



## OUTPUT 01 – GUIDELINES

# YOUTH, HISTORY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: A GUIDE TO YOUTH WORKERS AND EDUCATORS

Alessandro Pertosa

### Working group 01

*Alessandro Pertosa, Andrea Anconetani, Asunción Galiano Pérez, Edmilson Gomes dos Santos, Eugenio Criscuolo, Nazzareno Vasapollo, Samuel Chaves Díaz, Sérgio Manuel Pereira Novo*

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# 1. HOW HISTORICAL RESEARCH IS DONE

## 1.1. The origins of historical research

The method of historical research was not refined before the sixteenth century. Before 1500, a fact was neither studied nor considered in its complexity, because history was conceived as a teacher of life and its study had purely moral and theological purposes. In the Middle Ages, history was recorded with a purpose and charged with salvific tension: it was written to contribute to the spiritual elevation of the people, certainly not to seek the historical truth of a fact.

It was only in the sixteenth century, then, that the problem arose of how to organize the scientific investigation of history, questioning the rules to be followed, the protocols and the methods of interpretation.

In more recent times, around the nineteenth century, historians began to better articulate their method of investigation, beginning to distinguish the sources into intentional and unintentional.

The intentional source is the testimony that the author wanted to transmit directly, while the unintentional source is the testimony that has come to us by chance. Every intentional source hides - or can hide - even unintentional sources. And the latter are considered the safest, because they are not filtered by the will of individuals to transmit only some information.

In this sense, then, it is logical to consider a hagiographic source to be scarcely reliable for the information it provides us on the character, however that same source could prove to be very useful for all the information it provides in an unintentional way, and which allows the historian to reconstruct a period, a context, a situation.

The scholar must be aware of the fact that the sources do not speak for themselves but can provide interesting information only if they are properly questioned, consistently following the scientific method.

## 1.2. The phases of historical research

Historical research always starts from an idea, from an interest, from an intuition matured in the mind of the scholar, who, observing the facts, formulates hypotheses. In a second moment, it is the historical methodology to intervene, to verify if the idea holds up or should be set aside instead.

When studying a fact, it is necessary to start by searching for its sources.

This activity requires patience and a lot of flair, since it consists in guessing where to go and looking for the documents useful for the study.

The retrieval of the sources is followed by the analysis of the documents, which the historian implements using tools of scientific disciplines (epigraphy, philology etc).

By itself, no source is able to provide all the useful information for the reconstruction of a fact. Precisely for this reason, it is advisable to cross the various sources, integrating the gaps with possible interpretations and readings, which allow to reproduce a sufficiently clear picture of the event we intend to speak about.

Now, precisely in consideration of the fact that no source is exhaustive in itself, the historian's skill lies precisely in his ability to fill in the gaps, the voids of evidence, thanks to the general knowledge of the period and to his own flair.

It is evident that where the historian adds in his personal interpretation to help fill the gaps, it is necessary that he indicate it and make it known to the reader, who is thus able to evaluate the source and to make considerations also on the addition or on the historical interpretation.

The research work of the historian can be divided into four main phases: placing the facts in a time (when?); classification of information (how?); identification of the protagonists (who?); identification of the causes of a fact (why?).

#### FIRST PHASE: *Placing the facts in a time - When?*

The placing of the facts in a time becomes concrete when the observer obtains the answer to the question “when?” From the document or from the historical source. To clarify the “when” of a fact it is necessary to establish a dating, a chronology and a periodization.

Over the millennia, different dating methods have been used, since dating itself is closely linked to the world view. Each civilization has attributed particular importance to the years in which the events considered fundamental for its history took place.

In our age, the term **dating** refers to the process through which it is established how to divide time and which point of reference to adopt. All dating systems divide events into two eras: pre-Christ and post-Christ. The birth of Christ, in this way, assumes the characteristic of the “symbolic fact of reference”.

**Chronology**, on the other hand, is a discipline that aims to clarify the temporal relationships of historical facts, placing each of them in its rightful place over time. To be clearer: chronology structurally studies dating systems.

