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USING EXTENSIVE FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS WITHIN
A SOCIAL STUDIES CONTEXT

by
Christopher Hahn

An Action Research Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching
of
The Graduate School
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Approved by _____
Dr. Donna W. Jorgensen

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ABSTRACT

Christopher Hahn

USING EXTENSIVE FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS WITHIN A SOCIAL
STUDIES CONTEXT

2007/2008

Dr. Donna W. Jorgensen

Master of Science in Teaching

The purpose of this study was to determine what kind of impact extensive feedback had on eighth grade students within a social studies context. The researcher used best practice feedback techniques gleaned from research to assist all his students in improving content knowledge, mechanics and rhetorical skills. From the body of all student work, the writing of five students of varying abilities was examined in detail to determine the effect of feedback on student writing skills. Examination of subsequent student drafts and assignments from these five students and questionnaires from all students revealed that while feedback did play a role in improving student writing, particularly in the realm of content knowledge, the main reason student writing improved was due to improvement in writing assignment quality as the teacher gained experience with crafting writing tasks.

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Introduction

Writing is a skill at least as important as any other ability either cognitive or manual. People – some with a great deal of control over the lives of others, their future and their happiness – judge others by their skill in using the English language. Written language in the form of a cover letter could form a persuasive argument for why one is the best candidate for a job; letters to elected representatives could powerfully express one’s feelings about a given political issue and could lead to substantive civic action; a well-written history book could influence people’s concept of the past and, in turn, influence the future.

Because of the profound and varied importance of writing, I consider it crucial for teachers, regardless of their subject area, to effectively instruct students in writing.

Although I am training to be a social studies teacher, I endeavor to teach strong writing skills alongside content knowledge. Just as I am learning the best means by which to teach content, I am also experimenting with different ways of teaching writing skills. I am particularly interested in this latter aspect of teaching social studies because my ultimate goal in teaching is to teach students to think for themselves. As George Orwell averred in his novel *1984*, language and higher-order thought are inextricably linked. How does one discuss democracy, for example, if one does not know the meaning of the word “democracy”? Thus, rather than merely imparting information, I want to teach students to synthesize that data; I want them to evaluate that data and construct concepts

based upon that data. Ultimately, I want them to develop their own thoughts about those concepts and thence to forge arguments to defend their ideas. This kind of critical thinking is the highest level of mastery a history student can achieve; this mastery is usually expressed in writing.

The question then becomes: what is the best program a social studies teacher can institute within the context of his or her class to teach powerful writing skills? Before answering this question, an overview of the challenges facing any instructor of writing is necessary. In both Clinical Internships I and II, I noted many of the problems students have with their writing and the troubles teachers confront in attempting to improve student writing. Some typical problems with student writing included writing only one sentence when a paragraph was required, failure to write in complete sentences, awkward sentences, bad grammar, puny vocabulary and poor spelling – students misspelled even the words which were written correctly in the essay instructions. Beyond these mechanical and stylistic problems, I had concerns for student higher-order skill development. Some students seemed to lack understanding of the tasks required by the essay questions; others used poor or contradictory reasoning or used no reasoning at all. Sometimes students would also engage in something I call “meaningless writing” – writing without saying anything, writing to fill space. In the worst cases, mechanical, stylistic and cognitive shortcomings combined to result in totally incoherent work.

Probably the greatest challenge to teaching writing skills, however, was that student motivation to write well seemed low, as evidenced by many students writing as little as possible, often less than the bare minimum required to fulfill all of the tasks expected of them in a given assignment. Many students evinced little joy in writing. For

example, some wrote little or left entirely blank a portion of an assignment that asked students to discuss the legacy for which they would like to be remembered. This portion was intended to be a “fun” section which also comprised a third of the assignment’s weight, yet only a few students wrote with any kind of passion or interest on a subject which was intended to involve each person’s interests.

Lack of quality in student writing should probably not be blamed entirely upon students, however. Researchers have found that ever since the National Commission on Excellence in Education deemed America “a nation at risk” in 1983, reforms have had little effect on improving student writing because teachers have received little training in techniques which would facilitate improvement in that field. Improvement in student writing is often dependent upon the quality of the written assignment and the teacher’s feedback as much as it is upon student qualities such as analytical intelligence and motivation (Matsumura et al., 2002).

In the same study (Matsumura et al., 2002), the quality of a written assignment was based upon its level of cognitive challenge, the clarity of its learning goals, the clarity of its grading criteria, the alignment of its learning goals to the assigned task and the alignment of its learning goals to its grading criteria. The greater the cognitive challenge of an assignment, the more clear the learning goals and grading criteria were judged to be. The more closely aligned learning goals were to the assigned task and grading criteria, the higher the overall quality of the writing assignment was considered to be. The same study also judged teacher feedback which aimed to cognitively challenge students or improve their ability to communicate ideas to be more effective than feedback which merely sought to standardize student English skills by correcting superficial

problems in their writing. Unfortunately, quality assignments and quality feedback were less common than facile assignments with nebulous instructions and feedback which addressed merely mechanical issues (Matsumura et al., 2002). The findings of my Action Research project have largely coincided with the findings of this study, though I did not happen upon this research until after I had collected all my data from my internship.

Problems with student writing do not end once secondary education is completed; often they continue into undergraduate school. One study (Olwell & Delph, 2004) that examined efforts to improve historical writing and methodology among undergraduate students at Eastern Michigan University found that some typical problems with student writing included failure to state a thesis and performing all the work of writing a major research paper just forty-eight hours before the deadline after an entire semester had been allotted for the completion of this work. The problem of lack of thesis indicates that many students – even in undergraduate education – have not yet reached the stage of cognitive development to understand that history is not merely a collection of dates and events but a science which examines problems of the past that must be interpreted and critically analyzed (Olwell & Delph, 2004). This finding suggests that teaching writing in a social studies context to secondary education students presents special challenges. Not only must social studies teachers who desire to teach good writing deal with problems such as shoddy writing which results from students waiting until the last minute to complete an assignment, but they must also make allowances for students who might lack a fundamental understanding of the way in which history works.

None of these obstacles confronting teachers of writing is insurmountable. The solution can lie in finding the best method by which students can learn good writing

skills. Of course discovering the best methods and adapting them to one's teaching style requires some effort. During the course of Clinical Internship I, I began experimenting with teaching writing skills. The technique I used most frequently was written feedback on student writing assignments. My feedback was extensive, involving mechanical corrections, marginal notes and end notes. Sometimes the endnotes could be multiple paragraphs in length; they offered encouragement, suggestions, praise and asked questions to foster further thinking. I always appreciated and utilized extensive teacher feedback on my assignments so I decided to employ the technique myself.

The most dramatic successes I achieved using feedback in Clinical Internship I involved an English Language Learner from Korea and a student whose parents came from Puerto Rico. The latter had some particularly daunting challenges in her life. She was seventeen, had a child already and lived with a brother who had some significant special needs. She also had troubles that were severe enough to compel her to miss school for court appearances.

In the case of the student from Korea, I had a child who was extremely motivated to improve herself academically. I took advantage of this motivation by writing feedback that could stretch up to a few paragraphs in length. I knew this student would actually read and employ my feedback because of the impressive effort that she devoted to her assignments. I endeavored to assist her, not only in improving lower-order skills, but also higher-order skills. Her work was in an entirely different category of quality from almost everyone else I taught in the six classes at my internship high school. It was very satisfying to read her work because, with each time, her English became smoother and her rhetorical ability more advanced. I do not mean to suggest that my feedback alone

yielded this great positive shift in her skills, but rather that it played a part in this improvement. I have no way of measuring how large a role feedback played in this improvement, however.

The first paper the second student with whom I had great success turned in required her to write a paragraph explaining whether or not the federal victory in the American Civil War was worth the price paid to win it. She turned in a paper which merely listed five disconnected statements which demonstrated little, if any, understanding of the lesson. Feedback which modeled how to write a proper paragraph assisted her in writing the assignment for the next lesson. In the subsequent assignment, she wrote in proper paragraphs, using good reasoning and facts to support her arguments. She had achieved a quantum leap in writing quality. When I returned the paper, the highest grade of all six classes, she told me she would hang it on her refrigerator – this from a seventeen-year-old girl. Her praiseworthy performance was the result of her intelligence and effort; my assignment simply provided an opportunity for her to reveal these qualities and my feedback provided some guidance to bring these to fruition.

Because of these particular successes using feedback to improve student writing, I decided to employ a more substantial program for improving student writing in Clinical Internship II. With some guidance from my Action Research professor, I devised a system of using best practice feedback techniques combined with the option to revise all writing assignments – including tests – in order to improve student writing. This program formed the basis of my Action Research project, the critical question for which is “What kind of impact does extensive feedback have on eighth grade social studies students’ writing?”

Context

My Action Research project was undertaken during Clinical Internship II at a regional high school to which I will refer as Warrior's Gate Regional High School for confidentiality's sake. Grades seven through twelve attend this school with the seventh and eighth graders being largely separated in their own wing apart from the high-schoolers. Warrior's Gate Regional High School draws students from four distinct neighborhoods, some of them widely separated. I will encode the neighborhood names as well to preserve confidentiality. NP is a blue collar neighborhood as is WV neighborhood. WH is a mixed blue and white collar neighborhood while WN neighborhood is a white collar neighborhood with a relatively low population. The student population is composed of very few minorities. In my five classes, which consist of an entire eighth grade team – the gold team – and one tenth grade social studies class – a total of eighty-nine students, there are four African-Americans, one Latino and one Mongolian-American.

For my Action Research paper, I selected my second period eighth grade U.S. history class. There are nineteen students in this class, twelve male and seven female. One student is Mongolian-American; the rest are white. There is also a diverse mixture of abilities and interests in this class. From these nineteen students, I selected the work of four to focus upon in an effort to ascertain the success of my writing instruction program. Because of the high quality of her writing, I also brought a student from first period into the project.

In this project, I have avoided the use of rubrics. At first, the reason rubrics played no part in this project was that I have found that they can often limit the quality of student work. Students will do only exactly what is expected of them, or worse, they will do the bare minimum to earn the grade with which they will be happy. Some will consult the criteria for a “C” grade then undertake “C” work. As the marking period progressed, I kept my “no rubrics” policy because my assignment craft was improving. There was sufficient instruction within the essay tasks for students to understand my requirements. In the future, however, I would provide more writing instruction before major writing assignments. After major writing assignments are returned to students, I would then teach lessons to debrief students on the way in which the assignments met expectations and the manner by which they could be improved.

Since this study relies so heavily on student work which must be displayed or quoted, I asked my focus class to have their guardians sign permission forms to allow me to use their child’s work in my paper (see Appendix A). Thus, I had to eliminate some students from this study because they failed to return signed permission slips. Though I examined the work of all the remaining students for the purposes of this paper, after Clinical Internship II was completed, I settled on my five focus students. I chose these students for a variety of reasons. I selected as diverse a sampling as possible: three girls, two boys; one of the boys is originally from Poland; he has lived in America most of his life. The other boy began his time with me turning in particularly low quality work. One of the boys and one of the girls began their time with me turning in fairly average work. The remaining two girls almost always turned in high-quality work. One of the girls produced such superior work that I brought her into the study though she was in a

different class period from my focus class. Though she and the other high-performing girl, who was from my focus class, produced excellent work, I hoped through feedback to improve their writing as well because I believe writing improvement to be a lifelong process. The idea behind focusing on these five students was to determine the impact of my feedback on their writing over the course of seven weeks of my teaching them. My hope is that this sampling can give an indication of the effectiveness of extensive feedback on the rest of the students.

Guidance from Literature

Some researchers suggest that the problems students have with their writing may be exacerbated by inadequate teacher feedback on their work. If students are not properly informed of their errors and provided with effective instructions about how they may correct their errors, how will they be able to improve their writing? Researchers have studied teacher feedback and have pinpointed a plethora of faults in the typical teacher response to student writing and have suggested excellent ways of improving the craft of writing feedback.

