

Book Synopsis Guidelines

[Primary Source](http://www.primarysource.org), (<http://www.primarysource.org>) Watertown, MA, has graciously allowed *Windows into America's Past* to use their Book Synopsis format for TAH's summer institutes.

What's behind this assignment?

We are asking you to read a book that is new to you and that is relevant to one of more of the themes covered in our course on the history of America's gilded ages. This assignment is designed to enhance your own knowledge of a topic and to encourage you to explore ways of bringing some of your own learning to your students.

Please note: If you would

- a) like to write a more comprehensive guide to teaching a whole book, or
- b) want to develop curriculum for using children's books or young adult books, please complete the Lesson Plan Assignment Option, NOT this book synopsis option.

The Assignment

Required Elements:

1. Title Page with Introduction – include

- a) Title and author of book
- b) Title of your synopsis if you have one (not essential)
- c) School district
- d) Date
- e) Grade level you teach
- f) TAH course for which this synopsis was created
- g) One-paragraph (2-4 sentences) introduction to your synopsis that notes the major topics/points you address in your synopsis and why you consider this book relevant for your work or learning.

2. Synopsis

Write a polished, original **1-2-page** (single-spaced) synopsis.

For **NONFICTION** books, summarize the argument/thesis of the book and the major sub points supporting it. For non-fiction **memoir**, summarize the major theme of the book and the events and elements of the story line that support it. Describe the key new insights that it offered you as you built upon your knowledge of the topic from the course.

- Please make explicit connections between the book read and the course taken. When applicable, draw connections to any course readings, lectures, or assignments.
- Explain what questions the book helped you answer and what new questions it may have raised for you in your thinking about the given topic.
- Include a subjective paragraph at the end of your synopsis that tells us your opinion of the book as a resource for your teaching and professional growth. Was this a useful text? Has it informed your thinking in new ways?

For **FICTION** books, summarize the major themes of the book and analyze the dilemmas facing the key characters. Offer your reflections on how major events are resolved in the story. Comment upon how the book reflects the context in which it was written, addressing events and concerns of the time. If the book is historical fiction, research and describe its level of accuracy and whether its accuracy would be an issue in use with students.

- Please make explicit connections between the book read and the course taken. When applicable, draw connections to any course readings, lectures, or assignments.
- Explain what questions the book helped you answer and what new questions it may have raised for you in your thinking about the given topic.
- Include a subjective paragraph at the end of your synopsis that tells us your opinion of the book as a resource for your teaching and professional growth. Was this a useful text? Has it informed your thinking in new ways?

3. Classroom Uses

Write a **1- page** detailed description of how you anticipate particular aspects of the book will influence your classroom teaching. List several potential classroom activities or applications connected to specific passages or content. If you intend to use the book in the context of some project, describe what you have in mind. If discussion will be included, which topics will be the focus?