

History Skills Course

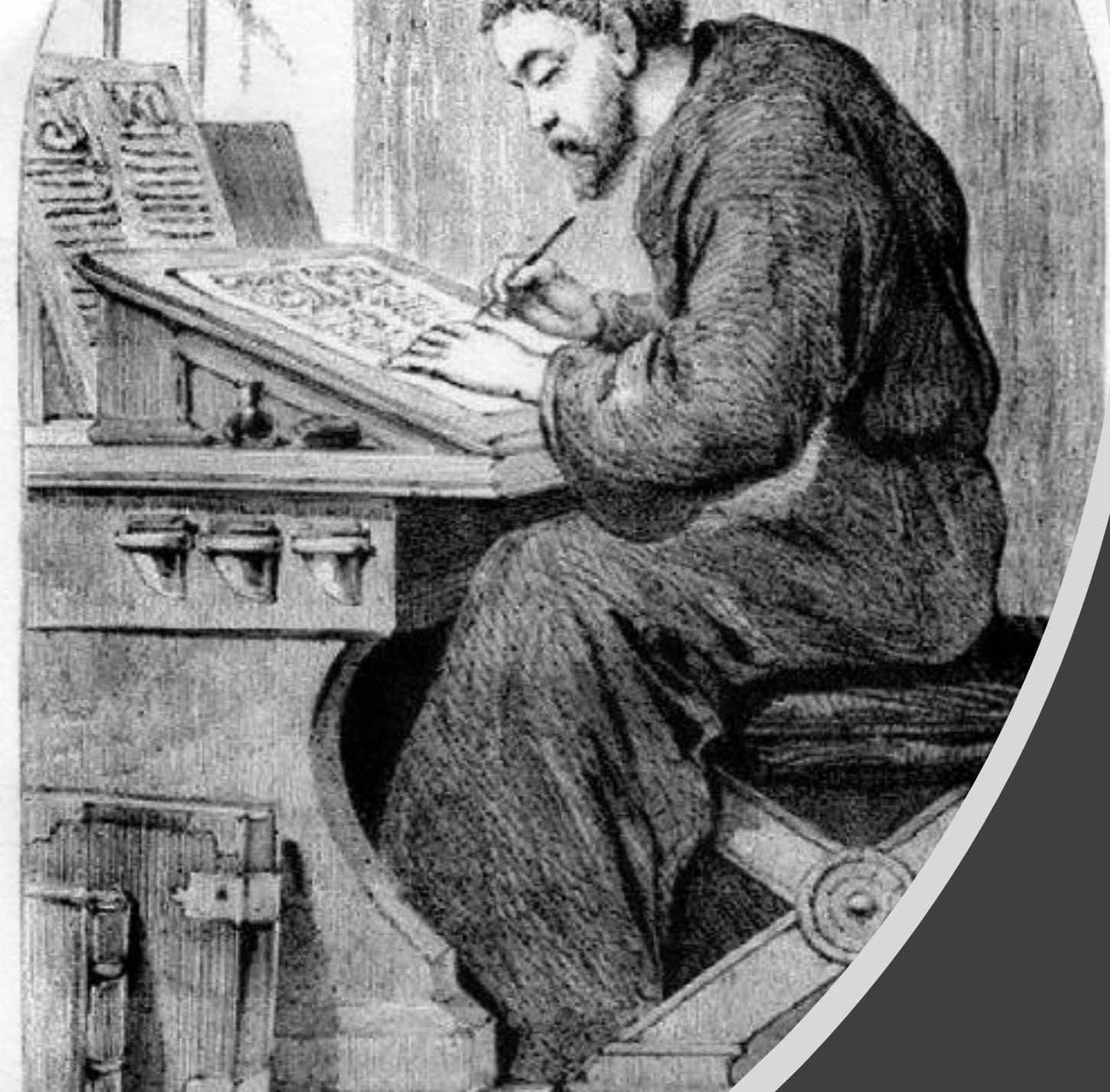
- Dr Tomas Mac Conmara
- January – February 2021
- LECTURE 4

