Undergraduates can choose from a wide variety of courses for their major. These courses deal with such diverse topics as ancient Greece and Rome, medieval and modern Europe, United States history, the American South, military history, Latin America, Russia, Asia, Appalachian culture, Cherokee and Native American history, and public history. At the graduate level, the department offers a Master of Arts degree in History as well as MAT and MAEd degrees in social sciences. MA History students may focus on American history, European history, public history, or Cherokee studies.

The History major at Western Carolina University requires 120 hours, including 42 hours in Liberal Studies and 33 hours in the major. The BA also requires completion of MFL 231-232 or 240. Students in Social Science Education complete a dual degree program (BS History and BSED Social Sciences) with 42 hours in Liberal Studies, 57-60 hours in Social Sciences and History, and 28 hours in Education (with several courses counting in more than one area).

HISTORY PROGRAM GOALS

Through its majors, the History Department seeks:

1. To impart to students a body of knowledge about the global past and its relationship to the present and the future.
2. To cultivate in students the ability to evaluate diverse perspectives and the capacity for moral reflection.
3. To help students develop an understanding of change over time.
4. To cultivate in students the ability to think critically.
5. To help prepare students for productive, meaningful, and responsible lives beyond the university.

Sources: History Department Strategic Plan (2004) and History Department Preliminary QEP Statement (2008).

For an expanded discussion of the program goals, see Appendix A.

THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT QEP AND THE HISTORICAL PROFESSION

The History Department views the QEP as an opportunity to support university initiatives, while improving its ability to meet the goals of the broader historical profession. Rather than simply mimic the language of the university QEP, the department has selected program

goals and student learning outcomes that reflect both the fundamental values of the university QEP and those of the discipline of history. We have translated the goals of the university QEP into terms that have real and practical meaning within our discipline.

In drafting this document, the department has drawn upon resources made available by the American Historical Association, in particular Peter N. Stearns, "Why Study History?" (American Historical Association, 1998) and Stanley Katz and James Grossman, "The History Major and Undergraduate Liberal Education: Report of the National History Center Working Group to the Teagle Foundation" (American Historical Association, 2008, both reports available online, www.historians.org).

QEP COURSE SEQUENCE

In response to the university QEP, the history department has engaged in a substantial discussion of its curriculum, with the aim of improving its ability to provide educational experiences that encourage critical thinking, integrated learning, and planning for life beyond the university. As indicated by the decision to offer a variety of capstone experiences, the department sought to grant its students the power to shape educational experiences suited to their particular goals.

Sophomore

As sophomores, history majors take the program's gateway course: HIST 297, Sophomore Seminar. This course provides students with a focused introduction to the historical profession, introducing them experientially to what historians do, how they do it, and why they do it. Students learn how to identify, locate and analyze primary source documents, and to dissect and critique historical arguments and monographs. The ultimate goal of Sophomore Seminar is to provide a foundation in historical thought, inquiry, and construction that will serve students well throughout the major. Students in this course are introduced to public history, discuss career options and goals, learn about co-curricular opportunities, and engage in the reflective activities appropriate to the second year, as defined in the university QEP.

Junior

As juniors, history majors take 300 and 400-level electives in history. These electives involve the refinement of the skills introduced in HIST 297 and their application to particular global regions and historical periods. Academic advisors lead students through the reflective and career-planning activities appropriate to the third year, as defined in the university QEP. In addition, the junior year (or the following summer) is generally

when students study abroad and complete public history internships.

Senior / Capstone Experiences

As seniors, history majors select a capstone experience. The department offers several options.

- Student Teaching: Social Science Education majors are required to complete a semester of student teaching, supervised in the classroom by the social science coordinator and a cooperating teacher, which serves as their capstone experience.
- Thesis: Students who intend to pursue post-baccalaureate degrees are encouraged to write a senior thesis. A three-credit course, this option is limited to students with a 3.2 GPA. In close consultation with an advisor and another committee member, the student proposes and pursues research with the end product of a 35-40 page thesis.
- Capstone Contract: Finally, the History Department offers a more flexible Capstone Contract. The contract is linked to an upper-division History course, designated by the student as their capstone course, and taken during the student's final two semesters. In conjunction with the course instructor, and approved by the student's advisor and the Department Head, the student designs a major project that demonstrates the comprehensive skills that they have mastered during their major coursework and broader college experience and reflects their goals for life beyond the university. Students who have studied abroad are encouraged to develop projects that reflect their international experience. Students who have completed public history internships are encouraged to develop projects related to their public history work. To facilitate tracking within the degree audit, students pursuing Capstone Contracts enroll in a 0-hour course.