One study (Brannon and Knoblauch, 1982) examined feedback from forty teachers on a RAFT assignment; RAFT is an acronym for Role, Audience, Format and Topic. Students undertake a **R**ole, write for a certain **A**udience in a specific **F**ormat about a particular **T**opic. This study led these researchers to conclude that teachers need to turn control of writing over to students in the same way that readers usually cede authority to writers as they read their text. In other words, the teacher as reader should allow the

student writer to determine the purpose behind the writing. The objective is to provide the incentive for students to improve their writing because they will be working toward their own purpose in writing rather than toward a teacher-prescribed “Ideal Text.” The authors suggest ways to facilitate this transfer of control: one way is to consult with students in an effort to ascertain their purposes in writing; a second way is to have students write in a column opposite their text to explain their reasons for writing the way they wrote each portion of their paper.

Another study (Connors and Lunsford, 1993) filled a void in research by undertaking a study of feedback on an unprecedented scale, surveying 3,000 papers, though the authors confess that the sampling was not entirely random because the participating teachers were self-selected. This article focused on “global comments” – those pertaining to rhetorical issues, structures, general success, mastery of conventional generic knowledge, etc. In studying these comments, these researchers found that the need to justify grades provided a great deal of the impetus for these comments – more so than the motivation to improve student writing. Comments also tended to fall into certain patterns. For example, teachers frequently began terminal comments with positive feedback about the paper before proceeding with negative feedback. Teachers also tended to affect an authoritative, objective tone, avoiding the semblance of subjectivity, which gave the impression that there was only one way to view the text. Ultimately, the authors drew two conclusions from this vast survey of teacher feedback. On the positive side, they found that teachers were not exclusively concerned with correcting mechanical problems in student writing; they also made efforts to assist students with rhetorical and organizational issues. On the negative side, the authors opined that feedback is often

ineffectual because teachers are struggling with the sheer number of students, burdensome workloads and inadequate feedback training which prevents them from maximizing the effect of their comments on student work. Another possible reason that feedback sometimes fails to make an impression is that students simply ignore it.

The feedback genre pattern that Connors and Lunsford (1993) noted in their survey was examined in detail by another study (Smith, 1997). Smith identified three groups of end comment genres: judging genres, which assign positive or negative value to student work; reader response genres, which see the teacher adopting the role of an active audience for student work and, last, coaching genres which are designed to correct problems with student work. Smith asserts that there are intrinsic problems in teachers' comments falling into recognizable patterns. For example, if end comments always begin with a positive statement, students may view the positive portions of the comment as a mere perfunctory effort to prove fairness and thence draw the conclusion that the positive comment is spurious and that the negative portion is the truly valid part. Smith suggests breaking up genre conventions by organizing comments differently. Rather than using a positive then negative pattern, teachers should organize both positive and negative comments around a series of main points.

In another article (Sommers, 1982), the researcher describes her research into instructor comments which involved thirty-five teachers. She found that teacher feedback often shifted student focus away from the student's overall purpose for writing the paper to the teacher's purpose in commenting. The result is that holistic improvement of writing is superseded by improvement of only the mere elements of the work such as words, sentences and paragraphs. Sommers also found that most teachers' feedback is not

specific to each student's work, that comments on one paper can, in effect, be cut and pasted to any other paper. Sommers argued that in order to foster effective revision, teacher feedback must suggest strategies which specifically address the concerns of each student's work. In sum, teachers' comments need to emphasize student purpose for writing over superficial matters like mechanics in order to improve writing quality in a meaningful way.

The last study dealing specifically with feedback (Zamel, 1985) examines the manner in which teachers write feedback on student compositions. Zamel identifies two main problems with teacher feedback: often teachers write feedback as if the draft in question were the final one which leads to a rigid view of writing; furthermore, teacher comments themselves are generally too abstract or vague for students to implement.

In aggregate, these studies indicate that improving student writing requires a comprehensive holistic approach which individualizes student work, relinquishes control of writing purpose to the student, does not mire itself in superficial concerns, avoids predictable patterns of feedback and withholds evaluation until the student presents a definitive final draft. Feedback must also be concrete and specific to ensure that students understand how to implement its suggestions. Thus, adapting techniques from composition classes for a social studies class entails combining available research into best methods for teacher feedback as well as giving special consideration to the exigencies of teaching history to students who may not yet have reached a level of cognitive development whereby they can effectively analyze the abstract concepts which are frequently the subject of study in social studies classes. The articles in this literature

review provided a veritable arsenal of potential weapons with which to combat poor writing.

Though feedback was the central issue in my project, as I wound down my research, I found that I needed to research other issues in order to produce a complete study of my topic. The research I consulted has been dwelt upon earlier so I will give only a brief recap here. One study (Olwell & Delph, 2004) dealt with challenges in writing instruction within a social studies context. The salient issue in this research for the purposes of my project was that students even at the college undergraduate level sometimes struggle with higher-order concepts which are often the focus in social studies courses. These struggles manifest themselves in writing assignments which are slapdash or lacking in thesis statements. Students who turn in work such as this often have yet to reach the level of cognitive development which enables them to grasp that history is not a mere matter of dates and events, but a science which weighs evidence of the past in order to develop higher-order understanding.

Probably the most important study for my project (Matsumura et al., 2002) examined the effect of writing assignment quality on student writing. This research indicated that student writing quality correlated with assignment quality. As this paper will examine later, the improvement of my writing assignment tasks correlated with an improvement in student writing quality.

Research Methods

Because I wanted to invest as much effort and time as possible in learning the craft of pedagogy during my student teaching, I opted to limit the labor intensity of my

AR work during my internship. The methodology for this project was essentially very simple. Basically, my methodology entailed writing extensive feedback on seven writing assignments given from the time I took over all eighth grade classes until the end of the third marking period. Feedback was guided by best practice methods gleaned from research. Students would have the option of revising work based upon the feedback I wrote. Thus, the process could be fundamentally reduced to comparing initial drafts of student work to subsequent drafts. Alternatively I could compare earlier assignments with later assignments as I did in my previous internship placements. Ideally, this examination would result in the finding that student writing improved either in subsequent drafts or in subsequent assignments. Further analysis conducted after the end of student teaching would be required to draw any possible connections between extensive feedback and any improvement in student writing.

For the purposes of this project, I defined “extensive feedback” as feedback which dealt with all the following issues:

1. In assisting students with writing within the context of a social studies class, I ensured that student content information was complete and correct.
2. I also corrected mechanics as I read student writing.
3. The most important facet of student writing to me, and certainly the most interesting, was their ability to construct an argument.

Thus, extensive feedback was a means by which I sought to assist students in writing excellent essays. An ideal essay was one which used the English language in a smooth and effective way to craft an intelligent argument bolstered by facts. Through

extensive feedback, I attempted to aid students in creating essays of this kind in following drafts or at least on subsequent assignments. Ultimately, this study aimed to be a test to determine whether or not I, or perhaps other teachers, could successfully use this system of extensive feedback within the context of a social studies class.

The following is a list of feedback techniques gleaned from research (Connors and Lunsford, 1993; Brannon and Knoblauch, 1982; Smith, 1997; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985) which I kept in mind while writing feedback to my students:

Things teachers should do while writing feedback	Things teachers should not do while writing feedback
Writing evolves; respond as a work in progress, not a finished product	Do not be vague or abstract
Try to understand the student's original meaning; feedback should not change original meaning	Do not just revise superficial matters (mechanics, usage, style, etc.)
Give specific strategies, questions, suggestions, directions, guidelines	Avoid giving the impression that writing is merely a matter of rules
Keep records of responses to determine to what degree they are being incorporated into student work	Do not make local problem corrections and meaning level comments contradictory
Reread feedback	Do not be too severe
Be text and student specific in comments	Avoid predictable patterns of commenting
Respond as a reader, not a judge (ask questions, show confusion, point out breaks in logic, disruptions in meaning and missing information)	Avoid banal comments which can seem insincere; write in complete sentences
Comments should be used as a means of improving student writing, not an end in themselves	Avoid adherence to "Ideal Text"

Be something other than an evaluator	Do not point out every error
Establish a personal connection; use “you” rather than “the paper”, etc.	Do not write comments which shift student attention from student purposes in writing to teacher purposes in commenting
Raise standards as the course advances	Avoid evincing disappointment and acrimony
Look at the “big picture”	
Be thorough	
Place coaching comments after negative ones to show confidence in student ability to improve	
Always include some praise	
React to content to show interest	
Take students seriously	

Table 1: The Framework for Extensive Feedback

Aside from writing feedback according to the above guidelines and contrasting student work with earlier drafts or assignments, I simply made note of anything pertinent to the process. Examples of these instances are included in the “Findings” portion of this paper. Student work constituted the bulk of my collected data but my notes often chronicled extremely important realities which had great bearing on my project. As a capstone to the project, I had the students fill out anonymous questionnaires in which they graded me (see Appendix F). Included on the questionnaire were questions which asked the students if they thought the feedback I gave them and the ability to revise their assignments made them better writers.

I began my internship on January 28, 2008. My first order of business was to become acquainted with the students I would be teaching. I passed out a questionnaire which asked students what they liked and disliked about history, which teaching methods they liked or disliked and what their dream was (see Appendix B). I answered these questions myself as I explained each question to them.

Over the next two weeks, I continued this process of getting to know my students, assisting my cooperating teacher, conducting observations and teaching lessons here and there. On February 12, I took over all four of the eighth grade classes. Instead of jumping into historical content, I spent my first day with the classes teaching a mini-lesson on the importance of good writing. The goal of the lesson was to heighten motivation to write well. In the lesson, the hook I used was asking students if they ever argued with their family or friends.

“Of course,” they answered.

“Why do kids argue with family or friends?” I asked.

They explained that kids usually argue to get their own way (class discussion, February 12, 2008).

From this point, I explained that I hoped to make students argue more effectively so that they could get their own way in life more often. I explained that arguments often took a written form and that these arguments are usually better than spoken arguments because a writer has more time to reflect upon and analyze the issue which is being

argued than does an interlocutor. I then provided examples of people getting what they wanted through written argument: an effective cover letter leading to an interview and employment, a written proposal for improving the conduct of business at one's job which, if accepted, could lead to a raise or a promotion.

In some classes, I then asked students why a history teacher was attempting to teach good writing. Is this not work for an English teacher? Judging by their tone, some students seemed irritated that a history teacher was going to be focusing so heavily on writing. In some classes they asked me my question before I had the chance to pose it. I explained that history and writing were inextricably linked. The main source of historical knowledge is through writing. Beyond this notion, historians argue with each other over the meaning of information recorded in the past. Their arguments usually take a written form. Depending upon which historical arguments achieve dominance, the present and the future could be drastically affected. I gave them the example of the historians who believed it was wrong for the American government to intern Japanese-Americans during World War II. The arguments of these historians led to the American government later compensating surviving Japanese-American internees during the Reagan administration. I concluded by explaining to the students that I wanted them to become historians. I did not want them to merely repeat data that I had imparted to them, but to form arguments based upon that data so that they could affect the present and the future with their historical ideas.

In practical terms for students, my writing policy meant that they would have to write more than they usually did in history classes, but also that they would always have the option to revise assignments if they were not happy with their grades. My feedback

would assist them in these revisions. There would always be another chance, I told them. “In my class, you get the grade *you* want. If you are willing to revise your work until it is perfect, you will receive a perfect grade. You will get the grade for which you are willing to work.” During the lesson I passed out a paper which detailed my writing policy (see Appendix C). I incorporated the sheet into my lesson to foster greater understanding. I also provided a sheet which listed all the copyediting symbols that I would be using in my feedback on student work (see Appendix D).

Nearly every assignment I gave students was a writing assignment and therefore required me to provide extensive feedback. For the purposes of this project I examined almost a marking period’s worth of assignments in which students had to write at least one paragraph; there were seven of these assignments. The following is a list and brief description of the assignments:

First Assignment: Principles of the Constitution Worksheet – Students could write about which principle of the Constitution they thought was the most important. Alternatively, they could write a letter in which they pretended to be a founding father advocating the inclusion of one of the principles in the Constitution. As a final choice, they could write a letter to an elected official that warned that one of the principles of the Constitution was under threat and needed to be protected (see Appendix E, p. 60).

