

**Irish Community Archives
Network**

***Local History: Research, Sources
and Methods***

Dr Tomas Mac Conmara

February – March 2022

Lecture 5 – Writing History

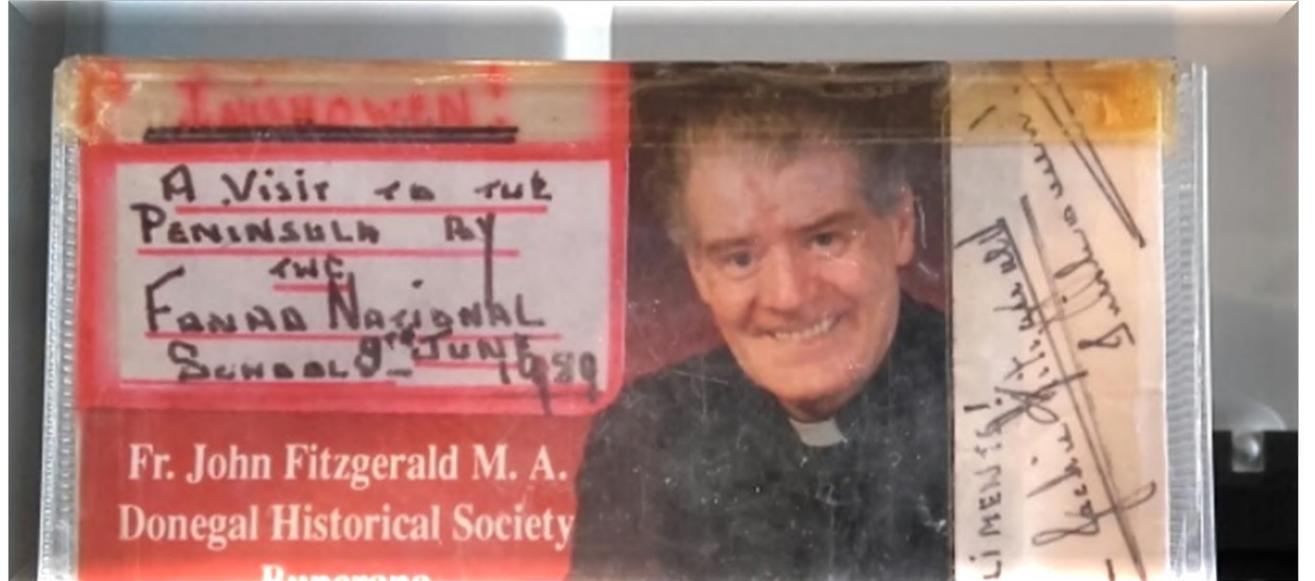


**IRISH
COMMUNITY
ARCHIVE
NETWORK**



Mac Conmara

Heritage Consulting





The Good Collector

“The good collector then should be an opportunist, ready to take advantage of every chance to reap his or her harvest of lore”.

Seán Ó Suilleabháin

– *Handbook of Irish Folklore*



* DENOTES
EXACT PLACE MARKS 27.6" TO 1 mile Co. Clare





**‘To illuminate the bare hills which
had yielded them’ - Ownership**

‘inspecting those evidences of the
civilization of their ancestors’

‘it does not matter whether they were
Tuath de Dannans, Fir Bolgs, or yet
Dalcassians of their time, they were
our forefathers’