ADVISING AND THE EDUCATION BRIEFCASE

Every History Department faculty member advises, on average, 20 to 30 students in History and/or History-Social Science Education, with several members advising considerably more. Our current advising model ensures that students meet with their advisors at least twice during the academic year. These meetings consist of course registration and review of graduation requirements, but also informal mentoring and career guidance. The History Department encourages advisors to remain current with both departmental and university curriculum requirements.

In addition to these duties, under the QEP, advisors are responsible for ensuring that students submit required materials to the Education Briefcase. These materials include Sophomore Seminar research papers, capstone projects and documentation, resumes and other career-planning documents, and the reflective pieces outlined in the university QEP.

ADVISING AND THE EDUCATION BRIEFCASE - A PROPOSAL

The department is concerned about the increased advising workload required by the QEP and the complexity of the task of overseeing student Education Briefcases in a large program. It recommends the establishment of a QEP Faculty Liaison (QEP-FL) position. The QEP-FL would be a new full-time position, staffed by a trained historian, hired for a fixed term. This faculty member would teach two to three courses a year, in addition to their supervisory duties with student Education Briefcases and representation of the department in campus wide QEP meetings and committees. The QEP-FL's primary job, however, would be to monitor completion and revision of the necessary elements within the Briefcase. More importantly, the QEP-FL would aid students in revising their educational and career plans as they progressed through the program. History faculty would take an active role in the production and inclusion of artifacts related to the discipline, while the liaison would ensure completion of the core elements of the Education Briefcase. This model would allow the department and its students to fully realize the opportunities offered by the Education Briefcase.

HISTORY PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

History majors will:

1. Experience a broad range of periods, cultures, ideas, and perspectives.
2. Demonstrate proficiency in historical research and writing, including the ability to synthesize information from multiple sources into a coherent whole.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of change over time and historical causation.
4. Apply critical thinking skills to historical problems.
5. Evaluate perspectives and arguments from the past and about the past.

HISTORY PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE UNIVERSITY QEP OUTCOMES:

WCU students are expected to:

1. Integrate information from a variety of contexts.

Historical research and writing (History Outcome #2) and the examination of historical problems (History Outcome #4) involve the integration of information from multiple sources into a coherent whole and thus directly support this university goal.

2. Solve complex problems.

History Outcome #4 directly supports this university goal, as does the practice of historical research (History Outcome #2). An understanding of change over time and historical causation (History Outcome #3) also contributes to the ability to solve complex problems.

3. Communicate effectively and responsibly

Historical research and writing (History Outcome #2) help students to learn to communicate effectively and responsibly.

4. Practice Civic Engagement

By encouraging students to evaluate arguments from the past and about the past (History Outcome #5) and by cultivating an understanding of historical causation (History Outcome #3), history helps students to develop the ability to make responsible judgments regarding contemporary life.

5. Clarify and act on purpose and values

In exposing students to a broad range of ideas, periods, cultures, and perspectives different from their own (History Outcome #1), history helps students to understand and clarify their own ideas and values.

HISTORY PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXPERIENCES

1. History majors will experience a broad range of periods, cultures, ideas, and perspectives.

200-level surveys provide broad introductions to European and United States history. All history and history majors must complete at

least two of these surveys.

Upper-level electives provide more specialized content and ideas regarding particular places and periods. The history programs require at least two U. S. history electives, two European history electives, and one non-western history elective. The remaining electives may be in any field.

2. History majors will demonstrate proficiency in historical research and writing, including the ability to synthesize information from multiple sources into a coherent whole.

The Sophomore Seminar provides an introduction to historical research methods.

Upper-level electives provide opportunities for individual research projects. The history programs require at least two U. S. history electives, two European history electives, and one non-western history elective. The remaining electives may be in any field.

The capstone contract and senior thesis involve the application of research skills to a significant individual project.

3. History majors will demonstrate an understanding of change over time and historical causation.

200-level surveys introduce major developments and transformations in European and United States history. All history majors must complete at least two of these surveys.

