

Suggested Lesson Plan centered on the Holodomor

An adaptation of the “Reading Like a Historian” model*

Resources provided in the Unit: Primary

Two sets of newspaper articles written during or shortly after the famine are presented. Each set includes 2 articles presenting conflicting reports on the famine, along with basic sourcing information for each article and optional guiding questions. One example of an official British consular exchange is also included for close reading and corroboration with the secondary resource readings identified below.

Resources provided in the Unit: Secondary

- “Reading like a historian” summary historical reading skills chart
- Historical timelines and map of affected areas
- Glossary and place names
- Overview of the development, rationale, and execution of the Holodomor by Valentina Kuryliw, with a set of guiding questions
- Scholarly article by James Mace on the news coverage of the Holodomor, with a set of guiding questions. (You may wish to read this after the document exercise in order not to prejudice the discussion; it would serve as an excellent wrap-up overview)
- Summary of censorship conditions under which foreign reporters in Moscow operated in the 1930’s

Additional resources not included in the Unit are listed at the end. You may wish to supplement or substitute some of the background information with a PowerPoint presentation, or a choice of DVD options, the classic *Harvest of Despair*, available in high quality on YouTube and the recently released *Genocide Revealed* educational versions (see citations for details).

Plan of Instruction

1. Select and distribute materials from the primary and secondary resources listed above; e.g. the Duranty/Jones set and the Holodomor article by Kuryliw for reading, or present a DVD or PowerPoint. Have the other secondary resources readily accessible to the students for further context information.
2. Establish background, by asking the students to read the Kuryliw article (in class or homework) or by screening a DVD or presenting a PowerPoint. Allow time for questions and discussion. The background information serves to describe the circumstances around this basic historical fact:

Fact: In 1932-1933, there was a massive man-made famine in Ukraine that took the lives of millions of men, women and children.

3. **Pose the central historical question:**

What factors affected the writing of conflicting reports about that massive man-made famine in Ukraine and ultimately, determined which reports prevailed.

4. Introduce or review the skills presented in the “skills chart”

5. Distribute the selected primary document set. You may wish to model the historical reading skills outlined below with one of the documents or another example. Next, students in pairs or small groups, will read the second (or both) of the two documents, including the specific background information that applies to each document. Have on hand the timelines and other secondary resources for consultation.

6. Select from among each article’s guiding questions and the questions presented below for the students to respond to and discuss:

Sourcing the documents:

The information that can be determined just from the citation, and any previous knowledge of the author and where the article was published. Each student answers these questions, based on the citation included with the articles, and supporting information presented in each set.

- Who wrote the article
- When was it written
- Intended audience
- Author’s purpose

Contextualization:

What else of particular economic or political significance was going on in the world at the time? This can be identified through a combination of:

- Prior class discussion, readings, visual presentation, outside research assignments, consulting the timelines, etc.
- Reading the article, and paying attention to specific events or circumstances mentioned by the author.

Close Reading:

- What claims does each author make?
- What supporting evidence does he present?
- What kind of persuasive words and phrases does he utilize to make his point?
- How does this document make me feel about the situations he describes?
- Specific guiding questions for each article.

Corroboration

- Compare how each author (in a given set described the conditions of the peasants
 - Which author sided with the farmers(peasants)? Which author sided with the government?
 - Which author do you believe, and why?
7. Ask the students to read the James Mace article (homework assignment). Point out that this article was written almost 60 years after the famine occurred, and reflects the reality now accepted by historians worldwide that a man-made famine occurred and that it was consciously and unconsciously concealed and denied both at the time and in subsequent decades.
8. Possible questions to ask the students; or select from those accompanying the article:
- According to Mace, which of the author's articles more closely corresponded to actual events?
 - What motivated each author to present his version of the events he witnessed?
 - Was censorship a factor?
 - How does personal belief and ideology color both how an author presents a story, and how a reader interprets that story?
 - Provide another example of how a single event or circumstance can be presented very differently (e.g. the misfortune of a homeless man; gun control.)
 - Can you name other factors besides personal beliefs and overt censorship that can affect how an author presents a particular report?
9. **Final whole group discussion of the central historical question:**
What factors affected the writing of conflicting reports about that massive man-made famine in Ukraine and ultimately, determined which reports prevailed.
10. **Corollary question for consideration:**
How can we apply these lessons to reading, understanding, and sharing news today?

*See the Stanford Project website: <http://sheg.stanford.edu/r/h>
Free use of the website and its many resources requires a one-time registration.