Second Assignment: Amendment II Activity – Students had to write a paragraph arguing their position on Amendment II (see Appendix E, p. 61).

Third Assignment: Constitution Test – On one portion, students had to write essays related to the Constitution (see Appendix E, p. 62).

Fourth Assignment: Washington’s Legacy and the Interpretation of the Constitution Worksheet – Students had to write three paragraphs. The purpose of one paragraph was to assess Washington’s legacy. Another paragraph required that students argue whether or not the Constitution should be interpreted using strict construction or loose construction. The last paragraph asked students to discuss what they would like their legacy to be (see Appendix E, p. 63).

Fifth Assignment: Washington/Adams Test – Students had to write essays related to strict and loose construction and the Alien and Sedition Acts (see Appendix E, p. 64).

Sixth Assignment: Judicial Review Essay – Students had to write one paragraph on whether or not they thought it is good that the Supreme Court has the power of Judicial Review (see Appendix E, p. 65).

Seventh Assignment: Jefferson/War of 1812 Test – Students had to write essays related to the Louisiana Purchase and the War of 1812 (see Appendix E, p. 66).

In addition to the problems, anticipated and unanticipated, concerning my students, this study was limited by factors most closely related to me as a teacher, my inexperience and the venue for this project. Student performance on assignments, particularly on tests, consistently improved over time. This phenomenon can be attributed to a number a factors, extensive feedback being only one of them and perhaps not even the prime factor.

First, the venue for this project was perhaps not the ideal control environment in which to conduct an experiment. My students had become accustomed to my cooperating teacher over the five months prior to my arriving on the scene. He is a great teacher, but he does not emphasize the importance of writing as strongly as I do. My tests and other assignments involved much more writing than did those of my cooperating teacher. The experience of switching from one assessment style to an entirely different one halfway through the year may have played havoc with some students.

Another limitation imposed by the venue became apparent toward the end of my project timeline. The purpose of this project was to test the effectiveness of extensive feedback in improving student writing skills and rhetorical abilities within a social studies context. As my internship progressed, however, I found the social studies content knowledge portion of my feedback moving from a role on par with writing and rhetorical skills to the prime role.

A third possible limitation on this project may have been the time restrictions inherent in business of teaching. At times, especially toward the end of my internship, my feedback may not have been as extensive as it should have been due to time constraints. This problem was foreseen as it has been noted in research (Connors and Lunsford, 1993). Tangential to this issue was a possibility for bias in this project in the form of spending more time on writing feedback to some students than to others. This potential bias is discussed in the “Findings” portion of this paper.

Almost all my feedback was written cursively. I did not discover until late in the project timeline that a certain number of students could not read cursive writing. This problem may also have had a limiting effect on my project.

There was one final limitation on my study. Since this project was conducted in tandem with my first substantial teaching work, my inexperience played a part in any lack of quality evident in student writing early in my stint with my students.

Findings

Broadly speaking, this project found that student writing did improve over the time that I conducted this experiment though the most marked student improvement was more closely related to the area of content understanding than to matters directly concerning writing skill. While feedback played a role in improving student writing, other issues probably had a greater impact on student success. The greatest of these factors was the increase in my ability to craft quality writing assignments, a finding which validates previous research (Matsumura et al., 2002).

Though this study strived for trustworthiness, complications, biases and limitations – foreseen and unforeseen – did find their way into the research. Their effect on my research must be examined before the ultimate value of this study can be ascertained.

The real work of my project began on February 12, 2008 when I took over all four eighth grade classes; my “Importance of Writing” mini-lesson was more or less the start

of my project. As previously discussed, the purpose of this lesson was to lay a foundation of motivation for students to write well in the hopes that students would appreciate the value of writing and the rationale behind my project. The lesson was also designed to introduce and explicate some of the unique features of the project such as feedback and revision. The results of this lesson were difficult to gauge. Some students seemed happy that they would always receive another chance to improve their work and, consequently, their grade. Some remarks included “Sweet!” and “I think I’m going to like social studies now.” Others appeared annoyed that I was overstepping the traditional bounds of a history teacher, saying things like “But we have to do this in English class!” The reaction of other students was more ambiguous. Motivation is a difficult quality to measure and in any case this quality was not the focus of my project. The most I hoped for was that the lesson would help students to understand that there are good reasons to write well and that there was a logical rationale behind my emphasis on writing in a history class. Perhaps these understandings would inspire some students to devote a bit more effort to their writing than they would have had I not introduced this project with this lesson. Again, however, motivation and effort were incidental concerns in my project. This lesson was simply a preparation for the main event which was to measure demonstrably improved writing in response to feedback.

One of the factors which may have limited the reliability of this research was that the venue may not have been the ideal control environment in which to test the impact of feedback on student work. As previously mentioned, I was a student teacher, appearing to students out of nowhere and altering a class to which they had spent five months becoming accustomed. Indeed, about halfway through my time with them, I became

upset by the great number of students who were failing my class, mostly due to low test grades. Few students had failed this class under my cooperating teacher's direction. To my great relief, however, most of the students who were failing my class were able to considerably improve their grades by the end of the marking period. Some students achieved this stunning turnaround by earning soaring grades on tests. Extensive feedback certainly explains part of this phenomenon, according to student responses on questionnaires. Yet one must not discount that even without extensive feedback, student test grades would probably have improved to some degree because, after two or three of my tests, students were beginning to become accustomed to my assessment style and began to work extremely well within that system.

In addition to my students needing to become accustomed to me, I had to become accustomed to them and to the craft of teaching – I needed to gain experience. One of the most important aspects of teaching with which I needed to acquire experience was assessment. In this project, I found that student test grades continued to get better as my time with them progressed. Feedback can partially explain this improvement, but one must also consider another factor – the improvement of my ability to craft writing assignments.

In one study (Matsumara et al., 2002), the researchers noted that the quality of student writing often correlated with the quality of the writing assignment. My assignments at the beginning of my internship were not particularly good. For example, the first test I composed for students assessed their understanding of the constitution. On reflection, though I think I posed a high level of cognitive challenge for students, the clarity of my learning goals was not sufficiently transparent and the clarity of my grading

criteria left much to be desired (see Appendix E, p. 62). I was unclear even in my own mind exactly what I expected from students; how then could I demand that they meet my expectations?

Fortunately, I had offered substantial extra credit on this test of which many students took advantage with the result that grades were not as low as they otherwise would have been. My reason for offering such a large amount of extra credit on this first test was because it was their first test with me. They had spent five months working with another teacher; all of a sudden they were now expected to adjust to an entirely different instructor with a totally different assessment style. I did not think it fair to jeopardize their grade point average before they became accustomed to the quality of work I expected. Also, I was fully aware that I was learning as much as they were, so I did not want to be too harsh in my first major assessment for them.

Though there were some problems with my first two tests, by the final test I used in the project, I had greatly improved in my ability to craft a good writing assignment. While I continued to pose a high level of cognitive challenge for students, I vastly clarified my learning goals and especially my grading criteria. Test questions were now tailored to not only demand specific content requirements but also to assist students in writing a proper paragraph with an introductory sentence, supporting evidence and a concluding sentence (see Appendix E, p. 66). By this time, I knew exactly the content I wanted students to learn and exactly the form in which I wanted students' synthesis of this data to take. Though not stated in the essay tasks, the precise grading criteria were very clear in my mind. Before the test, I reminded students to at least attempt each task demanded of them in each essay because some students had previously lost credit for

ignoring portions of essays. Not only did this clarity make grading this test much easier than the first one, but students also performed much better. Grades on this last test were outstanding despite much less extra credit being offered than on the first test.

A few problems directly related to feedback presented themselves in this project. I had accurately predicted that most students would not take the option to revise their work. Fortunately, this was not a problem because I was able to gauge student writing improvement based upon subsequent assignments. Unpredicted troubles also arose, but they proved to have a limited if not negligible negative impact on my project.

One problem turned out to be relatively minor indeed, though it caused me some concern since it appeared very early in the project timeline. When I handed back the first assignment, *The Principles of the Constitution*, replete with feedback, a girl in my seventh period class asked what all the red writing on her paper was. I explained to her that it was feedback, suggestions for how she could improve her writing on the assignment. I asked her, "Hasn't a teacher ever written feedback to you?"

"No," she said. Her demeanor and tone gave me the impression that she was annoyed that I had written all over her paper (discussion with student, February 21, 2008). After this episode, my concern was that if students had not had any previous experience with teacher feedback they might not understand its purpose, even though I had explained everything connected with my writing policy in the writing mini-lesson on the first day I took over all the classes. This worry was apparently not necessary because, according to the questionnaire students filled out at the end of my time with them, any problems students experienced with understanding the feedback stemmed not from a lack

of understanding regarding the purpose of feedback but from another issue I had not envisioned.

As far back as my first internship placement in September 2007, I had noted how few students wrote cursively. Almost all of them printed. This phenomenon was even more pronounced in Clinical Internship II. Very few if any students wrote cursively as a matter of course. When I first began this project, whether students wrote cursively or printed was immaterial to me. I would be delving into matters of spelling, grammar, rhetoric, critical thinking and content. It made no difference to me whether these matters were expressed in cursive writing or in printing. The problem was that it did not occur to me that many students who printed did so because they were incapable of writing cursively. Furthermore, many of these students who could not write cursively also lacked the facility to even read cursive writing. This reality presented a major problem for my project since all my marginal notes and end notes to students were written cursively.

I discovered this problem by accident. Every now and again, a student would approach me asking what one of my comments on his or her paper actually said. I assumed that the student could not read my handwriting because it was sloppy. Later, however, I was talking with another teacher who related to me a story about a twenty-two year old former student who was working at a job. At one point during the course of the job, this former student had to follow cursively written directions from a note left by the manager. The student could not perform the assigned tasks because he could not read cursive writing. I was appalled that a student could graduate without mastering this basic skill. The teacher with whom I was conversing explained that once students initially learn cursive writing in elementary school they are permitted to abandon the practice forever –

no one forces students to write cursively after they have been taught the skill. The skill thus dies of neglect (discussion with another teacher, April 2, 2008). It then struck me that perhaps my feedback had a very limited impact on my students because a high percentage of them could not read cursively written comments. I decided to test my hypothesis, if only in a very informal way.

The next day, I began my first two periods by asking all my students to close their eyes and put their heads down. I did not want anyone to see anyone else. I then asked all those who could read cursive writing to put their hands up. In both classes, about half of the students kept their hands down. I was surprised at the caliber of some of the students who admitted to this inability. Some of them were quite high achievers.

I was distraught over this finding because I did not discover it until very late in my project timeline – there was only one assignment left in the marking period. I began to question whether or not this fault in my system had rendered the entire project invalid. Fortunately, data which I later collected in a questionnaire (see Appendix F) indicated that the inability of some students to read cursive writing had only a limited, perhaps negligible impact on my project.

Seventy-one students filled out anonymous questionnaires which asked them to pass judgment on the utility of my feedback. Fifty-five, or over 77%, responded in some positive manner. Sixteen, or 22.5% responded in some negative manner. These sixteen responses can be divided into four categories. One student did not like the feedback because, he or she said, it made suggestions which the student felt ran contrary to his or her feelings and writing style. Another student responded by writing that my feedback

was not helpful because he or she said that I merely explained how students could fix their writing instead of telling them how they could improve it. Most students who responded negatively toward my feedback, however, fell into two much bigger categories. Six students responded that my feedback did not help them because they did not read the feedback or some variant thereof. The largest category of negative responses toward my feedback, however, was that students could not read handwriting. Eight students answered in this manner. However, the number in this category of students may be inflated. Only three students specifically mentioned failure to understand handwriting in general. One student noted that feedback was unhelpful because it was “Hard to read”. This could refer either to difficulty in reading handwriting in general or my handwriting in particular. The remaining four students wrote that they did not understand the feedback or some variant of that response. These responses could mean that they did not understand handwriting in general, my handwriting in particular or that they did not understand the suggestions made in the feedback.