Upper-level electives provide opportunities to study change and continuity in particular places and periods. The history programs require at least two U. S. history electives, two European history electives, and one non-western history elective. The remaining electives may be in any field.

4. History majors will apply critical thinking skills to historical problems.

The sophomore seminar introduces the critical skills distinct to the discipline of history and provides opportunities for individual investigation of historical questions.

Upper-level electives provide group and individual investigation of historical issues. The history programs require at least two U. S. history electives, two European history electives, and one non-western history elective. The remaining electives may be in any field.

The capstone contract and senior thesis involve individual investigation of historical questions.

5. History majors will evaluate perspectives from the past and about the past.

200-level surveys introduce varying interpretations of major issues in European and United States history. All history majors must complete at least two of these surveys.

The Sophomore Seminar includes discussion of varying schools of history, modes of interpretation, and approaches to the past.

Upper-level electives provide opportunities to evaluate diverse perspectives on issues related to particular places and periods. The history programs require at least two U. S. history electives, two European history electives, and one non-western history elective. The remaining electives may be in any field.

HISTORY QEP ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

In assessing the QEP outcomes, the department will examine:

- HIST 297 research papers
- Senior capstone projects
- Exit interviews with graduating history majors
- Causation and critical thinking exercise, administered to graduating seniors (see Appendix B)

HISTORY QEP ASSESSORS

The History Department has established an Assessment Committee, which will consist of three members selected from the department's full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

OUTCOME	EXPERIENCES	METHODS
<p>1. History majors will experience a broad range of periods, cultures, ideas, and perspectives.</p>	<p>200-level surveys provide broad introductions to European and United States history.</p> <p>Upper-level electives provide specialized content and ideas regarding particular places and periods. The history major requires at least two U. S. history electives, two European history electives, and one non-western history elective.</p>	<p>The Assessment Committee will examine department course offerings to ensure sufficient temporal breadth and cultural and geographic diversity.</p>

OUTCOME	EXPERIENCES	METHODS
<p>2. History majors will demonstrate proficiency in historical research and writing, including the ability to synthesize information from multiple sources into a coherent whole.</p>	<p>The Sophomore Seminar provides an introduction to historical research methods.</p> <p>Upper-level electives provide opportunities for individual research projects.</p> <p>Capstone contracts and senior theses involve the application of research skills to a significant individual project.</p>	<p>The Assessment Committee will examine Sophomore Seminar research papers and Senior Capstone products to judge levels of proficiency in research and writing.</p>

OUTCOME	EXPERIENCES	METHODS
<p>3. History majors will demonstrate an understanding of change over time and historical causation.</p>	<p>200-level surveys introduce major developments and transformations in European and United States history.</p> <p>Upper-level electives provide opportunities to study change and continuity in particular places and periods.</p>	<p>The Assessment Committee will examine the Causation and Critical Analysis Exercises to gauge students' understanding of change over time and historical causation.</p>

OUTCOME	EXPERIENCES	METHODS
<p>4. History majors will apply critical thinking skills to historical problems.</p>	<p>The Sophomore Seminar introduces the critical skills distinct to the discipline of history and provides opportunities for individual investigation of historical questions.</p> <p>Upper-level electives provide group and individual investigation of historical issues.</p> <p>Capstone contracts and senior theses involve individual investigation of historical questions.</p>	<p>The Assessment Committee will examine Sophomore Seminar research papers and Senior Capstone products for evidence of the application of critical thinking skills to historical questions.</p> <p>The Assessment Committee will examine the Causation and Critical Analysis Exercises for evidence of the application of critical thinking skills to historical problems.</p>

OUTCOME	EXPERIENCES	METHODS
<p>5. History majors will evaluate perspectives and arguments from the past and about the past.</p>	<p>200-level surveys introduce varying interpretations of major issues in European and United States history.</p> <p>The Sophomore Seminar includes discussion of varying schools of history, modes of interpretation, and approaches to the past.</p> <p>Upper-level electives provide opportunities to evaluate diverse perspectives on issues related to particular places and periods.</p>	<p>The Assessment Committee will examine Sophomore Seminar research papers and Senior Capstone products for evidence of students' ability to evaluate differing perspectives and arguments.</p>

ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

1. History majors will experience a broad range of periods, cultures, ideas, and perspectives.

No rubric necessary. The Assessment Committee will examine department course offerings to ensure sufficient temporal breadth and cultural and geographic diversity. At present, the history major requires at least two U. S. history electives, two European history electives, and one non-western history elective.

