

History 217 – The United States, 1607–1865

You are being asked to analyze the content of your textbook and compare it to the content of similar textbooks for this assignment. To complete this assignment, you will be required to locate other textbooks that are comparable in content.

QUESTIONS TO ASK FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

When comparing the content of the works, you should be asking the following questions:

1. When and by whom was the narrative written? [Who are the authors and what are their credentials?]
2. For whom was the narrative written? [Laymen, undergrads, graduates, PhDs?]
3. From whose point of view is the narrative written? [Does the text demonstrate a bias? Are all perspectives evenly represented?]
4. Is the information included in the narrative accurate? [How do the books compare to each other? What do monographs have to say?]
5. Is there information missing from the narrative? [Comparing the text—what is added what is dropped from each text.]
6. Does the author provide context for readers to draw conclusions about the significance of the events being described? [It is fine to tell the audience what happened, but are underlying political and social issues that gave rise to an event considered.]
7. Which narrative seems to be the best/worst treatment of the topic or event? Why do you think so? Provide specific examples to support your argument. [Consider the depth and breadth of the material that is covered.]

TEXT BOOKS DEFINED

There is no one complete definition of what a textbook is. If you are unclear of what a textbook is, things to look for include:

1. Typically they are books designed for educational institutions for the formal study of a subject.
2. A variety of subjects tend to be covered in a single text.
3. The content tends to be a broad overview of the subject matter.

OTHER COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES

If you are unsure of what is being employed as a textbook, then review courses being offered at other colleges and universities. Select a post-secondary institution, search for available classes, and try to locate a course outline/syllabus online. The syllabus will typically list the required readings and textbook. The textbook for a class taught in Quebec might be a little different from one being used in Western Canada.

If you are still not sure of where to look, use your favourite Web search engine. Enter terms such as: *canada history pre-confederation syllabus*—you are bound to discover a variety of course syllabi online.

In either case, be sure to select a class that is comparable in terms of subject matter and academic level.

TEXTBOOK PUBLISHERS

There are many companies that specialize in academic publishing. A brief list of academic textbook publishers is as follows:

- ~ Houghton Mifflin Harcourt – <http://www.hmhco.com>
- ~ HarperCollins – <http://www.harpercollins.com>
- ~ Pearson – <http://www.pearsonhighered.com>
- ~ W. W. Norton – <http://books.wwnorton.com>
- ~ Worth Publishers – <http://www.worthpublishers.com>
- ~ McGraw-Hill Publishers – <http://catalogs.mhhe.com>
- ~ Nelson Education – <http://www.nelson.com>
- ~ Wiley – <http://ca.wiley.com>
- ~ Harvard University Press – <http://www.hup.harvard.edu>
- ~ Oxford University Press – <http://www.oup.com>

COMPARE THE AUTHORS

Locating information about the authors might also be important in your comparison. You could potentially compare the authors' education level and institutes of affiliation. When searching for information about the author(s), consider the following resources:

- ~ *Contemporary Authors* database (<http://www.mhc.ab.ca/library/databases/english.html>)
- ~ "Who's Who" books
- ~ Author's personal or publisher Web pages (contact either directly via e-mail)
- ~ Other/past book reviews or articles book reviews.
- ~ If the author is affiliated with a particular institution (i.e., college, foundation, university, etc.) browse the institutional site for credentials. The credentials can often be found on a site or in a program calendar.

BOOK REVIEWS

These are NOT required to complete the assignment. Book reviews might also offer you some insight into the texts that might be using. The reviews might reveal potential strengths and weaknesses of the texts that you are employing—in terms of identifying a bias or a glaring omission from the historical record.

It is relatively easy to locate reviews of books, whether they are located in the library (in electronic or print formats) or through the World Wide Web. In either instance, you will need to employ a series of terms that will help you locate the materials. Keywords that you should consider employing to locate general sources include:

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|--------------|---|
| ~ book(s) | ~ publication |
| ~ literary | ~ specify the name of your book (i.e., <i>Canada in the Balance</i> , etc.) |
| ~ literature | |

The preceding terms can be paired with the following terms to help you narrow your search:

- | | | |
|------------|--------------------|----------------|
| ~ review | ~ commentary | ~ authenticity |
| ~ critique | ~ evaluation | ~ inaccuracies |
| ~ critic | ~ history/historic | |

It is important to note that there is more than one way to describe anything, so mix and match your terms to yield the best possible search results. In the library's online catalogue (<http://darius.uleth.ca/search~S2>), use the word AND to connect terms from one list to another when employing a keyword search to find print resources in the library.

If you cannot find enough information in the library's print resources, use any of the databases/online periodical indexes (<http://www.mhc.ab.ca/library/databases/>). Databases that you might want to use include:

- ~ any under the *General/Multidisciplinary* heading
- ~ any under the *English (Language and Literature)* heading
- ~ any under the *History* heading
- ~ any under the *Political Science* heading

Online search engines (i.e., A9, Google, Yahoo, etc.) do not require you to use AND to connect terms – those search tools assume that for you. If you use a search engine, consider using Google Scholar.

INTERLIBRARY LOAN

The interlibrary loan (ILL) service You might need to use the Interlibrary Loan Service (http://darius.uleth.ca/screens/illreq_s2.html) to order articles that are not full-text in the database or library.

GOOGLE BOOKS & AMAZON

Google Books (<http://books.google.ca/>) and *Amazon.com* (<http://www.amazon.com/>) might be a good source to locate textbooks if you having trouble getting a print copy. If you have identified a textbook that you intend to use, but cannot get a print version check out these sources. Either of the sources might have chapter excerpts that you could potentially use. Additionally, some publishers might have chapter excerpts that you might be able to employ as well.