

# **Decoding the Disciplines: Navigational Check & Midcourse Corrections**

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**~The History Learning Project~**

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**INDIANA UNIVERSITY**

# Crucial first steps in evaluation

- Focus on bottlenecks
  - Places where learning seems blocked
- Define as precisely as possible what students have to do

# **Why Traditional Evaluations of Learning in History Courses May Not Be Adequate**

- The information obtained is generally too global to provide information about student mastery of particular skills
- The information generally comes too late to be of use to students



## **U.S.S. Burns-DD589**

Staten Island, New York → Great Blasket Island, Ireland

# How Can We See If Students are Learning?

- Classroom Assessment Techniques

# Simple CATs

- **Minute Paper:** Most important thing you learned today? What questions remain.
- **Muddiest Point:** What was the muddiest point in the \_\_\_\_\_?
- **One Sentence Summary:** Who did what to whom, when, where, how, and why?
- **Directed Paraphrasing:** Paraphrase what you have learned about....
- **Word Journal:** Summarize a text in one word. Write a paragraph explaining why that word.

# How Can We See If Students are Learning?

- Classroom Assessment Techniques
- Metacognitive Essay

# End of course evaluation: Write a letter to a future student about how to succeed in this class.

Results:

- *“First, let me say what a history class in college is not. It is not a math class. There are no clear formulas that produce exacting answers. There is no one correct interpretation, or even two or three necessarily. Interpreting an event in history means compiling evidence and making some decisions.”*
- *“Be able to immerse yourself in the world—the place and the period. Adopt the mindset of the people you are studying.”*



# How Can We See If Students are Learning?

- Classroom Assessment Techniques
- Metacognitive Essay
- Rubrics

# **J300: Modern Presidential Elections**

- To understand that TV and other moving images communicate as much through visual signals as they do through explicit, textual content.
- Show two campaign advertisements: one from 1952, one from 1988. Ask students to describe each in contrasting paragraphs

# Contrast visual technique and political strategy:

Ike for President (Eisenhower, 1952)



0:25 / 1:01 CREDITS TRANSCRIPT SHARE SAVE

RELATED COMMERCIALS RELATED PLAYLISTS

## 1988 BUSH vs. DUKAKIS

Revolving Door (Bush, 1988)



BANDWIDTH  
HI  
LO

0:14 / 0:30 CREDITS TRANSCRIPT SHARE SAVE

RELATED COMMERCIALS RELATED PLAYLISTS

# Examples of Evaluations

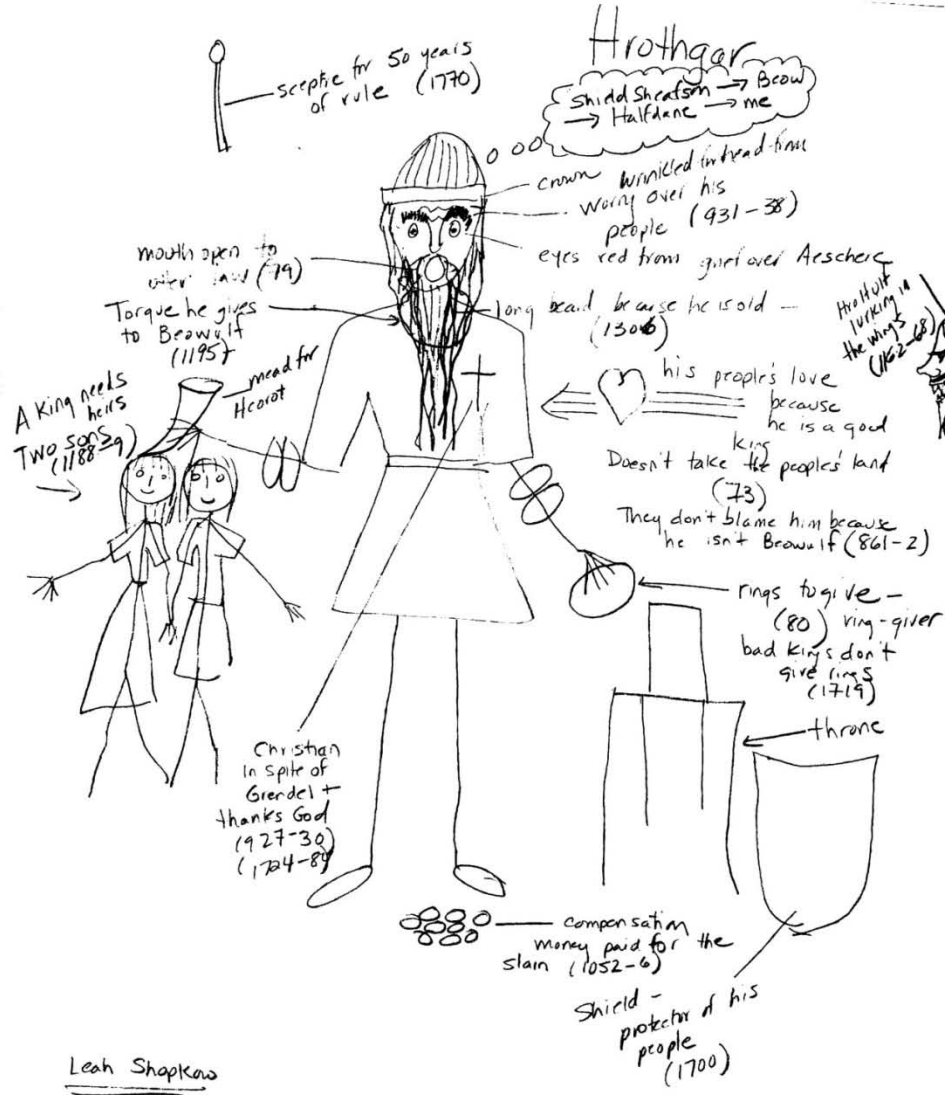
- #1 = Media Analysis: Identifying the explicit and implicit meanings in the text, sound, and video
- #2 = Historical Context: Identify relationships to external politics & social issues
- #3 = Writing: Complete, clear sentences; paragraph structure; point of view consistent; relation of the two paragraphs