Tuanach, Clare Champion, 10 April 1948



**'Always In the Human
Consciousness of the People'**

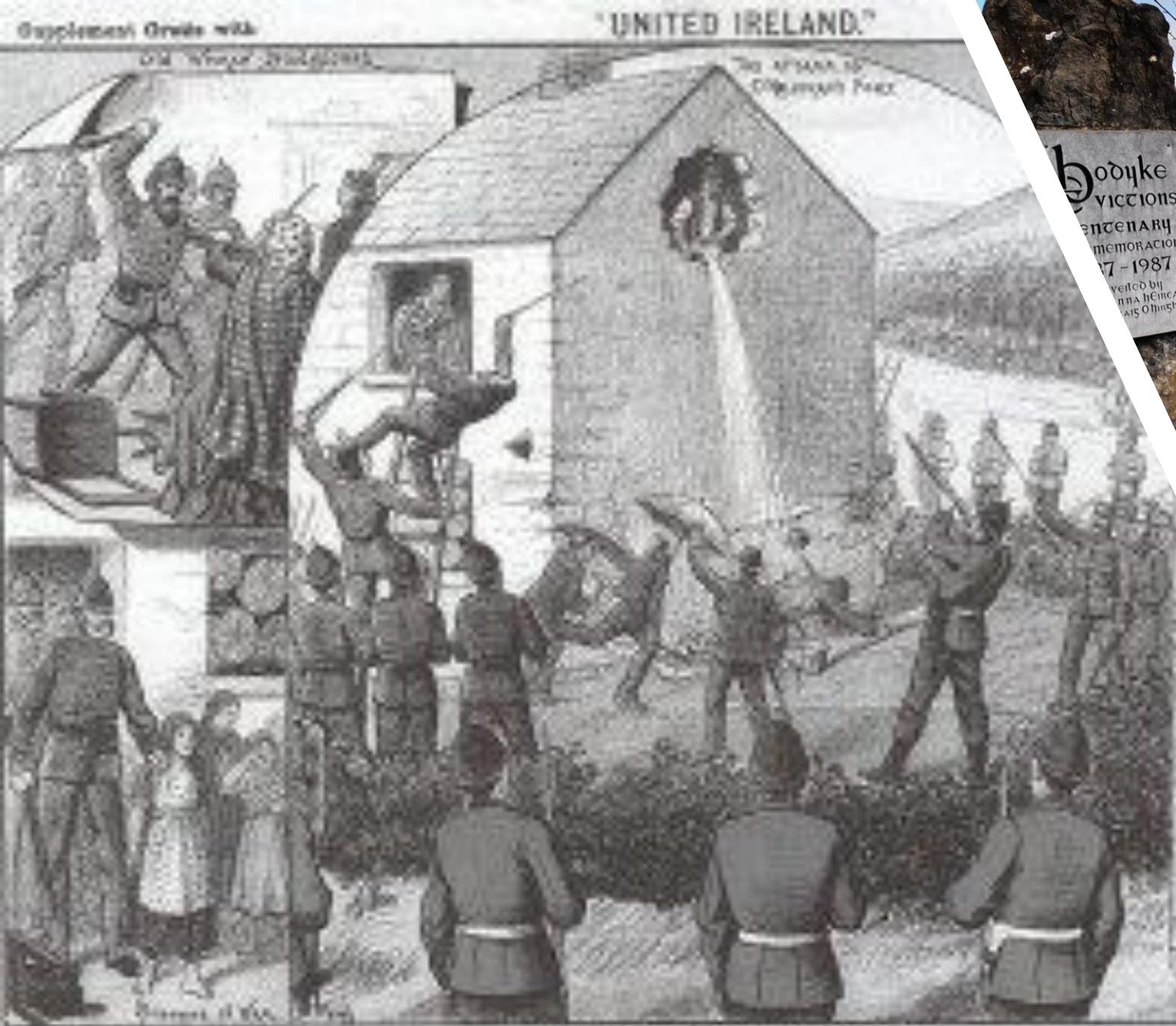


Fieldwork





BATTERING RAM "BACK WITH THEM, AWAY WITH THEM". 1771. W.L.



BODYKE EVICTION SCENES.



Local Drama was Well

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Silence



Citing Oral Histories

Provide sufficient information to lead the interested reader to the physical location of the **cited** source

- Archive/Collection
- interviewer name
- place and date of interview
- type of interview material (i.e., audio cassette; open reel tape; compact disc, CD-ROM, DVD, transcript, etc.)
- Reference Code (if given)
- If different interviewer than author, specify
- If handwritten notes and not audio recording, specify
- Hyperlink to website (if relevant) RECORD DATE OF ACCESS

Sample Citations of Oral History

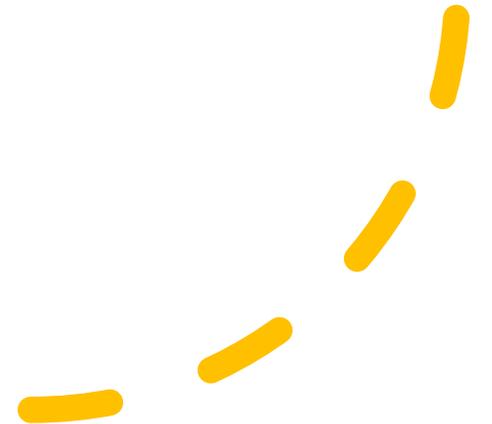
- Interview with Joe Bloggs, Gort, Co. Galway, 10 October 2020.
- University of Gort Oral History Collection (UGOHC), UGOHC00201, Joe Michael Bloggs, interview by AN Other, 10 October 2020 in Gort, Co. Galway, (compact disk).
- UGOHC, Bloggs, October 10, 2020.
- UGOHC, Joe Michael Bloggs, interview by AN Other, 10 October 2020 in Gort, Co. Galway, (transcript), Ref. UGOHC_TC_00201, available online <http://oralhistorycollection.gortuniversity.ie>.
- Bloggs, 10 October, 2020 (transcript).

