

# Synthesis...comparing sources

## Skill 9: Synthesis

Historical thinking involves the ability to develop meaningful and persuasive new understandings of the past by applying all of the other historical thinking skills, by drawing appropriately on ideas and methods from different fields of inquiry or disciplines, and by creatively fusing disparate, relevant, and sometimes contradictory evidence from primary sources and secondary works. Additionally, synthesis may involve applying insights about the past to other historical contexts or circumstances, including the present.

### Proficient students should be able to ...

- Combine disparate, sometimes contradictory evidence from primary sources and secondary works in order to create a persuasive understanding of the past.
- Apply insights about the past to other historical contexts or circumstances, including the present.

One important way to practice this historical thinking skill is to analyze two different sources or viewpoints on one event or era. Just as historians pull information from a plethora of different sources, we must also consider more than one source when analyzing history. In an essay, this skill will enable complex conclusions. On short answer questions, you may be presented with two sources then have to analyze them.

Such a task, when analyzing secondary sources, also requires an appreciation of historiography and realizing that history isn't necessarily what happened in the past. It is our perception of what happened in the past. The story changes as perspectives change, but the goal is the same: to better understand the past. As you analyze sources, consider the perspective of the author, but also consider your own viewpoint.

### 1600's Providential History

- Writers wrote about history in terms of man's relationship with God
- History is a chronicle of God's Providence toward his Chosen People
- Success is due to God's blessings, disaster due to His rebukes
- America replaced Britain as God's model of Christian virtue

### 1700's Rationalist History

- Writers began describing history in terms of nature or secularism.
- Natural Law dominated the approach as Divine Providence decreased
- Reason and logic explained things
- Self interest, not piety, became the force of man's actions

### 1800s (mid to late) Nationalist History

- Writers focus on progress, liberty, and Anglo-Saxon destiny in a more romantic way
- Anglos triumph over others as destiny in order to spread freedom

### 1900's (early) Progressive History

- Writers focus on power struggles and the development of democracy.
- History as a series of struggles between the Haves and Have Nots
- The people must fight the elite
- Freedom, democracy, capitalism, are solutions to conflict

### 1940's – 1980's Consent and Consensus History

- Writers focus on shared ideas of the people rather than conflict
- Americans are united in their love of freedom
- History is evolution of ideas, beliefs, motivations
- Politics are in the center and really not as divided as once thought
- Capitalism is to be celebrated

### 1950's – Present Conservative History

- Writers focus on history serving as a moral guide.
- History is more about people than events
- Heroes should be celebrated
- Natural law governs events

### 1960's-1970's New Left History

- Writers focus on the parts of American history that have been overlooked.
- History should expose violence, racism, oppression.
- America is not a melting pot
- Individualists and rebels should be celebrated
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### 1980's – present People's History

- Writers focus on common people.
- History should be derived from primary sources like diary entries, letters
- Conflict is cultural, not moral or economic
- The ongoing struggle in America is trying to figure out how to live
- History should serve to help people better understand each other
- Global perspective is needed

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 1, Periods 1 & 2

# Synthesis...comparing sources

Excerpt: *A People's History of the United States*, Howard Zinn, 1980

Some historians think those first blacks in Virginia were considered as servants, like the white indentured servants brought from Europe. But the strong probability is that, even if they were listed as "servants" (a more familiar category to the English); they were viewed as being different from white servants, were treated differently, and in fact were slaves. In any case, slavery developed quickly into a regular institution, into the normal labor relation of blacks to whites in the New World. With it developed that special racial feeling—whether hatred, or contempt, or pity, or patronization—that accompanied the inferior position of blacks in America for the next 350 years—that combination of inferior status and derogatory thought we call racism. Everything in the experience of the first white settlers acted as a pressure for the enslavement of blacks.

Excerpt: *History of Slavery in America*

In the 17th century, a majority of slaves were American Indians. From 1650 through 1750, the slave population very gradually changed from American Indian to almost exclusively African-Americans. Beginning in the 1660s, the previously shaky and indefinite legal status of African-Americans was beginning to be decided, as slave codes were enacted in many states making all members of non-white races slaves for life. By 1680, slaves were established as chattel, with few legal rights. The main source of labor was indentured servants on southern plantations, and when the first Blacks arrived, they were just that. It was a temporary status that ended with freedom. Some of those first Black servants became free and even owned their own slaves later on. The reason for this change in servant to slave was the burgeoning tobacco business made it all possible. Tobacco, unknown to Europe until the mid-16th century, required huge Southern plantations, and slave labor of a magnitude never before seen was established to work the fields. A resultant slave trade across the Atlantic Ocean -- the notorious "Middle Passage" -- forcibly brought at least 12 million Africans to what is now the United States. Around 80 percent (7 million) were exported in the 18th century. Over time the system created a caste that was nearly impossible to break out of, legally or culturally.

## H: Historical Context of sources

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Choose *one* of IPP to complete for each source

I: Intended Audience

P: Purpose

P: Point of View

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**Briefly explain ONE major difference between these two accounts.**

**Briefly explain ONE similarity.**

**Briefly explain ONE additional piece of outside information (historical evidence) that would support Zinn's position.**

**Briefly explain ONE additional piece of outside information (historical evidence) that would support the second position.**

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### Excerpt: Letter from Cortes's to King Charles I of Spain, July 10, 1519

...It should be believed, that it is not without cause that God, Our Lord, has permitted that these parts should be discovered in the name of Your Royal Highnesses, so that this fruit and merit before God should be enjoyed by Your Majesties, of having instructed these barbarian people, and brought them through your commands to the True Faith. As far as we are able to know them, we believe that, if there were interpreters and persons who could make them understand the truth of the Faith, and their error, many, and perhaps all, would shortly quit the errors which they hold and come to the true knowledge; because they live civilly and reasonably...

...In order that Your Majesty may see how well prepared they were, before I went out of our quarters, they had occupied all the streets, and stationed all their men, but, as took them by surprise, they were easily overcome, especially the chiefs were wanting, for I had already taken them as prisoners. I ordered fire to be set to some towers and strong houses, where they defended and assaulted us; and thus I scoured the city fighting during five hours... until I had forced all the people out of the city...

### Excerpt: The Broken Spears, 1523 Aztec poem

Broken spears lie in the roads;  
We have torn our hair in our grief.  
The houses are roofless now, and their walls  
Are red with blood.

Worms are swarming in the streets and plazas,  
And the walls are spattered with gore.  
The water has turned red, as if it were dyed,  
And when we drink it,

It has the taste of brine.

We have pounded our hands in despair  
Against the adobe walls,  
For our inheritance, our city, is lost and dead.  
The shields of our warriors were its defense,  
But they cannot save it...

#### H: Historical Context of sources

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Choose *one* of IPP to complete each source

I: Intended Audience

P: Purpose

P: Point of View

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Briefly explain **ONE** major difference between these two accounts.

Briefly explain **ONE** similarity.

Briefly explain **ONE** additional piece of outside information (historical evidence) can increase the narrative of the fall of the Aztecs.