# How Can We See If Students are Learning?

- Classroom Assessment Techniques
- Metacognitive Essay
- Rubrics
- Visuals

## 2) Visual Methods

Draw what Beowulf looks like to the audience for the poem. Point to the passages that support the elements in your picture. Present your picture to the class. Here's an example of what we're looking for: a picture of Hrothgar.





- Average number of items was 12
- Of these:
  - 4 items (roughly) related to plot elements
  - 2 items related to physical prowess
  - 1 item dealt with role
  - 2 with character

- high proficiency
- only character note is Christianity
- skill as warrior only social role
- that he is a great sailor is not that significant
- naming of the weapon is significant, but student doesn't explore this

Characteristics of Beowulf

No Children (pg. 188)

Fearless, faces dragon by himself (pg. 173)

Dragon kills Beowulf, but Beowulf also slays the dragon (pg. 191)

↳ Say Beowulf!

Killed Grendel, got paid in riches (113)

Very Muscular

- bc he is strong (pg. 72)

Christian (pg. 185, 39)

Hunting (pg. 101)

Skilled warrior (pg. 109)

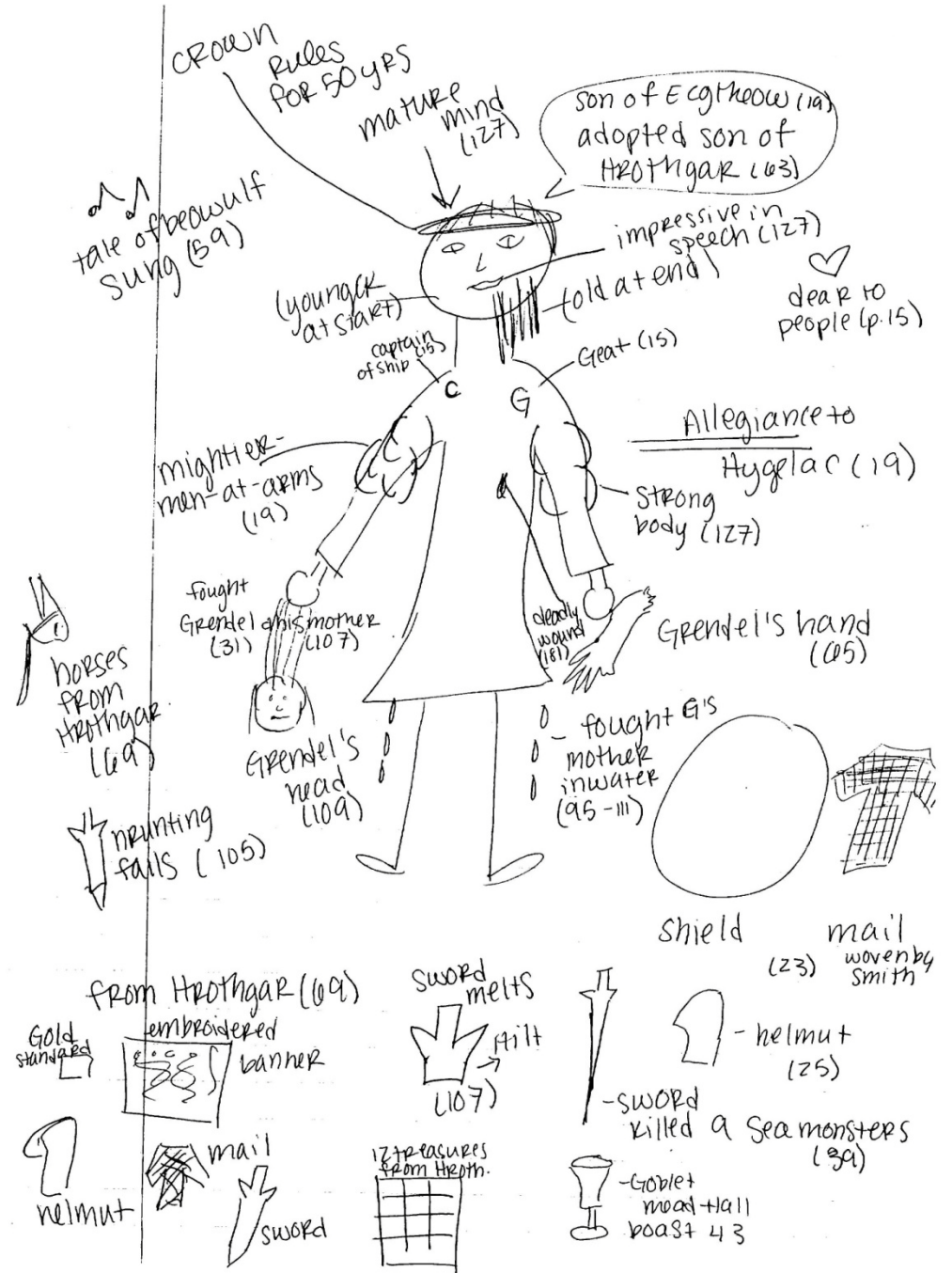
Great sailor (pg. 17)

- Also excellent swimmer (pg. 39, 161)

Really strong grip (pg. 51)



- 30 items
- 4 character
- 4 status
- 4 role



# How Can We See If Students are Learning?

- Classroom Assessment Techniques
- Metacognitive Essay
- Rubrics
- Visuals
- On-line Warmups

# Using Warmups to Evaluate Student Learning

- In seeking to replace older views of the Parisian *canards*, Cragin seeks to discredit older interpretations.
  - A) In your own words briefly describe one element in the older interpretation of the *canards* that Cragin throws into question.
  - B) What specific evidence does he present to throw doubt on this element in the older interpretation?
  - C) Briefly explain how this evidence is supposed to undercut opposing interpretations of the *canards*.

# How Can We See If Students are Learning?

- Classroom Assessment Techniques
- Metacognitive Essay
- Rubrics
- Visuals
- On-line Warmups
- Pre- and Post-Tests