Interpreting Memory

- ✓ Positivist approaches to reliability & 'triangulation' – useful but can miss the point
- ✓ contrast other accounts by the same narrator
- ✓ contrast other people's versions of the same events / experiences
- ✓ contrast other types of sources / records about the same events / experiences
- ✓ check if and how the account matches or challenges the secondary literature
- ✓ Logic is a useful tool but must be framed in sound considered rationale

Interpreting Memory

- personal significance
- motivation
- cultural meanings
- provenance
- narrative relationships
- archival history



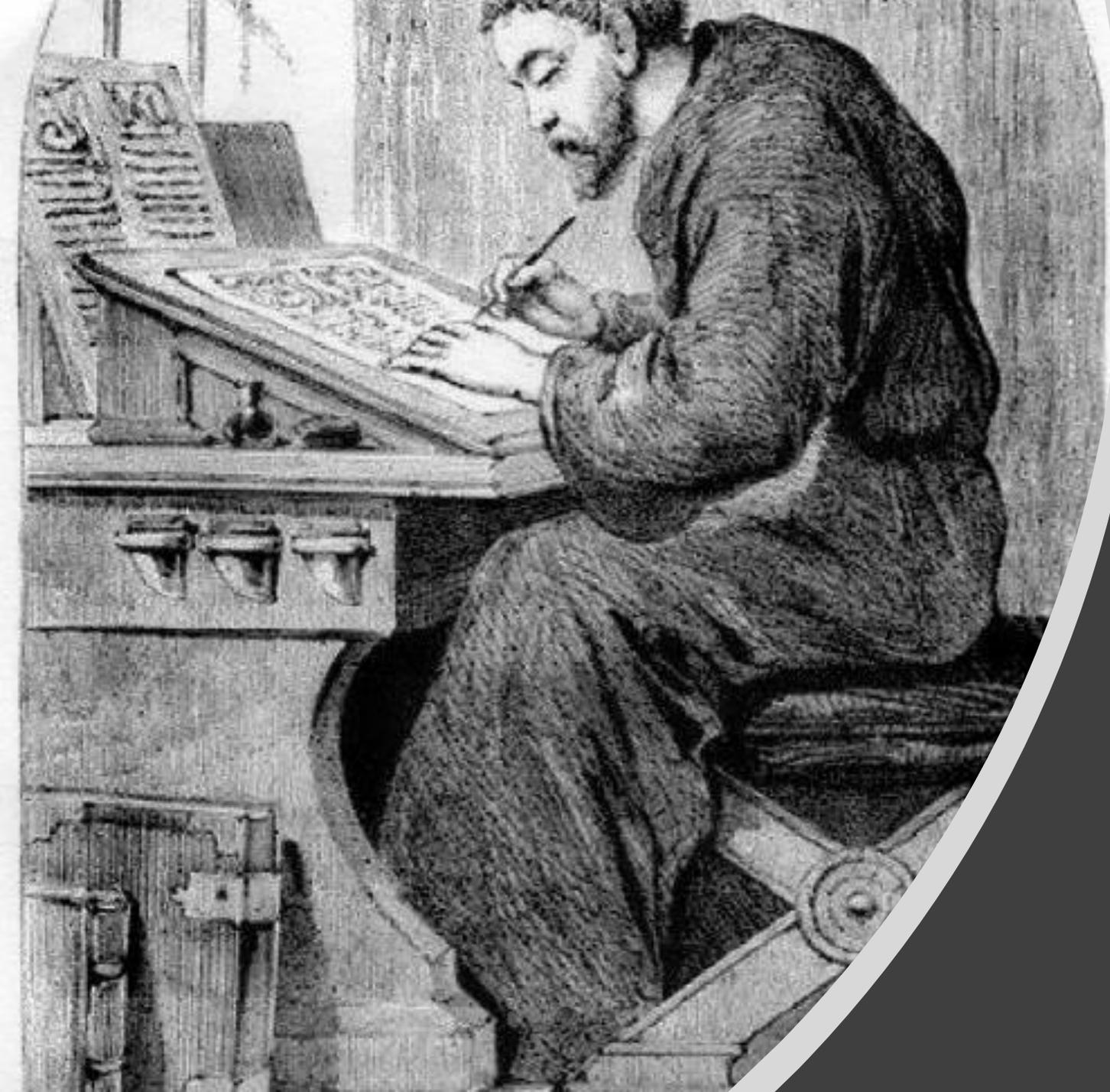
Observations in situ

'Ultimately, perhaps the greatest strength of narrative analysis, whatever its precise forms, is to encourage an acuter and more sensitive listening.'