Dr Tomás Mac Conmara



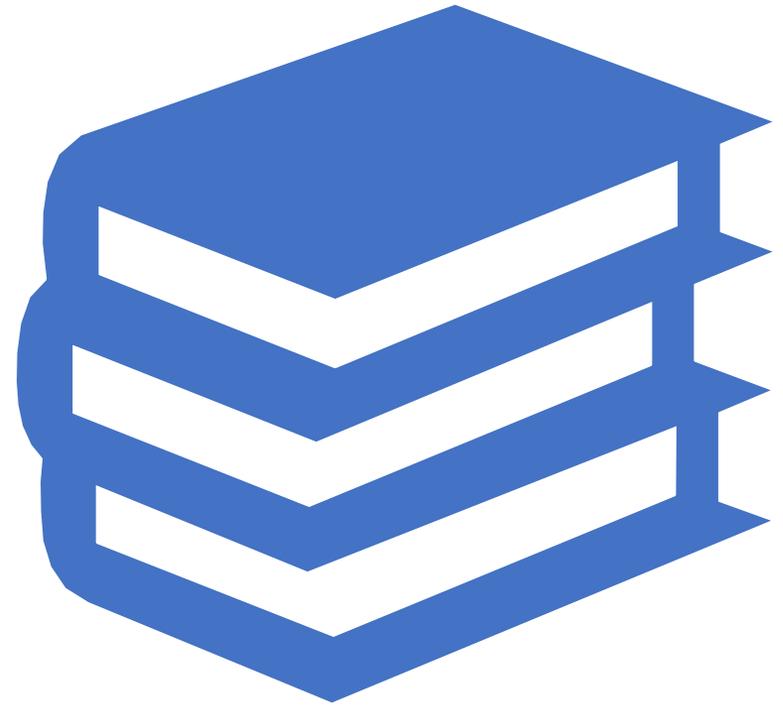
**IRISH
COMMUNITY
ARCHIVE**





Writing History

**Fundamental History Research and
Writing Skills Still Apply**



Approaching the page



Identify an idea, topic or research question that you are attracted to



Find out what has been written about it



Think broadly but refine the research idea and questions.



Determine what historical methods you will use



Identify and locate primary

A pair of black-rimmed glasses is resting on a stack of books and papers. The glasses are positioned in the upper center of the frame. The books and papers are stacked, with a red ribbon bookmark visible on the left side. The background is blurred, showing more books and papers. The text "Plan your Research" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Plan your Research

Thinking about my writing

- Why am I doing this?
- How can I explain the importance to the reader?
- Think about intro – hook
- Do I have evidence for my argument?
- How well known is the subject?
- Can I explain the significance of my primary and secondary sources?

Broad Strokes

Get off	Get off to a good start. Avoid pretentious beginnings. ...
State	State a clear thesis. ...
Be	Be sure to analyze. ...
Use	Use evidence critically- Note subtext and context

Continued



Be precise. ...