# Pre- and Post-Tests

- At the beginning and the end of a course give students a task designed to test a particular ability needed in history courses
- Have someone else randomize and number the evaluations
- Rank them using a rubric without knowing which were pre- and which were post-
- Divide the pre- from the post-tests and see if there was any change

# An example of a Pre- and Post-Test

- Students given a paragraph and an essay question and asked
  - To find evidence from the paragraph that would be useful in answering the question
  - To explain why this evidence would serve this purpose

# To Test Students Ability to Read Essay Questions

- Consider these two essay questions
- A) “The increased power of nationalism and militarism in the half century before the outbreak of the First World War 1914 was the principle reason for the First World War. All other factors pale in comparison to these.”
  - Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.
- B) Nationalism, which was closely associated with liberalism in the first half of the nineteenth century, became a weapon of conservatism by the end of the century. Discuss the causes of this shift and trace its development from 1815 through the revolutions of 1848 and the unification of Germany and Italy to the end of the century
  - Describe in your own words the differences in what is being asked for in these two questions.

# How Can We See If Students are Learning?

- Classroom Assessment Techniques
- Metacognitive Essay
- Rubrics
- Visuals
- On-line Warmups
- Pre- and Post-Tests
- Think Alouds



From the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*,  
March 12, 1850

- A Newspaper Account of Infidelity,  
Murder, and Mob Violence

# Question to Discuss

- Write down: Where do your students often encounter bottlenecks to learning?
- In groups: Take one of the “bottlenecks” and as a team try to specify what steps a student would have to perform to get past it
  - Do not discuss at this point how to teach this
- In groups: Brainstorm possible evaluations that will help us know more about the nature of the students’ difficulty in mastering this process