

ACTIVITY: Hook, Line, and Linker

We can't get to the past without passing through the gates of curiosity. And there are some powerful ways to hook students and entice that curiosity, including well-crafted questions that encourage the making of inferences, powerful inquiry questions that make connections to present-day issues or to students' experiences, puzzles, paradoxes, problems to be solved, and primary sources, especially those that are startling or unusual. Our example here is a drawing, but it could just as well be a written document or object. With a well-chosen source that is tied to a key event or personality and skillful questioning, *hooks* can develop *lines* of inquiry and *links* to the concept of evidence.

PURPOSE

To analyze a source using increasingly powerful questions

MATERIALS

- an engaging primary source (e.g., Figure 2.7, available on the DVD-ROM)

Stage 1: Initial Observations

When you introduce a hook—your interesting source—take time to linger at the gates and encourage close observation. Show students the drawing and caption in Figure 2.7 (on page 54 and on the DVD-ROM), ideally by projecting it at the front of the class.

Start by asking students to list what they see in the drawing. Students should list as many details as possible. You may wish to have students work in pairs. Select a few students to point out details on a projected version at the front of the class.

Here are some beginning responses from one student:

- naked people
- a soldier firing a gun
- The soldier has a helmet and fancy clothes.
- canoes
- bows and arrows
- guys dead on the ground
- It might be a fort on the right.

Encourage further observation with prompting questions such as these:

1. Describe the arrangement of the people in the picture.
2. What technologies of war are shown?
3. What actions are shown?

Stage 2: Making Inferences

Carefully planned questions that encourage the making of inferences are essential for the *line* and *linker*. Work through the following questions, all of which require students to make inferences.

1. What can you infer about the relationships among the three main groups (the soldier with the gun; the two unclothed groups)? What details enable you to make these inferences?
2. Using both the caption and the picture, identify (infer) who is Champlain and which group is the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois).
3. Based on your observations, where do you think this battle took place?
4. Using everything you have figured out up to this point, who or what do you think (infer) Champlain thought was the most important piece of this picture?
5. Using both the caption and the picture, make an inference about what took place after the moment shown in the picture.

Stage 3: Developing Good Questions for Further Inquiry

The next step is to create, through good questions, a *line* of inquiry connecting the analysis of the source with a lesson or unit to come. These questions and lines of inquiry should meet four criteria:

1. They are based on what we already know (from the source and our inferences), but ...
2. ... we don't already know the answers, but ...
3. ... with more investigation they should be answerable, and ...
4. ... they will lead to larger understandings of the historical situation.

With some classes, it will be enough to suggest with students a few good, big questions that offer such lines of inquiry. Here are a few questions that cannot be answered by analyzing the drawing, but which you can use to spark further inquiry:

1. How important was European technology in the defeat of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois)?²⁰
2. How important was Champlain's alliance with the Wendat (Huron)?
3. What were Champlain's goals? Did he achieve them?
4. What were the goals of the Wendat (Huron)? Did they achieve their goals?
5. What were the unintended consequences of Champlain's actions?

Students can also develop their own questions for further inquiry stemming from the picture, with some guidance, of course. Questions to spark inquiries can be similar to the "What I Want to Know" questions in the KWL reading strategy (What I Know/What I Want to Know/What I Learned). However, they should follow the criteria given above, especially in that they can probably be answered with some research and that they are worth answering, that is, that they lead us to a more complete understanding of Champlain, the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), the Wendat (Huron), and the early years of New France. Another simple criterion to guide students in writing good inquiry questions is to request "questions that you can't Google to get the answer but that you can still answer."

Students' early efforts to develop inquiry questions might be superficial or simplistic. Be prepared to take some time to help students develop good inquiry questions, and set aside some time for discussion and feedback in small groups and as a class. If necessary, give some guidance with prompts such as the following:

- What kind of important questions might you ask about the relations among these three groups before and after this battle?
- What questions would be worth exploring about the technology of war?

Collect students' questions, and compile them to create a wonder wall. With the class, discuss which ones meet the criteria for a good inquiry, or big question. Ask students to choose one or two questions for their personal focus, or decide as a class on a small number for a class focus.

Stage 4: Linking to the Evidence Concept

At different points, your analysis of a primary source can be linked to the concept of evidence. Encourage students to step back to recognize their process of observation and making inferences, as well as the role of good questions. Questions such as the following can help in this reflection:

- How did your thinking change as you studied this source?
- What changed when you read the description?
- What did this source not tell us?
- What are its limitations as a window into the past?
- Why are good questions important?
- What do we need to do next to find the answers to our questions?
- What does this suggest about how historians use evidence to learn about the past?