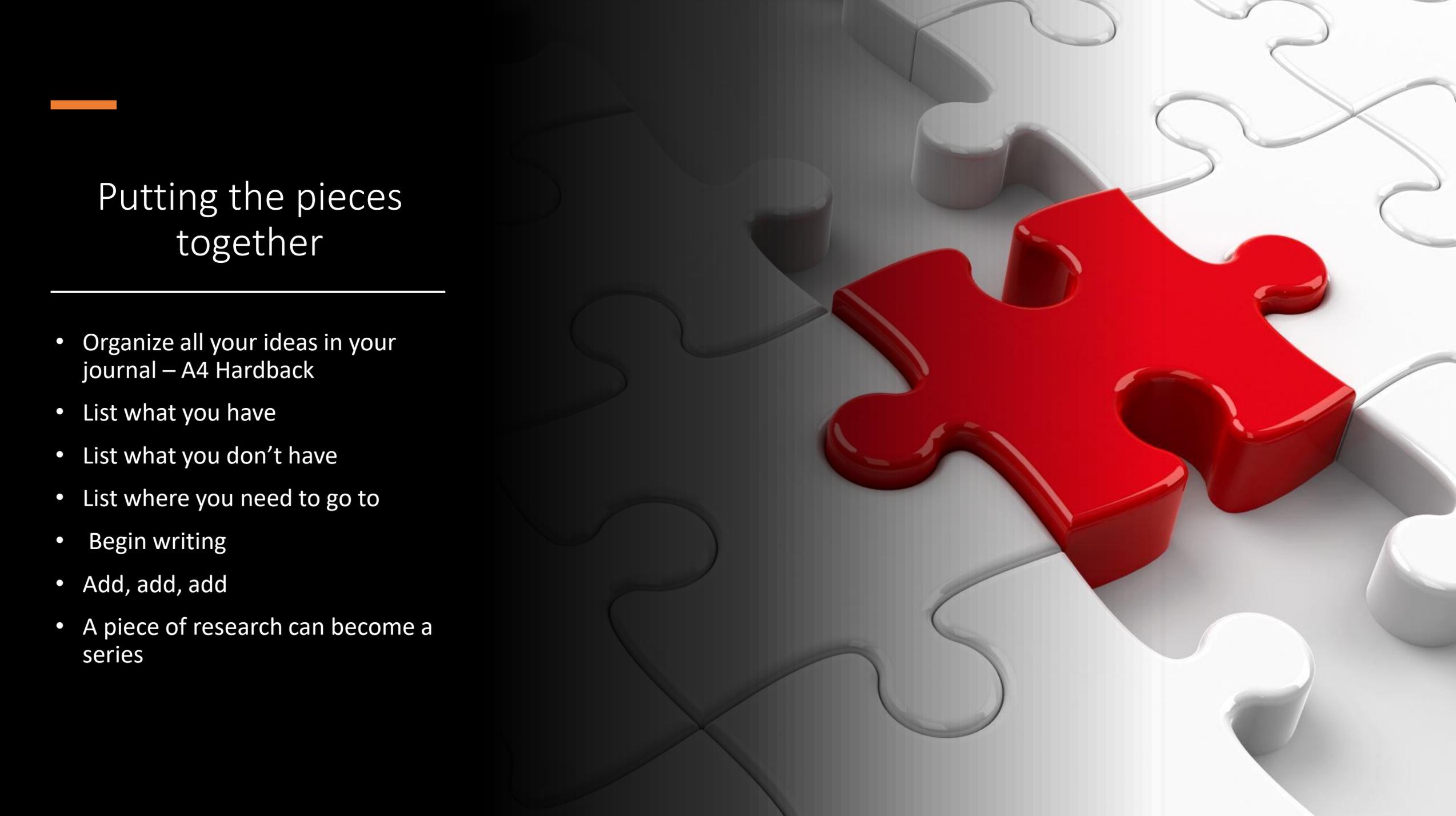
Watch the chronology. ...



Cite sources carefully. ...



Use primary sources.



Putting the pieces together

- Organize all your ideas in your journal – A4 Hardback
- List what you have
- List what you don't have
- List where you need to go to
- Begin writing
- Add, add, add
- A piece of research can become a series

Thesis



You'll need to come up with a thesis (however simple).



Thesis will have a statement summing up the basic argument or focus that your work is based on.



This argument will be **YOUR** interpretation on your topic



Give evidence and show research to support your thesis.

Evidence



Vital that you back your thesis up with strong evidence.



Mention dates and quotes (within text) to reinforce authenticity



Underline interesting facts and figures



Shine a light on new perspective



Be persuasive, convince the readers that your work is sound – If it is sound!

What do I
need to
provide?

Factual and interpretive accuracy

Persuasiveness of evidence

Sourcing of evidence

Corroboration of evidence

Contextualisation of evidence

Good historical writing

Focused, limited topic.

Clearly stated argument.

Include original thoughts of the author.

A story?

Built, step by step, on evidence.

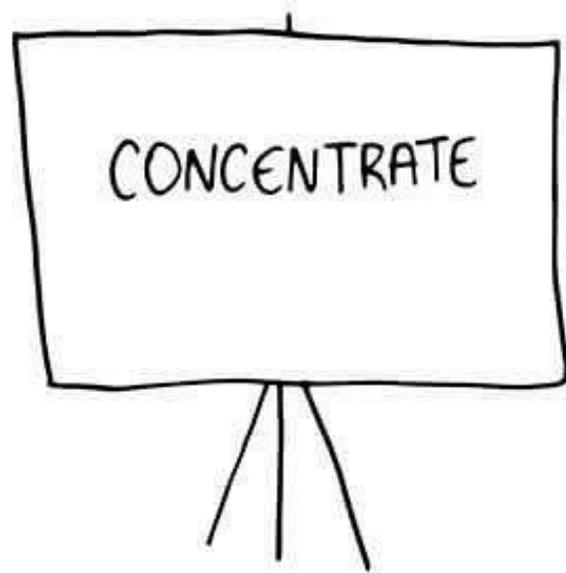
Document sources

Written dispassionately?

Speaks to its intended audience.

DRAFT

Attention



Considerations

Short sentences and paragraphs help capture the attention of the reader.