The term **periodization** refers to the cataloging of historical events according to an established criterion. It is a procedure that allows you to create and apply a diachronic model, which orders history from the point of view of changes, of leaps: it captures critical moments, detecting, selecting and hierarchizing the issues that the historian considers to be priority and decisive, to address and solve the precise problem that arises from time to time. It is an interpretative operation that can concern long periods of time (macro -periodizations) or short periods of time (micro-periodizations).

### SECOND PHASE: Classification of information - How?

In this phase, the historian tries to understand the ways in which the events took place, answering the question “how?”.

From a purely practical point of view, it may be useful to identify the various aspects that make up and characterize a historical fact, collecting them in summary charts or tables.

The main indicators that make it possible to classify these historical events generally refer to the fields of economy, politics, society and culture.

As for the **economy**, the reference is to productive activities and to the study of the forms of organization and management of the production of goods. Sectors of investigation are therefore industries, commerce and agriculture.

The indicator relating to **politics** allows to describe the forms of power management and the relationships between individual states.

The analysis and study of **society** make it possible to show the types of relationship existing between the members of the community and the forms of organization of associative life. In this regard, the family, social classes and interpersonal dynamics are put under the magnifying glass.

**Culture** is the last indicator that the historian looks at to understand the habits, uses, customs and beliefs of individuals and of the community. At this level, the field of investigation ranges from philosophy, to religion, passing through art and ethics.

### THIRD PHASE: Identification of the protagonists - Who?

In the third phase, the historian's commitment consists in identifying the main subjects of history, answering the question “who?”.

It is quite rare, though not impossible, for the subject of a story to be a single subject. Since these are collective events, there are generally many historical

actors and they must be classified according to larger groups. From this point of view, then, it will be a question of identifying the social class to which they belong, the class, the people or the nation of the subject under study <sup>1</sup>.

#### FOURTH PHASE: Identification of the causes of a fact - Why?

After having established where and how a certain historical event took place and who the main subjects are, it is necessary to understand why a certain event happened, what are the causes that made it possible, determined or provoked it.

The identification of the cause (or causes) of a fact is fundamental to try to give a reading of the event, inserting it within the complex web of events that we call “general history”.

When it comes to causes, it is necessary to distinguish between conjunctural and structural causes. The economic causes are immediate and produce effects in a short time. The structural causes (also known as long-term causes) are deeper and must therefore be considered more broadly, also taking into account the past, the periodization of facts, and past events.

Generally, the causes that produce historical effects are economic, social, political and cultural. The economic causes are related to production crises, recession and stagnation and can mature over a longer or shorter period. Economic causes also often trigger social causes - such as conflicts between peoples or between classes - political - wars and revolutions - and cultural - diffusion of new habits, innovations, artistic mutations.

### 1.3. Sources: definition and analysis

#### a. The sources

The historical narrative is based on observable data, known as 'sources'. These, understood as basic tools through which the historian reconstructs and explains the past, can be classified as **primary** (or direct), **secondary** (or indirect),

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<sup>1</sup>The term “class” refers to the group of individuals sharing the same economic condition (eg bourgeoisie; proletariat). By “social class” we mean the group of individuals united by political and social power and prestige, obtained by inheritance (eg nobility). “Peoples” or “nations” are those groups of individuals united by cultural, linguistic and ethnic traditions (eg Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese). The term “State” means the political and juridical organization of a people, which finds itself in a territory, delimited by precise borders over which state sovereignty is exercised.



written, unwritten, oral, intentional and unintentional.

By primary or direct source we mean all the material contemporary to a fact: original documents, manuscripts, illuminated manuscripts or printed documents.

On the other hand, a secondary or indirect source is defined as the set of material produced in a subsequent period with respect to the historical moment taken into consideration. In this regard, among the secondary sources there are books, theses, articles and studies carried out on a given topic or fact.

Having made this first distinction, it is possible to further classify the source, considering it **written, not written** and **oral**.

Written sources are literary or epigraphic ones <sup>2</sup>. The nonwritten sources are archaeological finds, tools, coins, fossils; as well as graffiti, paintings, images, monuments or the remains of historical buildings of particular importance. The oral sources are instead the testimonies expressed verbally and subsequently recorded.