This questionnaire therefore enables me to roughly quantify the adverse effect student inability to read cursive writing had on my project. The greatest negative influence student inability to read cursive writing could have had on my project is 11%. That is, 11% of students found my feedback unhelpful because my feedback was written cursively. Alternatively, a conservative estimate of the negative impact of student inability to read cursive writing could run as low as 4%; that is, only 4% of students reported that inability to read cursive writing was a major factor in why feedback was ineffective.

Given that such a high percentage of students indicated a lack of facility with reading cursive writing in the informal poll I took in two classes, this problem seems to have had remarkably little impact on my project. If students were responding honestly about their inability to read handwriting, the negligible impact of this pitfall during the course of my project may be explained by students asking others to read feedback for them. This seems unlikely, however, as very few students ever asked me – the obvious first choice for inquiries regarding feedback – to read feedback for them.

Practical matters had perhaps the greatest negative impact on my project. Time was at a premium so I had to manage my affairs carefully in order to complete Clinical Internship II successfully. As a result, I was not able to spend as much time writing feedback as I would have liked. I had to be discriminating in the usage of time.

One effect of the constraints posed by time on this project was that assisting students with problems directly related to writing and rhetorical matters began to receive less feedback attention than content issues as the project progressed. Certainly, in my feedback I continued to address writing and rhetorical matters until the end of my internship, but as the press of other necessities began to cut into time I was able to spend on feedback, I found it more and more difficult to justify according such heavy weight to writing and rhetorical matters in the context of a social studies class. Thus, my first concern in writing feedback became noting any missing content or content errors; I would always correct mechanics as I read, though this sweep became more cursory as the internship progressed; if there were any egregious flaws in rhetoric, I would also note those. Unfortunately, toward the end of the project, I tended to spend less and less time offering feedback on writing and rhetorical issues because time became more and more

precious and, in a social studies context, content had to take pride of place. This shift from content/writing-rhetorical skills parity in feedback to content first, writing-rhetorical skills second feedback had a limiting effect on my study which can be gauged to some degree by student responses on questionnaires.

The questionnaire (see Appendix F) asked, “Did the feedback I wrote to you on your assignments help you write better? Why or why not?” Six students responded with nebulous statements such as “Sort of” and “Sure”. Four students responded that feedback helped them perform more successfully on subsequent assignments. The rest of the responses can be broken down into two camps with an expansive area of uncertainty between them. One camp would be a “Feedback Improved Writing” camp; the other one would be a “Feedback Improved Content Knowledge” camp. Of the fifty-five students who responded that feedback was helpful to them, eight specifically mentioned that the feedback assisted them in matters of content as opposed to issues specifically related to writing or rhetoric. Thus, at least 14.5% of students who said that feedback aided them acquired more content knowledge and understanding though they did not necessarily become better writers.

A more liberal estimate of the way in which content-centered feedback impacted the study could yield a much higher percentage of students who improved in matters of content knowledge but not necessarily in matters directly bearing upon writing and rhetoric. Fifteen students responded to the question “Did the feedback I wrote to you on your assignments help you write better? Why or why not?” with a statement that could be taken to mean either that the feedback helped he or she to become a better writer or more well-versed in content. Some examples of these statements were:

“Yes, you told me what to correct.”

“The feedback on my assignments did help me for they helped me realize my mistakes.”

“Yes because I knew what I did wrong.”

These more ambiguous statements could legitimately be taken either way, but my inclination is to think that they favor the interpretation that my feedback tended to improve content knowledge for these particular students rather than specifically writing and rhetorical skills. If these students are taken in aggregate with the eight who explicitly discussed content improvement then as many as nearly 42% of students who said that they were helped by feedback were assisted in matters of content more than in issues specifically related to writing or rhetoric. Of course, if this figure is close to the reality, it is not a bad thing; content knowledge is crucial in the realm of social studies. If accurate, however, this figure of 42% does reveal a limitation in this study or at least in the way in which I conducted the study.

How many students thought that feedback helped improve their writing? Of the fifty-five students who said that feedback was helpful to them, fifteen specifically mentioned that feedback improved their writing – about 27% of the total. If more ambiguous statements are included, a further three students can be placed in the “Improved Writing” camp. These statements which could be construed as claims to improvement in writing or in content knowledge, but which I think should be credited to the “Improved Writing” column include:

“Yes it shows what you should work on.”

and

“Yes, I could see what I could improve.”

Thus, as many as eighteen out of fifty-five students could have thought that feedback assisted their writing – over 32% of the total of students who believed that feedback was helpful.

Any limitations on this study imposed by the content-centered feedback which became my standard practice were not complete. There were exceptions to the rule of content first/writing-rhetorical skills second, but unfortunately these exceptions reveal another limitation of this study in the form of a potential for bias. After becoming well-acquainted with my students in all the ways a teacher learns about his or her students, I developed a good idea of which students utilized feedback and which ones ignored it. It could be argued that bias entered the study at this point because, while I wrote copious feedback to students who I thought implemented feedback, I usually offered the bare minimum of feedback – content and mechanics – to students who I thought ignored feedback. So by the end of the project, while my best writers were still receiving the extensive feedback that ran the gamut of content, writing and rhetorical issues, my students upon whom feedback had seemed to have little if any effect received mostly content-centered feedback. Bias in the form of treating one group of students differently from another thus may have entered the project.

These findings were primarily the limitations of this project, but there are additional findings to discuss about this project. After closely reexamining the work of

my focus group of five students, I have delineated four broad findings related to extensive feedback:

1. Extensive feedback within the context of a social studies class can have a positive effect on student writing but tends to more dramatically improve student work in the realm of content issues.

2. In this project, since revision work was not mandatory, improvements in student writing tended to become apparent in subsequent assignments rather than in subsequent drafts. This improvement in later assignments might be more closely related to improvements in assignment quality than to student response to feedback.

3. In some cases, feedback seemed to have little impact on student writing. One of the most disturbing findings was that sometimes feedback had only a negligible impact on student critical thinking skills. I believe that fostering critical thinking skills should be the teacher's ultimate goal when attempting to improve student writing.

4. As noted in one study (Connors, 1993), sometimes the exigencies of teaching – e.g. time constraints, workloads, etc. – cause teachers to limit the amount of feedback they provide thus limiting the possible effect feedback could have.

I can think of no reason to believe that these conclusions are peculiar to my teaching experience. I believe that any teacher who seeks to improve student writing through the use of feedback could duplicate these findings. This is not to say that a more

experienced teacher could not find more effective ways of dealing with factors which hamper the successfulness of feedback.

As I reread my feedback to students, I was happy with some of my work, especially in the earlier assignments. The most satisfying feedback was that which challenged students to think more deeply about the historical issues at hand. In the following analysis of the effect feedback had on one of the highest-performing students in my focus group there is an example of feedback which attempts to foster critical thinking skills. The feedback pertains to an essay on the first test I gave students. In the student response section, teacher feedback is written inside brackets:

Essay task from first test

Essay task: Should the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights be guaranteed to foreigners? For example, should captured terrorists have the same rights in the court system as you do? Explain why you think the way you do.

Student response: I think they [terrorists] shouldn't have the same [constitutional] rights [as Americans]. I think this because they are terrorists and are not loyal to the U.S. And if they don't support our country why should our country defend them?

Teacher endnote feedback: Should we be allowed to do anything we want to them? What about foreign tourists who are loyal to a country besides the U.S.? Your argument could be improved by saying that national defense is more important than protecting constitutional rights for all people (see Appendix G, p.69).

The above endnote encourages the student to take a broader view of the question, to respond in a way that is more challenging than the way in which the student envisioned the issues involved. This feedback is also satisfactory because it suggests a way that the student could bolster her assertion.

Unfortunately, this level of feedback was less evident in later assignments. There could be several reasons for the lessening degree of feedback on later assignments. One reason could be that students were becoming more accustomed to my expectations. By the same token, I progressively became more cognizant of the level of response I could expect from my students. As students fashioned their work more and more closely to my requirements, and as my expectations became more realistic, the call for correction did not arise as often as the marking period drew to an end. Students were getting things right the first time more often which tended to obviate the need for vast amounts of feedback.

Another factor limiting the quantity of feedback in later assignments was that later assignments had much more firmly stated guidelines. My first test posed questions which were probably not clear or specific enough for eighth grade students. My last test of the marking period provided instructions which kept the students to a well-defined line of writing which tended to structure their responses more cogently. Compare these two essay tasks:

Essay task from first test

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. In your opinion, what is the most important amendment in the Bill of Rights? Defend your position.

Essay task from last test

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Do you think America or Britain won the War of 1812? Discuss four results from the Treaty of Ghent to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph.

Note the way in which the essay task from the last test provides clues for the way in which the student can most effectively write his or her essay. Answering the question, “Do you think America or Britain won the War of 1812?” would make for an excellent introductory sentence. Discussing four results of the Treaty of Ghent which ended the War of 1812 would provide excellent supporting evidence in the body of the paragraph to strengthen the assertion made in the introductory sentence. Lest students forget, a reminder to write a concluding sentence is posted at the end of the task. In the future, I would improve this essay task by thoroughly training students in writing good concluding sentences rather than merely telling them to do so. Nevertheless the quality of this essay far exceeds that of the former essay which is vague in the extreme. The first essay task merely asks for an opinion and a defense of that opinion. The essay task is not structured

to draw out specific content from students, nor is it framed to lead students to effectively express their opinions.

To illustrate the positive impact higher quality tasks seemed to have had on the writing of the average student, contrast these responses which were written by the same student, the average male in my focus group; teacher feedback is written within brackets:

Essay task from first test

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. In your opinion, what is the most important amendment in the Bill of Rights? Defend your position.

Student response: In the Bill of rights, I believe that the most important amendment is the first one. Americans have so much freedom compared to other countries. We should have the right to do what we can/want and its good that we can. [Why?]

Teacher marginal note response: You must tell me the rights in the first amendment and why they are important (see Appendix G, p. 70).

This student earned five points out of a possible twenty for this essay. Though his essay was vague and poorly supported, I bear a large share, perhaps the lion's share, of the blame for his poor essay because my essay task was too vague for an eighth grade assignment. I myself was not exactly certain as to the kind of essay I wanted students to write. How then could I expect them to write sharp, rich essays? I understand this problem now, though I did not when I wrote

the feedback. Fortunately, I improved in my creation of essay tasks and students accordingly improved in writing essays:

Essay task from last test

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Do you think America or Britain won the War of 1812? Discuss four results from the Treaty of Ghent to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph.

Student response: I believe that America won the war of 1812. The U.K. ended the war, returned conquered land, and we even got West Florida. If the British had won then they wouldn't [have] given us [the] land. It makes no sense. We still did not have control of the seas, But [correction for lower case noted] we wouldn't have anyway with just a dozen or so ships [good point]. Also the British didn't end impressments and we really needed that. But eventually the British lost to Napolian [No! The British beat Napoleon] and they ended it. So I think that's why we won (see Appendix G, p. 71).

I did not write any end or marginal notes for this essay. My feedback was limited to some mechanical corrections – though in my haste I obviously missed many of them – a commendation for some good critical thinking and a strenuous citation for a content mistake. Though not perfect, this student earned eighteen points on this essay out of a possible twenty points. His writing quality greatly improved on this task compared to the previously cited task. Because there was not as much room for improvement on this essay there was less feedback, though this is not the only reason there was less feedback.

Feedback certainly facilitated to some degree this student's improvement in writing. For reasons of his own, this student identified himself on his questionnaire, so I

am able to quote his thoughts on feedback. In his questionnaire, this student responded to the questions “Did the feedback I wrote to you on your assignments help you write better? Why or why not?” by writing “It did. It showed me what I did wrong and I appreciated that you spend time to make corrections for everyone one.” His response seems to indicate that feedback helped him understand content better as opposed to helping him become a better writer, though his statement is subject to interpretation. Even if feedback did assist this student in his writing, one must consider the fact that student writing improved as writing assignments improved even though the amount of feedback provided lessened in later assignments. This trend seems to indicate that the quality of a writing assignment is more important than the quality of feedback in terms of improving student writing. This is not to say that feedback was inconsequential. Feedback did indeed help as dozens of students claimed in their questionnaires, though it seems feedback assisted more with content issues than with matters directly concerning writing ability. In other words, students were providing the right information more often in later assignments, though they were not necessarily expressing it in writing that was substantially better than earlier assignments or actively using critical thinking techniques suggested in earlier feedback. Even so, the fact that feedback did help is reason enough to utilize this tool. However, teachers must use it in tandem with well-crafted assignments which are designed specifically to lead students to write better rather than to merely give them a task and hope for the best.