Long sentences make readers drift off and lose focus.

Subheadings help the reader to understand the structure immediately.

In an online environment, readers are often looking for answers to specific questions.

-
- Do I take contrary evidence into account?
 - Have I been fair in the presentation of the evidence?
 - Are my transitions effective?
 - Are my sentences clear enough to be understood at first reading/viewing?
 - Can I reduce the text/wording without losing effect?
 - Have I used an active or passive style?
 - Do I repeat some words or phrases too often?
-



General suggestions



Limit paragraphs to 4-6 sentences



Limit sentences to three lines



Include a new subheading after (at least) 5-6 paragraphs



Include a Bibliography at the end of your history essay



Keep citation consistent and clear

Write in an Accessible Manner



Write in an accessible manner, particularly for the the Web.



A Web essay potentially has a much broader audience.



Convey nuanced arguments with historical evidence in an accessible manner?



Write for an intelligent reader who does not necessarily know many of the specific of your topic.

George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language"

1. Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything barbarous.

Hyperlinks as Super Footnotes

- Show your sources to the reader through [hyperlinks](#).
- Digitized historical primary sources now available online
- Link directly to the sources rather than orientation in your footnotes.
- Growing online storage options and digital repositories
- Citation on the Web can broaden research through the use of disparate historical documents.

Images/Visual Sources (in online publishing)



New opportunities to incorporate visual sources into research and presentation.



Use of photographs and illustration can be increased



Include large, high-resolution, and full-colour images (where you can and give copyright)



TIME FOR

REVIEW

Lecture 1 – Review



Lecture 2 Review

Oral History,
Personal Testimony
and tradition,

Interview dynamics

Sample Collections

Sample audio and
analysis

Using oral history
and memory

Lecture 3

Time and
research

Understanding
Sources

Potential
drawbacks with
sources

Analysing
sources

Using Local
Archives & Rules
and Policies

Comprehensive
searching

Lecture 4

Writing and
Publishing

Creating a plan
for a written
piece

Characteristics
of a well
written history

Importance of
referencing and
source citation

Review of key
learning
outcomes

The Fifty- Year Rule?



