Textbook Reading and Comprehension Exercises

Muddiest Point

Textbooks aren’t perfect; no book is. Describe something you read in the textbook that more or less confuses you, or leaves you with a question that the book just doesn’t answer.

Big Ideas

List the three to seven “big ideas” you think sum up the week’s textbook reading.

Two Pages Away

History is less about facts and more about connections. Remembering things about famous people or events is part of cultural literacy, or understanding the civilization in which you live. But more important is recognizing connections between things.

Describe a connection between two things mentioned in the textbook, that are at least two pages away from one another. Probably most of us think of a historical connection when we see the same person involved in unrelated events, or how an event causes, or contributes to multiple subsequent events or processes that are otherwise unrelated. But consider parallels or contradictions. Did you read two (or more) unrelated things that might cause you to propose a hypothesis about American civilization in that era? Did you read two things that suggested to you an intriguing contradiction in American life, politics, or culture?

You have the entire textbook from which to choose contradictions, including chapters we don’t otherwise need to read in class. You can even scan ahead in the book to find things that connect with something we read for this week. But most chapters have (and the first week’s textbook reading certainly does) enough to make meaningful connections as described above.