In sum, feedback played a part in student writing improvement though I think its role was supporting rather than primary. I believe that the main reason student writing on the last test tended to be better than it was on the first test was because the quality of the

tasks I crafted improved with experience. This finding goes some way to validating the research of a previous study on the relationship between writing quality and assignment quality (Matsumura et al., 2002).

The final reason that the output of feedback tended to lessen over time derived from the age-old teaching problem of a limited amount of time to take advantage of students' unlimited capacity for learning. The time constraints imposed by factors outside this project formed perhaps the greatest limiting effect on the quantity of feedback I provided for students.

Personal matters also influenced feedback, sometimes expanding it, sometimes curtailing it. As previously noted, after becoming acquainted with my students, I developed fairly accurate insights into which students used feedback and which students ignored it. This insight was based upon my perception of their effort and growth on each assignment. As a result, I gradually focused more feedback on those who used it most while those who seemed to ignore it received only the most essential feedback. For example, one student who, for a history project, turned in a short story which ran to over five single-spaced typed pages in length received an entire page of handwritten endnote feedback, several marginal notes and mechanical correction throughout the story. This gamut of feedback included praise, encouragement, suggestions and questions. I wrote down as feedback any idea that would ignite in the mind of a dutiful active reader. Conversely, students who seemed to make little use of feedback received limited feedback. I do not think that I ever cheated any students by providing less feedback to some as the marking period advanced; I was simply budgeting resources, employing time and effort in the places where I believed they would net the greatest success. This is a

higher-order skill which everyone, regardless of their trade and station in life must master.

For an illustration of the shortening of feedback on the work of certain students compare the following examples. Both essays were written by the same student, the average female in my focus group. Teacher feedback is written in brackets:

Essay task from first test

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

3. Should the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights be guaranteed to foreigners? For example, should captured terrorists have the same rights in the court system as you do? Explain why you think the way you do.

Student response: I think that the rights in the Bill of Rights shouldn't be gaurenteed [correction for reversed letters] to foreigners because they aren't part of America.

Teacher endnote response: Use examples to support your opinion. Should we be able to do anything we want to foreigners, even tourists? This leaves too many questions unanswered. If you revise, please provide more detail as to why you think the way you do (see Appendix G, p. 72).

Note how my endnote was longer than the student's essay. My feedback addressed rhetorical problems and suggested specific strategies to improve the argument. I simply could not continue writing feedback of this length for all ninety or so students

that I taught during student teaching as the exigencies of the internship became more demanding. I had to be more careful and sparing in the manner in which I employed my resources. I do not think that this resulted in any kind of shortchanging of particular students; I was simply limiting the usage of a technique which seemed to have little effect with particular students. As such, this was a form of differentiated instruction. This particular student turned in average work fairly consistently. She could write coherently and match content to the task at hand but continued to have trouble with higher-order skills such as critical thinking. Since this was her greatest challenge, any feedback I did write to her tended to focus on that issue while secondary issues usually ceased to find their way into my comments. For an illustration of this development see the following; teacher feedback is written in brackets:

Essay task from last test

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

2. Did the fighting in the War of 1812 go well or badly for America? Discuss four events that happened during the course of the war to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph.

Student response: The fighting in the War of 1812 went bad[ly] for America. Four events that happened during the course of the war were three U.S invasions of Canada fail, New England supplied U.K. and Canada during war, Royal Navy sweeps [swept] U.S ships from the seas and blockades America. U.S foreign trade ends, and British army succeeds in taking parts of New York, Maine, Wisconsin. Even though America won the war, the fighting in the war went bad[ly].

Teacher endnote response: How did we win if we did so poorly in the war? (see Appendix G, p. 73).

In the previous two essays, note how the level of detail and precision in the student response greatly improved when the last essay is contrasted with the first essay. In the feedback on my first essay, I did comment to the student that her answers needed to provide more examples to be considered complete. In the second essay, the student did indeed provide more examples to bolster her opinion. Feedback may have influenced her to offer more detail in support of her thesis, but I believe it is more likely that this student was reacting to a more effectively framed question which channeled her efforts in that direction. From my experience, the character of the eighth grade mind is more suited to dealing with instructions directly before the eyes than recalling data written to them weeks previously, perhaps in handwriting they could not quite interpret. Thus, assignment quality seems to have greater influence on student actions than extensive feedback, though feedback also is an essential component of any writing improvement program.

What made the second essay task a better assignment than the first? Through experience, the assistance of other teachers and my own problem-solving abilities, I crafted progressively better writing assignments. For this essay, I allocated five points for an introductory sentence, ten points for citing all necessary content and five points for a concluding sentence which also took into account higher-order rhetorical skills. Since this student wrote a coherent introductory sentence and actually cited more content than was required she earned full credit on these subtasks. Because she did write a coherent concluding sentence I gave her three points, but because her reasoning was flawed, or at least incomplete, I deducted two points. Thus, this student earned eighteen points out of a possible twenty. While this student could produce adequate work, she continued to have

problems synthesizing notes with higher-order skills like argument development and critical thinking. I did note the flaw in her argument but I made only passing reference to her inability to properly format her notes to the essay task – notice how she merely copied notes which were written in present tense into her essay. She made little effort to write facts in her own words or even to convert them to the proper tense. I do not blame this student for these errors nor even my paring down of feedback. These problems, however, have taught me that if I want to improve student writing within the context of a social studies class, feedback must form part of a comprehensive program of writing instruction – a kind of “language offensive.”

Now that this paper has examined the effect of feedback on the average performing student, it will study the impact feedback had on students at the extremes of the performance spectrum. The cases of most marked writing improvement in response to feedback came from students who struggled the most with English language usage when I first became their teacher. Improvements in the writing skills of students in the upper tier of the language aptitude spectrum were more fine but nonetheless evident upon close examination. As might be expected, writing improvements in response to feedback was most difficult to gauge among the overwhelming percentage of students who could be placed in between these two extremes.

Despite the difficulty in determining causality inherent in a project such as this, certain themes can be substantially validated:

1. Extensive feedback has a positive effect on student writing, though probably not as much as high quality writing assignments.

2. The greatest positive shift in writing ability generally appears in students whose writing skills need the most improvement. Feedback can lead to success that is so extraordinary, it appears to be a quantum leap in quality as I observed with my student of Puerto Rican heritage in Clinical Internship I. In Clinical Internship II, the positive shift in low-performing students' writing was more evolutionary but there was still a qualitative change in their writing – their writing became an entirely different animal as it were to what it had previously been. This mutation was evident even at a glance.

3. The positive shift in the writing ability of students who already possessed excellent language skills was more subtle because they had less space for improvement. However, because their motivation to write well remained high, they could be relied upon to alter their writing in response to feedback. Close reading of their work can reveal improvements directly related to feedback.

4. For the vast majority of students, the impact of feedback, while certainly positive, is very difficult to measure because their writing is adequate enough that large-scale shifts in quality are unlikely to be observed in the same way as they are with low-performing writing students. By the same token, these average students typically lack the intense motivation to improve writing which is often found with writers of high ability. Thus, the response of average writers to feedback often takes the form – if it takes any – of improvements in ways which are not directly related to writing ability. Specific to this study, feedback seemed to assist students much more with content issues than it did with matters directly related to writing skills.

The following are three essays written by a student who probably improved the most as a writer from the AR project focus class. The three essays demonstrate an evolution in writing skills which can partially be attributed to extensive feedback.

Teacher feedback is written in brackets:

Essay task from first test

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

2. Discuss some of the rights that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights but which you do not seem to have in school. Tell why you think you do not have these rights in school and whether or not you think this situation is fair.

Student response: the [correction to remove word] freedom [correction to capitalize word] of speech [“is a right we don’t have in school.” give examples of how you don’t have this right] We don’t have that in school, [correction to remove phrase] It’s not fare [fair] [Tell me why and make it a conclusion sentence] And if you have a warrant [correction to remove phrase] The police can [correction to remove “can”] [need a warrant to] search you or [your] house. But principals don’t need a warrant to search your locker [This is a great example].

Teacher marginal note: Why do you think things are this way? (see Appendix G, p. 74).

Essay task from second test

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to

(20 points). Note* If you write both essays you only need to describe Adams' responses once. In the second essay you only need to name the responses.

1. What were three problems facing the John Adams presidency? Name and describe four of Adams' responses to these problems. Were these responses good laws or bad laws? Defend your position.

Student response: [John Adams had to deal with 3 major problems during his presidency] Should we fight in the Quasi-War; Mostly all immigrants voted D-R; D-R Mobs threatened Federalists. [To deal with these problems, he passed the] Alien enemies act to stop immigrants [correction to remove "stop immigrants" and to replace the phrase with "deport foreigners if their home country was at war with the U.S.A."] Staying out of the Quasi-War. [correction to remove sentence] Having more control of the D.R threaten Federalists.

Teacher endnote response: What about: Alien Friends Act? Sedition Act? Naturalization Act? Did Adams pass these laws just to give himself more power? or was he really trying to protect the country? (see Appendix G, p. 75).

Essay task from last test

Section III: Short Essay (Part I) Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Discuss four reasons why the Louisiana Purchase was important to America. Was the Louisiana Purchase a good deal for America? Defend your position.

Student response: The four reasons why Louisiana Purchase was important to us. One, it doubled [correction for reversed letters] our size. Two, it gave us control of Mississippi River. Three, it gave us more land to hunt and trap. The forth and final reason it was our mission to have controll [correction to remove last "l"] all the whole northern United States [Manifest Destiny, good!]. It was a great deal because Lousiana Purchase was the biggest piece of property.

Teacher endnote response: much better! [drawing of a smile-face] Your essays have become much better. They are clear, organized and contain good information. You made my day. I am proud of you! [drawing of a bigger smile-face] (see Appendix G, p. 76).

While the last essay was far from perfect, it was entirely more coherent and rich with accurate facts than the first two essays. These facts were also organized in a straightforward, numbered manner which succinctly displayed the evidence the student had that supported his thesis. There is progressively less feedback that addresses mechanical issues on each essay. This reduction can partly be explained by the time constraints that began to affect my feedback writing with more force with each passing week. However, it is also patently evident that this student's writing was getting better with each assignment – and not all the credit should be traced to increases in assignment quality. All three writing assignments were fairly clear in terms of the content and synthesis they demanded. All three were also sufficiently challenging. While the learning goals and criteria of the task from the first test could have been more clear, the latter two essay tasks were very lucid on these matters. The latter two essay tasks were also constructed in a manner that was conducive to leading students to write properly or at least organize their content in a much more coherent manner. Because the last two essay tasks are of roughly equal quality, the main credit for the evident improvement in student writing quality can be traced to extensive feedback.

Feedback could also be effective with students with good writing skills who were highly motivated to improve their abilities. The student who probably had the best writing skills of all my eighth grade students was not in my second period focus class, but in my first period. Her writing was so outstanding that I decided to include her in the project late in the game. Fortunately, I had made copies of much of her work so I do have

a sufficient amount of data of this most excellent writer for the purposes of this paper. I will refer to her as BC in this paper.

BC's work was a pleasure to read because of her elegant writing style and her good vocabulary but especially because of the interesting ideas she was able to express through her writing. For her, writing seemed to be a pleasant exercise, an art rather than a chore. I base these impressions upon her manifest effort and a bit of writing that she did in which she stated that she would like authorship of some future book to be her legacy. Because of the sheer quality of her writing, her diligence and the joy of writing she evinced in her work, I always strived to provide all the mentoring I could for her writing because I believed that she would take full advantage of it.