2. History majors will demonstrate proficiency in historical research and writing, including the ability to synthesize information from multiple sources into a coherent whole.

	Emerging	Developing	Achieving	Exemplary
Position/ Argument	Presents summary of the topic	Presents basic argument	Presents clear argument	Presents convincing argument
Sources and Research	Identifies sources	Identifies historical sources	Identifies relevant and appropriate sources	Identifies best available sources
Analysis	Provides description of sources	Provides analysis of sources	Provides competent analysis of sources	Provides thorough and effective analysis of sources
Synthesis	Demonstrates ability to present different sources	Demonstrates ability to utilize different sources	Demonstrates ability to blend sources	Demonstrates ability to blend multiple sources into a coherent whole
Communication	Displays weak skills in written communication	Displays basic skills in written communication	Displays competent skills in written communication	Displays effective skills in written communication

3. History majors will demonstrate an understanding of change over time and historical causation.

	Emerging	Developing	Achieving	Exemplary
Connection of Causes and Effects	Provides narrative of historical actions/actors	Connects historical actions and actors	Connects cause and effect clearly	Connects cause and effect clearly and convincingly
Recognition of Complexity	Recognizes chronological narrative	Recognizes historical causation	Recognizes complexity of historical causation	Recognizes and displays appreciation for the complexity of historical causation

4. History majors will apply critical thinking skills to historical problems.

	Emerging	Developing	Achieving	Exemplary
Conceptualization	Identifies historical issue	Identifies some aspects of historical issue	Identifies relevant aspects of historical issue	Identifies complex aspects of historical issue
Evaluation	Considers single perspective	Considers limited perspectives	Considers multiple perspectives	Considers complexity of perspectives
Application	Articulates limited interpretation	Articulates basic interpretation	Articulates appropriate interpretation	Articulates nuanced interpretation

5. History majors will evaluate perspectives and arguments from the past and about the past.

	Emerging	Developing	Achieving	Exemplary
Understanding Perspectives from the Past (Historical Empathy)	Conveys limited empathy with historical subjects	Conveys general empathy with historical subjects	Conveys specific empathy with historical subjects	Conveys and integrates empathy with historical subjects
Understanding Arguments about the Past (Historiography)	Understands the past uncritically	Understands differing interpretations of the past	Understands historiographical thinking	Understands and applies historiographical thinking

APPENDIX A: PROGRAM GOALS - DISCUSSION

1. To impart to students a body of knowledge about the global past and its relationship to the present and the future.

"History offers a storehouse of information about how people and societies behave. Understanding the operations of people and societies is difficult, though a number of disciplines make the attempt. An exclusive reliance on current data would needlessly handicap our efforts. How can we evaluate war if the nation is at peace—unless we use historical materials? How can we understand genius, the influence of technological innovation, or the role that beliefs play in shaping family life, if we don't use what we know about experiences in the past? Some social scientists attempt to formulate laws or theories about human behavior. But even these resources depend on historical information, except for in limited, often artificial cases in which experiments can be devised to determine how people act. Major aspects of a society's operation, like mass elections, missionary activities, or military alliances, cannot be set up as precise experiments. Consequently, history must serve, however imperfectly, as our laboratory, and data from the past must serve as our most vital evidence in the unavoidable quest to figure out why our complex species behaves as it does in societal settings. This, fundamentally, is why we cannot stay away from history: it offers the only extensive evidential base for the contemplation and analysis of how societies function, and people need to have some sense of how societies function simply to run their own lives."¹

2. To cultivate in students the ability to evaluate diverse perspectives and the capacity for moral reflection.

"There is a fundamental tension in teaching and learning history between covering facts and developing historical habits of mind. Because history provides an immediate background to our own life and age, it is highly desirable to learn about forces that arose in the past and continue to affect the modern world. This type of knowledge requires some attention to comprehending the development of national institutions and trends. It also demands some historical understanding of key forces in the wider world. The ongoing tension between Christianity and Islam, for instance, requires some knowledge of patterns that took shape over 12 centuries ago. Indeed, the pressing need to learn about issues of importance throughout the world is the basic reason that world history has been gaining ground in American curriculums. Historical habits of mind are enriched when we learn to compare different patterns of historical development, which means some study of other national traditions and civilizations. History also