- Paul Thompson

- visual clues
- aural clues
- linguistic clues
- narrative structure
- silence





LECTURE 5

Writing History

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

- Analyze. ...

Use

- Use evidence critically- Note subtext and context

Continued



Be precise. ...



Watch the chronology. ...



Cite sources carefully. ...



Use primary sources if they are available

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.

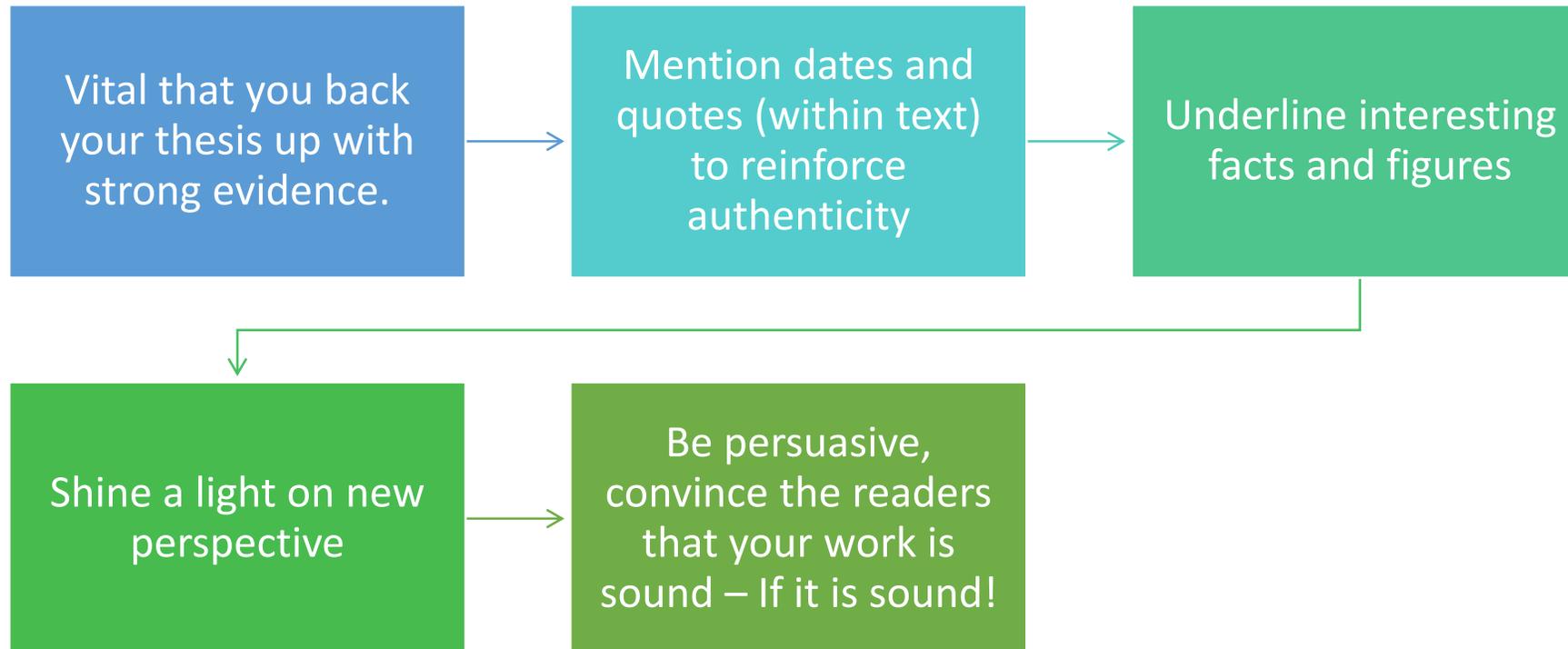


THIS ARGUMENT WILL BE **YOUR**
INTERPRETATION ON YOUR TOPIC



GIVE EVIDENCE AND SHOW RESEARCH TO
SUPPORT YOUR THESIS.

Evidence



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

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	Limit paragraphs to 4-6 sentences
Limit	Limit sentences to three lines
Include	Include a new subheading after (at least) 5-6 paragraphs
Include	Include a Bibliography at the end of your history essay
Keep	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)