The following examples of BC's writing illustrate not only the quality of her writing but also the fulfilling professional relationship teachers can establish with their students simply by taking their writing seriously and taking genuine interest in them as human beings; teacher feedback is written within brackets:

Essay tasks from first test

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. In your opinion, what is the most important amendment in the Bill of Rights? Defend your position.

Student response: Freedom of speech is key to the way our government functions. I feel that without freedom of speech, our daily lives would be robotic [good word] and people would no longer have the ability to think for themselves [excellent point. Freedom of speech spreads ideas, which encourages thinking. Read 1984. The novel deals with the connection between language and thinking]. America's government does not control our thoughts and allows us to agree to disagree. I feel that this attribute is imperative [another great word] in keeping America free.

Teacher endnote response: Great work! I just would like to have seen you tell me which amendment freedom of speech comes from. But again, your language skills are of a very high order. Clear expression, good vocabulary, good thinking (see Appendix G, p. 77).

2. Discuss some of the rights that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights but which you do not seem to have in school. Tell why you think you do not have these rights in school and whether or not you think this situation is fair.

Student response: In school, there are usually specific answers to straightforward questions. However, when there is a question asking your opinion, I feel some teachers may be biased about grading someone's paper with a different answer than theirs [correction to remove "theirs" and replace it with "the one the teacher has in mind."] This is where freedom of speech comes in. If it is [correction to remove "it is" and replace it with "the student is"] not lies [correction to remove "lies" and replace it with "lying"] and there are reasons supporting your [correction to remove "your" and replace it with "his or her"] answer, no answer should be rejected (see Appendix G, p. 77).

Teacher endnote response: [BC], this is an extremely interesting paragraph. You are the only one who brought up this issue of students being punished for their opinions. You are quite correct, [sic] no one should be punished with a lower grade because the teacher disagrees with them [sic]. The 1st Amendment gives us the right to express opinion without fear of punishment, so long as we don't libel anyone. Unfortunately, in recent years, political correctness has acted as a break on free expression and thought. For example, no one today is allowed to doubt Global Warming without fear of personal attack.

The only way your paragraph could be improved is to add an anecdote or example which proves that students are punished for their opinions. Has this happened to you or someone you know? Also, why do you think some teachers do things like this?

I hope you plan on doing something with writing. [Drawing of a smile face with a quill pen and a sheet of paper inscribed with "We the People..."] (see Appendix G, p. 78).

Clearly, I took great pleasure in reading and responding to this student's work. I enjoyed responding to all student work, but with this student and a few others, I believed it was worth spending a little extra effort and time on not only assisting them with their writing but also establishing intellectual dialogues.

How did feedback assist students whose writing was already excellent? Again motivation to write well led these students to improve their writing. The positive shift was more subtle in the work of these students than in the work of the lowest performing students but it was nonetheless present. BC was one of the most highly motivated and highest achieving students I taught. She ended the third marking period, during which I performed the lion's share of the teaching, with a 111% average – the highest of all my students. When she related to me in one of my assignments that she would like to write a book one day, I responded that I could not wait to read her tome. The following examples illustrate the improvement in this student's writing as a result of extensive feedback; teacher feedback is written within brackets:

Essay task from first support assignment

3. Choose one of the following. If you write on two or three of these tasks, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to.

C. Write one paragraph discussing which principle you think is the most important principle of the constitution. Tell why you think it is more important than all the others.

Student response: Separation of powers is key in [correction to remove "in" and replace it with "to"] the way our government functions. I feel that without this [principle], our system would crash. The reason I believe this is because of the equality that this country has created. Having more than one person's say on any subject allows us to create compromises for the better[ment] of our country (see Appendix G, p. 79).

Teacher endnote response: Again, a very good, clear essay. For next [sic] the next assignment, or if you would like to revise this one for even more credit, think of arguments others would use against your opinion then figure out how to counter or fight their argument. For example, someone might say that separation of powers makes it difficult to get things done. How would you answer them?

Compare the above student essay with the following essay which she penned for the second test; teacher feedback is written within brackets:

Essay task from second test

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points). Note* If you write both essays you only need to describe Adams’ responses once. In the second essay you only need to name the responses.

1. What were three problems facing the John Adams presidency? Name and describe four of Adams’ responses to these problems. Were these responses good laws or bad laws? Defend your position.

Student response: John Adams had to deal with many conflicts as president. Some of these problems included: immigrants voting Democratic-Republican, the Quasi-War, and threats from democratic-republican mobs. Adams responded with the Alien enemies Act: [correction to remove colon and replace it with “which said that the”] president could deport foreigner’s who’s [correction to change “who’s” to “whose”] nation was at war with us. [The] Alien friends Act: [correction to remove colon and replace it with “said that the”] president could deport foreigners to home countries, if [he] considered [them] a threat. [The] Sedition Act: [correction to remove colon and replace it with “said it was”] illegal to publish anything bad about [the] government, unless about vice president. [The] Naturalization Act: [correction to remove colon and replace it with “said that”] immigrants must live here 14 years to be citizens. I feel that the only laws made for the betterment [good word] of the country were the Alien acts. I feel this way because the Sedition act allowed lies [correction to replace “lies” with “criticism”]. Marginal note reads “Remember: publishing lies as facts is libel. This was just as illegal in 1790s as now.] to be published about the vice president. The vice president was conveniently a democratic republican [you are one of the few students to mention this. Good thinking!]. Immigrants having to live here 14 years was only made a law, in my opinion, because immigrants voted democratic republican. John Adams stayed [strived?] very hard to stay in power (see Appendix G, p.80-81).

Note how this student took the time to learn the difference between “better” and “betterment” – a subtle detail but I believe an important one. Improvement in writing can be composed of a comprehensive collection of subtle improvements. Also, note the strong evidence of higher-order thinking in her analysis which can be traced partly to feedback but also to thorough class discussion on the matter. Again, feedback cannot be successful in a vacuum. It must be supplemented, or perhaps, be the supplement of other writing instruction practices.

Indeed, the outstanding revelations of this project are that assignment quality has a greater impact on student writing performance than feedback and that, while feedback does assist student writing to some degree, it seems to have greater impact on content issues. If one compares the previous essay task with one from a prior assignment, one can discern the large qualitative difference the better constructed later task yielded.

Essay task from first test

Section VI: Short Essay (Part I) – Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Why is the Constitution called a “living document”? Do you think it is good that the Constitution is a living document? Why or why not?

Student response: The Constitution is a living document because it can be changed to make it better. And the Supreme Court looks at it continuously [to make sure it is being followed.] I think this is a great name because it is still used today. The Constitution is living because it is still an important part of our government.

Teacher endnote response: Okay, just give some examples of how it makes things better. e.g. ending bad laws like legal slavery and adding good laws like allowing 18 year olds to vote (see Appendix G, p. 77).

Because this task was not constructed as strongly as the task from the second test, BC provided much less detail on this task than on the task from the second test. In the essay from the second test BC – as did most other students – provided many more examples to support her assertions because the task specifically demanded this of the essayist. Feedback certainly helped in the improvement of her writing and content issues, but the evidence seems to suggest that feedback is secondary to a quality writing assignment.

Thus, the findings of this project can be reduced as follows: extensive feedback in a social studies class context does assist a good percentage of students in becoming better writers but may assist them to a larger degree with content issues. Also, feedback cannot be effective in a vacuum; it must form part of a comprehensive program of writing improvement with quality writing assignments being the centerpiece.

Conclusion

Even during the course of my internship, I was developing a comprehensive writing improvement program or “language offensive” as I like to call it, though I did not realize it at the time. I was using feedback in tandem with a steady improvement in the quality of my writing assignments. Feedback certainly improved student writing to some degree, but probably not as dramatically as did my improved writing assignments. Feedback also seemed to yield a greater improvement in student content knowledge and understanding than in matters specifically related to writing skills.

For future teaching, I plan to expand my language offensive to embrace, not only high-quality writing assignments and extensive feedback, but also greater use of best practice vocabulary instruction techniques, more preparatory instruction prior to students beginning work on assignments and writing debriefing after I have returned assignments to students. I believe that with such an all-embracing, carefully orchestrated system of writing instruction, student writing can vastly improve. The most formidable challenge of such a system for me would be implementing it within the context of a social studies class without sacrificing a prohibitive amount of content knowledge instruction time.

A future AR project could examine one of the issues which arose during the course of this project, namely the inability of some students to read cursive writing. This potential project could study the impact this lack of facility has on other student skills and learning.

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APPENDIX A

Permission Form [School's name excised]

Dear Parent,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Christopher Hahn; I will be working with your child alongside your child's social studies teacher, [Mr. D.], from now until May 9, 2008. I am a student teacher from Rowan University, pursuing both certification to teach and a master's degree in Education. In order to fulfill requirements for certification, I will be taking over all the teaching duties from [Mr. D.] by mid-February or early March, holding them until May 9. To fulfill requirements for my master's degree, I must also complete an Action Research paper, which in my case will involve studying methods which work best to improve student writing abilities. Your child will be assisting me in testing these methods to teach writing skills.

Writing about my research in my paper will require quoting students or including excerpts from student work. Before we include any student's comments or work, however, I must obtain written permission from parents. In addition, I will change each student's name in the paper in order to protect their privacy.

Because your child will be involved in this research study, I would like your permission to quote your child or refer to a work sample. Please detach, sign and return the form at the bottom of the page if you agree to this. If you have any questions, please contact me at [coordinating teacher's school number].

I am looking forward to working with your child.

Thank you in advance for your assistance,

Christopher Hahn

Please detach, sign and return this form.

I hereby give permission for Mr. Hahn to refer to the work of my child, _____, in his research paper. I understand that he will use a pseudonym in place of my child's real name. In addition, please have your child sign his or her name to give their assent to taking part in this research.

Parent signature _____ Date _____

Child signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B
Getting to Know Students

Name _____
Period _____

Who Are You?



1. What are your interests?
2. What do you like about history?
3. What don't you like about history?
4. How do you like your teachers to teach?
5. In what ways don't you like your teachers to teach?
6. What is your dream?

APPENDIX C

Mr. Hahn's Writing Policy

Why is a history teacher talking about writing?

1. We do not know for sure exactly what happened in the past; we can only interpret what happened in the past based upon what was recorded – written, filmed, drawn, made.
2. We argue today over these interpretations. These arguments are usually written.
3. We make decisions based on these arguments. These decisions change the future.

How are we going to improve writing skills?

1. A matching vocabulary quiz at the beginning of each unit, because you have to know what we are talking about.
2. Writing assignments which get you to argue a point. How to argue: state your opinion; use facts to back up your opinion; anticipate and neutralize the arguments others may have against your opinion; conclude strongly.
3. Revision: Work is always better when it is revised. Any writing assignment you have for me, tests included, you will have the opportunity to redo for the chance to change your old score to a perfect score. I will hand your paper back with suggestions to improve your writing. If you redo your work using all my comments and corrections, you will wipe out the old grade and get a perfect score. If you type your redone work, you will get 5 points extra credit – as a bonus you will learn keyboarding.

APPENDIX D

Copyediting Symbols

MC210: Copyediting Symbols

Page 1 of 2

Nancy Edmonds
Hanson, APR

Office: 293.1489
Fax: 237.4662

nancy@hansonphoto.com

Mass Communications 210 Media Writing

Copy-Editing & Proofreading Symbols

Indent for paragraph	The injured were taken to MeritCare Hospital,
Begin new paragraph	where they were treated. According to Sheriff
Eliminate paragraph	Larry Costello, none were seriously hurt.
Transpose (letters, words)	The driver of the southbound vehicle the spokesperson, MeritCare said
Use figures (or words)	about seventeen workers attended 7 sessions
Spell out (or abbrev.)	the delegate from N.D. came to Moorhead, Minn.
Uppercase	majored in english literature at Msum
Lowercase	Bachelor's Degree in Mass Communications
Remove space	extra effort will be required
Insert space	according to sources close to the president
Retain original	will be completed in early January
Delete	the very exciting climax of the film
Insert word	the exciting climax of the film winning
Boldface	Summary: The agreement demonstrates
Italicize	the book, titled <i>Certain Prey</i> , written by
Insert comma	later when work was halted, the staff went home
Insert period	and completed their tasks.
Insert quote marks	He said, "At last it's over."
Insert apostrophe	He said, "All's well that ends."
Insert hyphen	the right-handed pitcher
Insert em dash	a sudden stop and began again

[Back to MC210 Syllabus](#)

APPENDIX E

The Assignments

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

The Seven Principles of the Constitution

1. What is a principle?

2. List the seven principles of the constitution and give an example of how the Constitution puts each principle into effect.