Key Skills

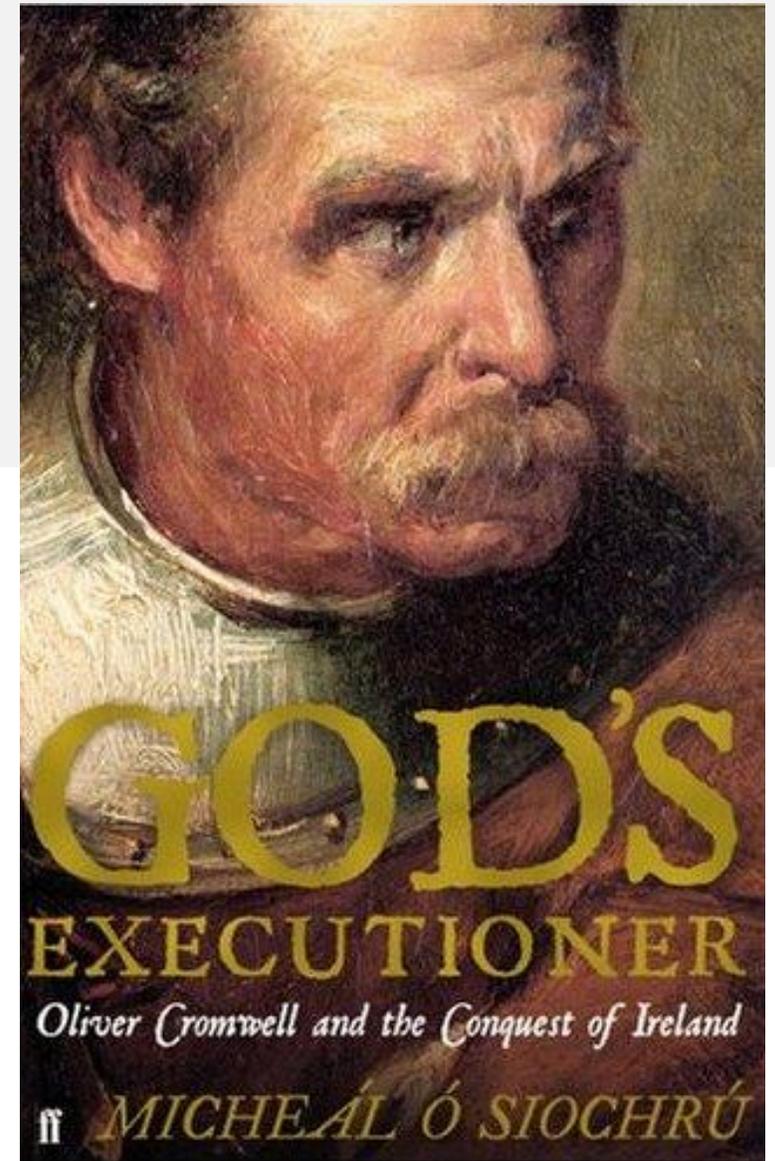
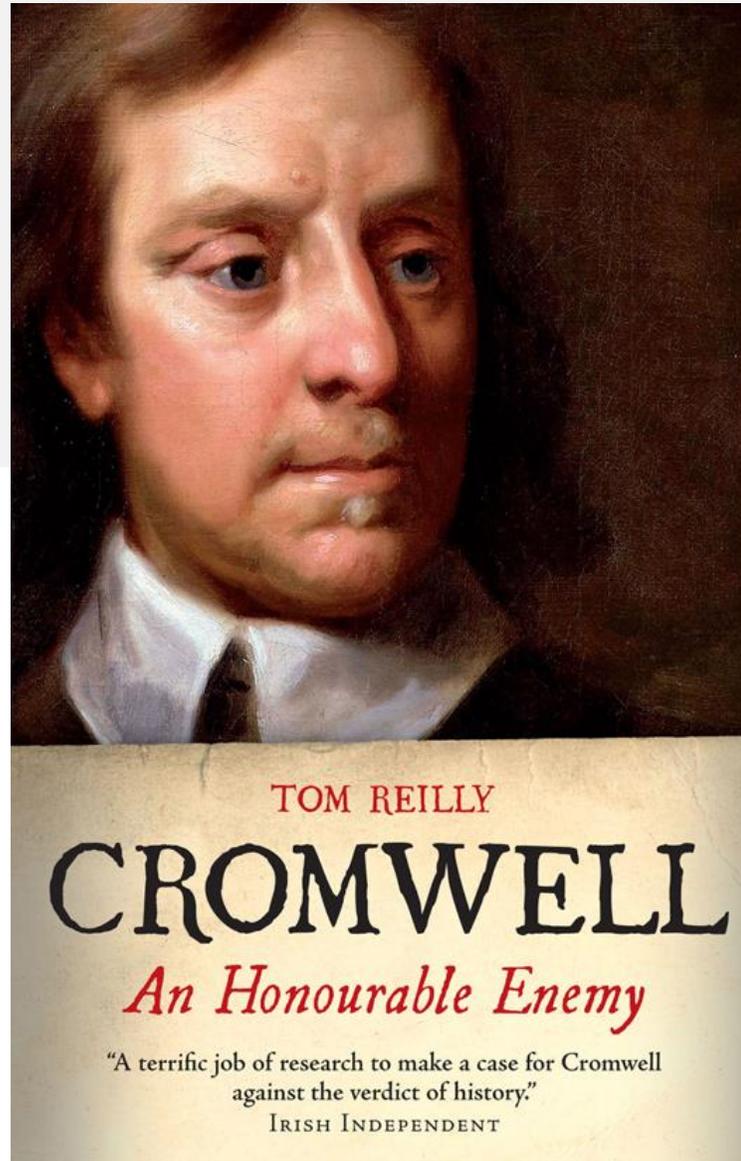
- Listen
- Hear
- Understand

**The biggest
communication problem
is we do not listen to
understand.**

We listen to reply.



- Should we believe *everything* we read?





How do you find
sources?

Look for them!

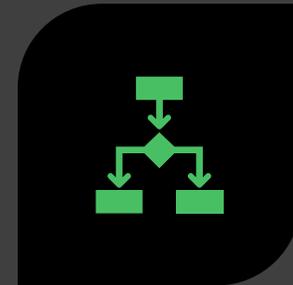
When
examining an
image?



CONTENT



ORIGIN



MOTIVE



ANALYSIS

Referencing/Citations



Why are references/citations important?



Does your work and effort justice



Does the subject your explore justice



Undermines the work of the historian by placing doubt in the mind of the reader



Gives proper credit to the authors of the words or ideas that you incorporated into your research.

Course Outcomes