The example we have used to hook students is an image, but we could use any stimulating source. Make the most of readily available resources such as the class textbook. Most modern textbooks are full of primary sources. In many instances, however, accompanying text explains the source; that is, it does the historical thinking for students. In this case, you may want students to study the source in isolation on a projector screen, and not within the context of the textbook. In a pinch, you can use the textbook but ask students to cover up the explanatory text.

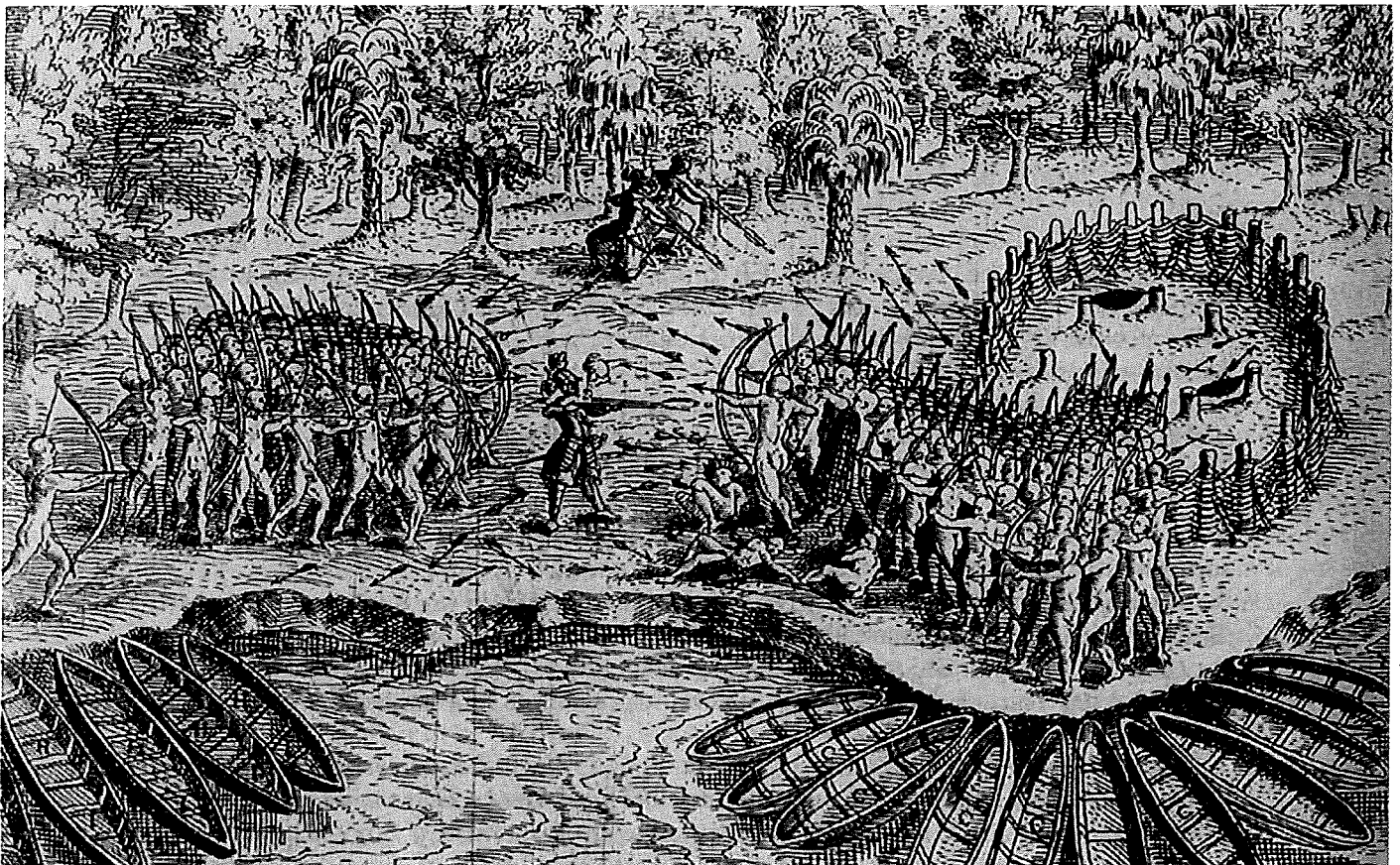


Figure 2.7 *Deffaites des Yroquois au Lac de Champlain, 1609*, drawn by Samuel de Champlain¹⁹

¹⁹ Archives Canada-France. (n.d.). *On French soil in America*. Retrieved from http://www.champlain2004.org/html/11/1102_full_1_e.html There is also a description of this battle written by Champlain in his journal available from New York State Education Office. (n.d.). *Champlain, Hudson, Fulton*. Retrieved from <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/chf/commtwoworlds/twoworldcommclass.html>