3. Choose one of the following. If you write on two or three of these tasks, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to.
 - A. Pretend you are one of the founding fathers. Write one paragraph arguing for or against including one of the principles in the Constitution.

 - B. Write a draft of a letter to your congressman, the governor or the president which argues that one of the principles of the Constitution is under threat right now. Identify the principle, tell how it is under threat and what should be done to remove the threat to the principle.

 - C. Write one paragraph discussing which principle you think is the most important principle of the constitution. Tell why you think it is more important than all the others.

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Amendment II

1. In America, who should be able to own guns? Give one reason why you think the way you do.

2. According to your partner, who should be able to own guns? What reason did they give for thinking this way? Do you agree with them? Why or why not?

3. If anyone should be allowed to own guns, should there be any restrictions on the types of guns they can own? Give one reason why you think the way you do.

4. Does your partner believe there should be any restriction on the types of guns people can own? What reason did they give for thinking the way they do? Do you agree with them? Why or why not?

5. Write one paragraph which states your opinion on these questions: In America, who should be able to own guns? And: If anyone should be allowed to own guns, should there be any restrictions on the types of guns they can own? Back up your opinions with the reasons you gave in the above questions. If your partner agreed with you, put their facts into your paragraph to strengthen your argument. If your partner disagreed with you, put their arguments into your paragraph and tell why you think their arguments are wrong.

Section VI: Short Essay (Part I) – Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Why is the Constitution called a “living document”? Do you think it is good that the Constitution is a living document? Why or why not?

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. In your opinion, what is the most important amendment in the Bill of Rights? Defend your position.

2. Discuss some of the rights that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights but which you do not seem to have in school. Tell why you think you do not have these rights in school and whether or not you think this situation is fair.

3. Should the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights be guaranteed to foreigners? For example, should captured terrorists have the same rights in the court system as you do? Explain why you think the way you do.

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Legacy and Interpretation of the Constitution

1. Is Washington's legacy as a president a good one or a bad one? In other words, should he be remembered as a good president or a bad president? Explain why you think the way you do using information from your notes.

2. Do you think the Constitution should be interpreted using strict construction or loose construction? Explain both viewpoints then tell why you prefer one to the other.

3. Think of things you have achieved in your life. Think of things in which you take pride. What would you like your legacy to be?

Section III: Short Essay (Part I) Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. What is the main purpose of the Constitution? How did different ways of looking at the Constitution lead to the forming of political parties? Be sure to explain both loose construction and strict construction. Tell which interpretation of the Constitution you prefer then explain why you think the way you do.

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points). Note* If you write both essays you only need to describe Adams' responses once. In the second essay you only need to name the responses.

1. What were three problems facing the John Adams presidency? Name and describe four of Adams' responses to these problems. Were these responses good laws or bad laws? Defend your position.

2. Name and describe four of John Adams' responses to the problems of his presidency. Then identify three problems facing the George W. Bush presidency. Should Bush use some of these Adams policies to deal with the problems of today? Defend your position.

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Judicial Review Essay

On the back of this sheet of paper write one persuasive paragraph which either supports or argues against Judicial Review. Use the two paragraphs below as a model. State your opinion on Judicial Review then defend your position using at least three facts. Use the information from your Judicial Review information sheet to help you, but you may also bring in facts from other sources such as previous lessons. Predict at least one argument that someone might have against your opinion and then tell why this opposing argument would be wrong. Finally, end with a strong concluding sentence.

I think that Judicial Review has given the Supreme Court too much power. Popular Sovereignty, the belief that government's power comes from the people, is the most important part of

the Constitution. If we the people elect Congressmen and women to pass laws that we want to be put into effect then five people on the Supreme Court should not be able to put a stop to those laws. Some might argue that we need Judicial Review as one of the checks and balances against Congress, but I think that Judicial Review is a check and balance against the people. While Congress is elected by the people, the Supreme Court is not elected. The ability to strike down laws which millions may favor is too much power to give to people who are not elected. This is especially true when we look at some of the people who have been appointed to the Supreme Court. Hugo Black, for example, was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. Someone like him should not have so much power over the laws of America. It is also true that Supreme Court justices do not interpret Constitutional law so much as they merely rely on previous court rulings to make their decisions. For example, because the Supreme Court did not want to break precedent with the case Plessy vs. Ferguson, segregation remained legal in America for fifty-eight years. Because of all the injustices that have been committed by the Supreme Court, I think their power should be cut back – Judicial Review should be eliminated with a constitutional amendment.

I think that Judicial Review is a necessary power for the Supreme Court. In order to keep one branch of the government from getting too powerful, we must have checks and balances. Judicial Review is an effective block against Congress getting too powerful. Congress does not always make the right decisions – sometimes laws are passed which are unconstitutional such as the Alien and Sedition Acts. We need the Supreme Court to strike down such unjust laws otherwise we could have our most important rights stripped from us. John Adams was right to fill the Supreme Court with Federalist judges in order to limit the power of the Democratic-Republican Party because that party supported slavery. Some would argue that Congress is elected by the people and so should have more power than the other branches of government. This idea is wrong because the people do not always make the right decisions either. The people frequently elect corrupt politicians or politicians with horrible ideas. For example, the people elected Richard Nixon who had to resign because of his corruption; they also elected Senator Robert Byrd who was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. For these reasons, Judicial Review needs to remain in force to protect the country from bad laws passed by a Congress that could become too powerful.

Section III: Short Essay (Part I) Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Discuss four reasons why the Louisiana Purchase was important to America. Was the Louisiana Purchase a good deal for America? Defend your position.

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Do you think America or Britain won the War of 1812? Discuss four results from the Treaty of Ghent to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph.

2. Did the fighting in the War of 1812 go well or badly for America? Discuss four events that happened during the course of the war to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph.

APPENDIX F

End of Project Questionnaire

1. What teaching methods did I use that were helpful to you or that you liked?
2. What teaching methods did I use that were not helpful to you or that you did not like?
3. Did the feedback I wrote to you on your assignments help you write better? Why or why not?
4. Did giving you the chance to revise your work help you write better? Why or why not?
5. Is there anything else about our time together that you would like to say which is not discussed above?
6. Please circle the grade you would give me.

A+ A A- B+ B B- C+ C C- D+ D D- F

APPENDIX G

Student Work

Section VI: Short Essay (Part I) - Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Why is the Constitution called a "living document"? Do you think it is good that the Constitution is a living document? Why or why not?

The main reason the Constitution is called a living document is because it can be changed to make it better, e.g. it ends bad law like slavery & adds good ones like 18 year olds can vote, also, the S.C. is always looking at it to make sure it is being followed.

The Constitution is called a living document because we still use it today. I believe that it's good that the constitution is a living document because it has all of our rights and the limits of the government and it works very well.

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) - Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. In your opinion, what is the most important amendment in the Bill of Rights? Defend your position.

In my opinion amendment IX is the most important. I think this because we have some rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, but if we only had those as long as the government follows the Bill of Rights, they could do anything they want to us and we couldn't do anything about it. Excellent! This could be improved with examples, e.g. there is no right to privacy in the Bill of Rights but because of amendment 9 we have a right to privacy.

2. Discuss some of the rights that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights but which you do not seem to have in school. Tell why you think you do not have these rights in school and whether or not you think this situation is fair.

A right we don't have in school is a warrant of anything like that to check our lockers. The Constitution says that we can't be searched in our house, papers, and personal belongings in our lockers are our property. The school does give us books so they should be allowed to check them but the other stuff is ours and not fair doing that. That is unconstitutional. good use of example. Just tell me why you think the situation is the way it is, if it's unconstitutional, why is it allowed?

3. Should the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights be guaranteed to foreigners? For example, should captured terrorists have the same rights in the court system as you do? Explain why you think the way you do.

I think they shouldn't have the same rights, I think this because they are terrorists and are not loyal to the U.S. And if they don't support our country why should our country defend them? Should we be allowed to do anything we want to them? What about foreign tourists who are loyal to a country besides the U.S. Your argument could be improved by saying that national defense is more important than protecting constitutional rights for all people.

Section VI: Short Essay (Part I) - Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Why is the Constitution called a "living document"? Do you think it is good that the Constitution is a living document? Why or why not? +10

I believe that the constitution is a living document because we still use the constitution today. Its a good system of government, and its great that we still have these rights today, people like me honor our freedom and dont want to lose it. The main reason it is called a "living document" is because we can be changed, its improve it, get rid of bad laws eg slavery; add good laws eg, 18 year olds can vote. The S.C. looks at it continuously, to ensure its being followed.

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) - Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. In your opinion, what is the most important amendment in the Bill of Rights? Defend your position. +5

In the Bill of rights, I believe that the most important amendment is the first one. Americans have so much freedom compared to other countries. We should have the right to do what we want and its good that we can, why?

2. Discuss some of the rights that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights but which you do not seem to have in school. Tell why you think you do not have these rights in school and whether or not you think this situation is fair.

In school you do not have freedom of speech. You cant say what you want or you'll get a detention. There is no official school newspaper. You cant write anything you want in a newspaper either. You could get in trouble with Mr. Bev.

3. Should the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights be guaranteed to foreigners? For example, should captured terrorists have the same rights in the court system as you do? Explain why you think the way you do. +10

If illegal immigrants come to the U.S, then they should not get the rights that we get. A terrorist is not an american citizen so he/she shouldn't get the rights that we have. If an migrant comes to the U.S, then there's nothing wrong with that as long as he/she are legal. He/she should get constitutional rights. Should we be able to do anything we want to towards or illegal immigrants?

Section III: Short Essay (Part I) Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Discuss four reasons why the Louisiana Purchase was important to America. Was the Louisiana Purchase a good deal for America? Defend your position.

+20

The Louisiana purchase was an amazing move to take. It was our manifest destiny to own all of North America, and this was a big step. America avoided the war with France, doubled the country size, and gave the U.S. control of the Mississippi. Avoiding the war saved us many men and kept us allies with France with the country twice as big it meant more trade and availability for a larger population. And control of the Mississippi meant safer travels knowing that you couldn't get choked in, or you just have control on what goes through and out of the river. Awesome analysis!

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) - Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Do you think America or Britain won the War of 1812? Discuss four results from the Treaty of Ghent to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph.

+18

I believe that America won the war of 1812. The U.K. ended the war, returned conquered land, and we even got west Florida. If the British had won then they wouldn't have given us the land. It makes no sense. We still did not have control of the seas, but we wouldn't have any with just a dozen of 50 ships. Also the British didn't end impressment and we really needed that. But eventually the British lost to Napoleon and they ended it. So I think that:

2. Did the fighting in the War of 1812 go well or badly for America? Discuss four events that happened during the course of the war to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph.

+20

In this war it didn't go too well for the US. The new England cobblers supplied Britain. And helped them. Three major losses occurred when we tried to invade Canada. The Royal Navy ships swept us from the seas and blockaded America's trade. Also, the British launched many raids, burn Washington D.C. and killing many. The only good part of this war was at the Battle of New Orleans, where we fought the British and killed/wounded about 2000, and our casualties were only about 50. That was the biggest battle of the war. And we won it! But overall the war another great war! from writing...

Section VI: Short Essay (Part I) – Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Why is the Constitution called a “living document”? Do you think it is good that the Constitution is a living document? Why or why not? +12

The Constitution is called a “living document” because it can be changed to make it better and the Supreme Court continuously looks at it to make sure it's being followed. I need your opinion & why you think the way you do. Use examples, Constitution can end bad laws e.g. slavery or add good ones e.g. 18 year olds can vote.