¹ Peter N. Stearns, "Why Study History?" American Historical Association, 1998, available from <http://www.historians.org/pubs/Free/WhyStudyHistory.htm>; Internet; accessed 24 March 2008.

provides a terrain for moral contemplation. Studying the stories of individuals and situations in the past allows a student of history to test his or her own moral sense, to hone it against some of the real complexities individuals have faced in difficult settings. People who have weathered adversity not just in some work of fiction, but in real, historical circumstances can provide inspiration. 'History teaching by example' is one phrase that describes this use of a study of the past—a study not only of certifiable heroes, the great men and women of history who successfully worked through moral dilemmas, but also of more ordinary people who provide lessons in courage, diligence, or constructive protest."²

3. To help students develop an understanding of change over time.

"The key to developing historical habits of mind is having repeated experience in historical inquiry. Such experience should involve a variety of materials and a diversity of analytical problems. Facts are essential in this process, for historical analysis depends on data, but it does not matter whether these facts come from local, national, or world history—although it's most useful to study a range of settings. What matters is learning how to assess different magnitudes of historical change, different examples of conflicting interpretations, and multiple kinds of evidence. Developing the ability to repeat fundamental thinking habits through increasingly complex exercises is essential."

The past causes the present, and so the future. Any time we try to know why something happened—whether a shift in political party dominance in the American Congress, a major change in the teenage suicide rate, or a war in the Balkans or the Middle East—we have to look for factors that took shape earlier. Sometimes fairly recent history will suffice to explain a major development, but often we need to look further back to identify the causes of change. Only through studying history can we grasp how things change; only through history can we begin to comprehend the factors that cause change; and only through history can we understand what elements of an institution or a society persist despite change."³

4. To cultivate in students the ability to think critically.

Critical thinking is defined as "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or a communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on...clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness."⁴

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Michael Scriven and Richard Paul, "Defining Critical Thinking,"

As Derek Bok and others have emphasized, critical thinking is a crucial skill all college students, regardless of major, should strive to obtain. By placing critical thinking skills at the center of the its curriculum, history shares in this aspiration and seeks to reinforce work being done other disciplines by inculcating this skill at all levels.⁵

In effect, this goal synthesizes the skills of the previous goal and directs them towards a common objective.

5. To help prepare students for productive, meaningful, and responsible lives beyond the university.

Students will eventually graduate. The study of history should prepare them for future success in the job market as well as enable them to participate broadly and responsibly in their society and world affairs.

In addition to providing an excellent university education, the study of history is a solid and accepted preparation for many careers. Because of its rigor and its exploration of cause and effect, the intellectual and communication skills acquired by majoring in history are in demand by many professions. In a survey of Western Carolina University history graduates, a large majority pursued highly successful careers in business, education, and government work. A significant percentage also found employment in such professions as law, journalism, and the ministry. More than seventy percent of history majors at WCU eventually attended graduate school. WCU majors have been admitted to professional and graduate programs at Harvard, Virginia, Wake Forest, Duke, UNC, LSU, USC, Georgia, Auburn, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Kansas, and many others.

National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking Instruction
(2007).

⁵ Derek Bok, *Beyond the Ivory Tower: Social Responsibilities of the Modern University*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1984.

APPENDIX B: CAUSATION AND CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE

The history department uses your responses to the questions below in order to assess the effectiveness of the program. Your careful and thoughtful responses are greatly appreciated.

QUESTION 1: KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORICAL CHANGE OVER TIME

Choose one of the major historical events listed below. What do you think is the major cause of causes of the selected event? Why do you think so?

American Civil War
Cherokee Removal
Vietnam War
Civil Rights
Manifest Destiny

World War I
Fall of Roman Empire
Renaissance
Discovery of America
Industrial Revolution

World War II
Atlantic slavery
French Revolution
American Revolution
Peloponnesian War

QUESTION 2: CRITICAL EVALUATION OF SOURCE MATERIAL

Carefully review the primary source below.

-What time period and geographical area (i.e. US, Europe, etc.) do you think it comes from? Why do you think so?

-What is the point of view of the source? What view is it opposing? Why do you think so?

-What does the source tell us about the place and time from which it came?

