

## INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 18

### TASK 18 SOW, SEW, SO WHAT?

Critical reading requires students to summarize authors' assertions, evaluate the supplied evidence, determine what elements have been left uncertain, and analyze the significance of the assertions and proof. In this way students are not only interacting with the historical content of the text but also reviewing models for defending assertions. Examining writing in this way not only improves content knowledge, it can help students become more competent in creating and proving their own assertions. *Sow, Sew, So What* is a mnemonic device to assist students in organizing their analysis. *Sow* represents sowing the seeds of the idea, or the thesis assertion that the author intends to prove. *Sew* is the thread of evidence connected or 'sewn' to the thesis. *So what?* Is the explanation of why the thesis matters, why is it worth examining, how is it significant to the course, history, their lives, etc. This strategy can be especially effective as textbook challenge that generates student questions for research. It can also be used to compare two texts on the same topic.

There are several ways this strategy can be employed.

- Students are provided with a thesis statement (**Sow**) and a set of documents. They then **Sew** the appropriate evidence from the documents and write a **So What** conclusion.
- Students examine their textbook account using the topic sentence of the chapter as section as the **Sow** and then determine what evidence the author has **Sewn** to the topic sentence. In determining **So What** students consider what additional evidence they need or what elements have been left uncertain. (textbooks with lower reading levels have often simplified content and can make this exercise an opportunity for students to fill in the gaps)
- Students are provided with texts of varying degrees of support for a given thesis (**Sow**) and determine which source provides (**Sews**) the strongest evidence, and why the sources might vary considering the author's point of view and purpose (**So What**).
- Students use **Sow, Sew, So What** to guide their own investigations and writing based on a topic of their choice.

**Source:**

Fitzpatrick, Anthony. *Social Studies can be SPEcTacular*. New Jersey: American Institute for History Education.