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. In your opinion, what is the most important amendment in the Bill of Rights? Defend your position. +10

In my opinion the most important amendment in the Bill of Rights is Amendment I. I think this is the most important because everyone should have their freedom of speech, right to petition, freedom of religion no official church, freedom of press, freedom assembly & we should have their own choices. Why? what happens in other countries when people don't

2. Discuss some of the rights that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights but which you do not seem to have these rights in school. Tell why you think you do not have these rights in school and whether or not you think this situation is fair. +6

Some of the rights that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights that we don't have in school is the right to carry guns. It says in Amendment II the people have the right to have guns. This is true but it is regulated by each state whether or not you can carry them in public. Should it be this way? Why is it this way? Is it fair?

3. Should the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights be guaranteed to foreigners? For example, should captured terrorists have the same rights in the court system as you do? Explain why you think the way you do. +6

I think that the rights in the Bill of Rights shouldn't be guaranteed to foreigners because they aren't part of America. Use examples to support your opinion. Should we be able to do anything we want to foreigners, even terrorists? This leaves too many questions unanswered. If you revise, please provide more detail as to why you think the way you do.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
Section III: Short Essay (Part I) Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Discuss four reasons why the Louisiana Purchase was important to America. Was the Louisiana Purchase a good deal for America? Defend your position.

Four reasons why the Louisiana Purchase was important to America was because it doubled the size of the country, gave the U.S. a control of the Mississippi river, avoided a war against France, and ^{which meant the U.S. had to take over north American continent} had to take over north American continent.

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) - Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Do you think America or Britain won the War of 1812? Discuss four results from the Treaty of Ghent to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph.

I think that Britain won the war because they kept control of seas, ^{we got west Florida!} they get West Florida, they returned conquered U.S. land, and U.K. abandons Indian allies. Because they did all of that, I think that they won the war of 1812.

2. Did the fighting in the War of 1812 go well or badly for America? Discuss four events that happened during the course of the war to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph.

The fighting in the War of 1812 went ~~good~~ ^{badly} for America. Four events that happened during the course of the war ~~that~~ ^{were} were three U.S. invasions of Canada fail, New England supplied U.K. and Canada during war, Royal Navy ^{swept} swept U.S. ships from the seas and blockaded America. U.S. foreign trade ends, ~~Britain~~ and British army succeeds in taking parts of New York, Maine, and even though America won the war, the fighting in



Section VI: Short Essay (Part I) – Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Why is the Constitution called a “living document”? Do you think it is good that the Constitution is a living document? Why or why not?

The constitution is called a living document because it can be changed to improve it. e.g. it can get rid of bad laws like slavery or add good laws like letting us wear old hats.

Yes, I do. The Constitution is a living document. It worked back when the 13 colonies were around and it still works to this day. That's why I think the constitution is a living document.

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) – Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

all the time it is being followed. To make sure it is being followed.

1. In your opinion, what is the most important amendment in the Bill of Rights? Defend your position.

2. Discuss some of the rights that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights but which you do not seem to have in school. Tell why you think you do not have these rights in school and whether or not you think this situation is fair.

Freedom of speech. We don't have that in school. It's not fair. And if you have a warrant, the police need a fair search of your house. But principals don't need a warrant to search your locker.

is a right we don't have in school.

is a right we don't have in school.

is a right we don't have in school.

is a right we don't have in school.

is a right we don't have in school.

3. Should the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights be guaranteed to foreigners? For example, should captured terrorists have the same rights in the court system as you do? Explain why you think the way you do.

No. If you're a terrorist, you should have a different set of rights. Because terrorists are here trying to harm us. But if you're not a terrorist and you break the regular constitutional rights, you should have to face the law. You should have to face the law.

terrorist, you should have a different set of rights. Because terrorists are here trying to harm us. But if you're not a terrorist and you break the regular constitutional rights, you should have to face the law. You should have to face the law.

Section III: Short Essay (Part I) Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. What is the main purpose of the Constitution? How did different ways of looking at the Constitution lead to the forming of political parties? Be sure to explain both loose construction and strict construction. Tell which interpretation of the Constitution you prefer then explain why you think the way you do.

L.C. = more government power & control over your life. S.C. = less gov. power & control over your life. which of these do you prefer?
To have control Federalist like different things than the D.R. do. Loose construction is belief that a constitution should be interpreted broadly. Strict construction is belief that the constitution be interpreted as literally as possible.

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) - Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points). Note* If you write both essays you only need to describe Adams' responses once. In the second essay you only need to name the responses.

1. What were three problems facing the John Adams presidency? Name and describe four of Adams' responses to these problems. Were these responses good laws or bad laws? Defend your position.

John Adams had to deal with 3 major problems during his presidency
Should we fight in the Quasi-War? Mostly all immigrants voted D-R; D.R. Mobs threatened Federalists. Alien enemies act to deport foreigners if they stay out of the Quasi-War. Howing more control of the D.R. threaten Federalists.
To deal with these problems, he passed the Alien Friends act? Sedition act? Naturalization act?

2. Name and describe four of John Adams' responses to the problems of his presidency. Then identify three problems facing the George W. Bush presidency. Should Bush use some of these Adams policies to deal with the problems of today? Defend your position.

What about: Alien Friends act? Sedition act? Naturalization act?

Did Adams pass these laws just to give himself more power? Or was he really trying to protect the country?

Section III: Short Essay (Part I) Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Discuss four reasons why the Louisiana Purchase was important to America. Was the Louisiana Purchase a good deal for America? Defend your position. +5

The four reasons why Louisiana Purchase was important to us. One, it doubled our size. Two, it gave us control of Mississippi River. Three, it gave us more land to hunt and trap. The fourth and final reason it was our mission to have manifest destiny, good! Louisiana Purchase was the biggest piece of property in the northern United States. It was a great deal because much better! (11)

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) - Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Do you think America or Britain won the War of 1812? Discuss four results from the Treaty of Ghent to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph.

Your essays have become much better. They are clear, organized and contain good information, you made my day, I am proud of you!



2. Did the fighting in the War of 1812 go well or badly for America? Discuss four events that happened during the course of the war to back up your opinion. Be sure to include a conclusion sentence to wrap up your paragraph. +5

I think the fighting in the war of 1812 went badly to America. One event was when we invaded Canada & all 3 invasions went bad. Second event was the 'Royal' Navy would capture U.S. citizens and use for the own Navy. Another reason the Royal Navy were destroying US on the seas. The last and final reason is the Royal Navy had more ships than US. That's why I think war of 1812 was bad for us.

Section VI: Short Essay (Part I) - Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. Why is the Constitution called a "living document"? Do you think it is good that the Constitution is a living document? Why or why not?

Okay, just give some examples of how it could be made things better. e.g. ending bad laws like legal slavery adding good laws like allowing

The Constitution is a living document because it can be changed to make it better, and the Supreme Court looks at it continuously. I think this is a great name because it's still used today. The constitution is 'living' because it is still an important part of our

to make sure it is being followed

+18

Section VI: Short Essay (Part II) - Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer more than one, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

1. In your opinion, what is the most important amendment in the Bill of Rights? Defend your position.

Great words, I just would like to have seen you tell me your language skills are of a very high order. But again, excellent point, freedom of speech leads to ideas, which encourages thinking

Freedom of speech is key to the way our government functions. I feel that without freedom of speech, our daily lives would be robotic and people would no longer have the ability to think for themselves. America's government does not control our thoughts and allows us to agree or disagree. I feel that this attribute is imperative in keeping America free.

+20

2. Discuss some of the rights that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights but which you do not seem to have in school. Tell why you think you do not have these rights in school and whether or not you think this situation is fair.

Read 1994, the novel deals with the connection between language & thinking

In school, there are usually specific answers to straight-forward questions. However, when there is a question asking your opinion, I feel some teachers may be biased about grading someone's paper with a different answer than theirs. This is where freedom of speech comes in. It is not used and there are reasons

3. Should the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights be guaranteed to foreigners? For example, should captured terrorists have the same rights in the court system as you do? Explain why you think the way you do.

I do not think foreigners should have the rights we have. The rights in the Bill of Rights, should apply to citizens. I think this because rights like "Right to bear arms" may be dangerous if it applies to terrorists. Do you think we should be able to do anything we want with terrorism? They have some rights, e.g. fair trial.

no answer should be rejected. another good point. we want with terrorism should they have some rights, e.g. fair trial.

+17

no answer should be rejected.

+16

#2 comment: [redacted], this is an extremely interesting paragraph. You are the only one who brought up this issue of students being punished for their opinions. You are quite correct, no one should be punished with a lower grade because the teacher disagrees with them. The 1st Amendment gives us the right to express opinion without fear of punishment, so long as we don't libel anyone. Unfortunately, in recent years, Political correctness has acted as a brake on free expression & thought. For example, no one today is allowed to doubt Global Warming without fear of personal attack.

The only way your paragraph could be improved is to add an anecdote or example which proves that students are punished for their opinions, has this happened to you or someone you know? Also, why do you think some teachers do things like this?

I hope you plan on doing something with writing.



our ruler was forced upon us; I'm very lucky to have a new system where our voices are heard!

Excellent work!
you really put yourself
in the place of the
Founding Fathers

C. separation of powers is key ^{to} the way our government functions. I feel that without this ^{principle}, our system would crash.

The reason I believe this is because of the equality that this country has created.

Having more than one person's say on any subject allows us to create compromises for the better ^{ment} of our country.

Again, a very good, clear essay. For next ~~assignment~~ ^{the next assignment}, or if you would like to revise this one for even more credit, think of arguments others would use against your opinion then figure out how to counter or fight their argument. For example, someone might say ~~that the separation of powers makes it difficult to get things done. How would you answer them?~~ ^{that separation of powers makes it difficult to get things done. How would you answer them?}

Section III: Short Essay (Part I) Answer this question in one paragraph. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points).

+7

1. What is the main purpose of the Constitution? How did different ways of looking at the Constitution lead to the forming of political parties? Be sure to explain both loose construction and strict construction. Tell which interpretation of the Constitution you prefer then explain why you think the way you do.

The Constitution limited the ^{governments} people's rights. The strict construction and loose construction points of view separated the country into political parties. Loose construction ^{means} more government power while strict ^{means} less government power.

Finish this essay & turn it in as a revision.

Power

Section III: Short Essay (Part II) - Answer one of the following questions in one paragraph. If you answer both, you will receive extra credit. You may use the back of this paper if you need to (20 points). Note* If you write both essays you only need to describe Adams' responses once. In the second essay you only need to name the responses.

1. What were three problems facing the John Adams presidency? Name and describe four of Adams' responses to these problems. Were these responses good laws or bad laws? Defend your position.

Excellent essay!! John Adams had to deal with many conflicts as president. Some of these problems included: immigrants voting Democratic Republican, the Quasi-War, and threats from democratic-republican mobs. Adams responded with the Alien Enemies Act, which said that the president could deport foreigners whose ^{best} nation was at war with us. The Alien Friends Act said that the president could deport foreigners to home countries, if he considered them a threat. The Sedition Act said it was illegal to publish anything bad about the government, unless about vice president. The Naturalization Act said that immigrants

2. Name and describe four of John Adams' responses to the problems of his presidency. Then identify three problems facing the George W. Bush presidency. Should Bush use some of these Adams policies to deal with the problems of today? Defend your position.

John Adams had produced the alien acts, the sedition and naturalization acts, because of the immigrants voting democratic republican

You can finish this essay too and turn it in as a revision if you wish, it's always a pleasure to read your works.

Remember, publishing lies as facts is libel. This was just as illegal in 1790s as now.

I've here 14 years to be citizens. I feel that the only laws made for the best of the country were the Alien acts. I feel this was because the sedition act allowed

III

1. to be published about the vice president. The vice president was conveniently a democratic Republican. Immigrants having to live here 14 years was only made a law, in my opinion, because immigrants voted democratic republican. John Adams stayed very hard to stay in power. Strived(?)

you are one of the few students, mention the good things