

Lesson Plan

The Historian's Notebook, Season 1: *Molt Cara Companyona*

jonathanseymfried.net/historians-notebook/s1-lesson-plan

AP World History Alignment and Suggested State Standards

This lesson plan aligns with the following standards and skills:

AP World History Course and Exam Description, Historical Thinking Skills: This lesson draws together all six of the Historical Thinking Skills because the webpage for each Episode, as well as the audio content, were created with the intent to demonstrate how the six Historical Thinking Skills operate together. However, instructors interested in identifying one of the Historical Thinking Skills for a focus point of the lesson might benefit from choosing 3.B (Identify the evidence used in a source to support an argument) and 3.C (Compare the arguments or main ideas of two sources).

AP World History Course and Exam Description, Unit 1, Topic 1.6 (page 45 of the *Course and Exam Description*): This lesson will help students fulfill the Learning Objective, 'Explain the causes and consequences of political decentralization in Europe from c. 1200 to c. 1450.' The methods by which Joan and Violant established their rule reflect the historical context of political decentralization in Europe.

New Mexico State Standards, Inquiry 24: Gather and Evaluate Sources: 9-12.WH.2. Evaluate the credibility of sources from a range of media (print, internet, audio, visual) by examining origin, author, context, content, and corroborative value. This lesson also fits into the World History content standard *Patterns of crisis and recovery in Afro-Eurasia, 1300–1450* within the topic *1300-1500 Global Encounters and Exchanges Grow*.

California State Standards, Analysis Skills: This lesson supports the section within Grades Nine through Twelve, *Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View* and specifically 3. *Students evaluate major debates among historians concerning alternative interpretations of the past, including an analysis of authors' use of evidence and the distinctions between sound generalizations and misleading oversimplifications*, and 4. *Students construct and test hypotheses; collect, evaluate, and employ information from multiple primary and secondary sources; and apply it in oral and written presentations*.

Recommended Activity to Prepare Students

Students will benefit from a prior activity that helps them to understand how historians create narratives from at times very disparate sources. An excellent lesson available on the [Reacting Consortium website](#) presents students with isolated snippets regarding a relationship that ended in a breakup. The content can be adapted for younger students.

Learning Objectives

- Students will gain first-hand experience constructing a historical narrative from archival documents.
- Students will experience the challenges of filling in the informational gaps encountered in the historical record.

Preparation

The preparation work for the Activities could be assigned as homework or done in a class period prior to the Activities.

- To give them enough background knowledge about the late medieval Crown of Aragon, students should read the FAQ page on the Historian's Notebook website before starting this lesson.
- Assign each student one Episode. For their episode, the students should write two additional questions that could be added to the bullet points of questions on the episode's webpage and write in their notes what they think is the most important piece of information from the Historical Thinking Notes section of the episode's webpage.
- Ensure that the students arrive to the class with a solid understanding of the concept of a historical narrative and the idea that two very different narratives could be constructed about the past based on historian's source base and their interpretive framework.

Activities

- (5 minutes) Elicit questions from students about any major points of confusion or misunderstanding about the basic history of Joan I of Aragon and Violant de Bar.
- (5 minutes) Ask the students to state the intended goal of the historian for *Season 1: Molt Cara Companyona*. All students write that goal in their notebooks. (Answer: The goal of the historian creating this podcast is to gather information about how Joan and Violant worked together to establish their reign, all the while looking for ways that they might have resisted gendered expectations.)
- (20 minutes) Divide the students into groups of three or four. Each student will take five minutes to share what they wrote in Preparation for the class about the episode they listened to.
- (10 minutes) Still in their groups, the students will work together to write a mini-chapter in the History of Joan I of Aragon and Violant de Bar. At the end of this 10-minute period, they should have at least three sentences that tell what happened to Joan and Violant. Those three sentences must directly refer to all the documents assigned to the students in that group.
- (10 minutes) Return to whole class discussion. Have at least four student groups report out to the class the sentences that they wrote. Discuss the reasons that the histories sound so different. Which of the histories would best support the historian's research goal?

Options for Assessment

- Collect an exit ticket, asking students to respond to the following question: What kinds of choices do historians make when they create a narrative from what they find in archives?
- Students write a ten-sentence paragraph explaining how the documents from the same archive could lead to such different histories during the whole-group share-out at the end of class.
- Ask the students to write an answer to the question: How does history get made from facts and how does history get made from questions?
- In later lessons, during document analysis, ask students to recall information on sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and close reading from the document they looked at from *The Historian's Notebook, Season 1: Molt Cara Companyona*. Ask the students to explain how some of the historical thinking techniques from the document they were assigned could be applied to the document they are studying in this later lesson. (For example: "Remember how Violant or Joan wrote that letter the way they did because they were a new queen and king? How does the identity of the writer of this document shape the choices they made about what they wrote?")

Materials

A task card can be distributed to the students once they are in small groups. It is available at: jonathansefryed.net/historians-notebook/pdfs/s1-lesson-plan-task-card.pdf