Oral sources have risen sensationally to the fore in historiographic use only recently. They have long been ostracized and have had to fight vigorously for credit and acceptance in the mainstream historiography.

The initial criticism was due to the prejudice matured towards everything that was not written, so much so that when the oral source was finally recognized as credible, this happened only on condition that it was transcribed.

In more recent times, oral sources have instead been held to have meaning in their oral form. The oral source is valid precisely because it is immediate and not sophisticated like a written source can be.

From the point of view of critical analysis, the oral source must be examined like any other source. And even the blatantly unreliable ones turn out to be precious, since it can be useful for reconstructing the context and the reasons that led the narrator to make mistakes or to lie.

After distinguishing the sources into primary and secondary, and subsequently into written, nonwritten and oral, we can further specify them into **intentional** and **unintentional**.

Intentional sources are those that intend to explicitly narrate a historical fact. They are therefore written in order to testify to something that is to be handed down in a certain way: for example Caio Giulio Cesare's *De Bello Gallico*.

These intentional sources must be analyzed very carefully, because they are generally an expression of the social groups in power, and therefore present a

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<sup>2</sup>Epigraphy is the particular discipline that studies and interprets what is written on hard support material and, as such, potentially durable over time.

deliberately oriented view of the facts. To get a picture as precise as possible, it is therefore useful to compare the intentional sources with sources of different types.

Unintentional sources, on the other hand, do not respond to the deliberate intention of handing down the account of historical facts for posterity. They are therefore less oriented, because they have no propaganda purposes. Generally speaking, they can be considered more reliable and allow the historian to investigate the fact more generally, not only with the eyes of the ruling class, but also with that of the lower social classes.

Unintended sources are, for example, letters or correspondence, which although not written for posterity, provide useful details to reconstruct some personal events, providing interesting insights into life.

That said, consider that any object can become a source but, in themselves, objects are mute. It is up to the researcher's intelligence to interrogate the source and interpret it to obtain the information necessary to reconstruct the historical fact. That the source must be questioned in order to reconstruct the whole is not, however, something singular, but in some ways it is the rule. The sources are often incomplete, fragmentary, not homogeneous, because of various origins, perhaps not preserved in perfect conditions, or even originally produced for different purposes and by subjects who had no intention of leaving that object to posterity.

### *b. Source analysis*

To study and critically analyze a source it is first of all necessary to date it and identify the type: that is, to establish whether it is a primary, secondary, written, nonwritten, oral, intentional or unintentional source.

Once this first investigation has been completed, it will be necessary to establish the name of the possible author and at the same time identify the purpose for which the source was produced. In doing so, it is necessary to distinguish essential information from secondary data, which perhaps deepen some aspects, but which add nothing to the general picture.

If the source we have is written, it is possible to summarize it in discursive form, summarizing everything with tables and diagrams.

To interpret a source it is essential to have analysis techniques that allow the historian to decrypt, for example, a text, reading it in the language in which it was written. If the source is instead an object - as in the case of a ceramic find or a stone fragment - it is necessary to analyze the chemical composition, which allows to establish the origin, as well as to study the shape, to know what it was

used for, and perhaps try to interpret the decoration, to understand where it was produced and for whom.

These hermeneutic operations can be facilitated by information regarding the history of the find. Knowing the path taken by the source is essential. Knowing whether a written document is an original or a copy, whether it is a first-hand codex or a manuscript requested by someone, is useful in producing an interpretation that is as error-free as possible. Similarly, if instead of a written document we are dealing with an object, it is essential to know where it was found, under what conditions and in what context.

After verifying the data, the source is interpreted by trying to reveal its secrets.

## **1.4 Concept maps**

After having interpreted the sources and presented a more or less clear picture of the context to be reconstructed, it may be useful to develop concept maps, which allow both the scholar, the teacher, and the learner to connect different aspects of the same one topic.

From a purely practical point of view, it is necessary, first of all, to distinguish between essential information - to be included in the map - and superfluous information. Secondly, it can be useful to summarize this essential information and establish a hierarchy among the information, so that all the news is arranged in order of importance. Once the general picture has been clarified, all the information can finally be linked together, establishing cause and effect connections, the beginning and end of an event, meeting or clashing between people.

Concept maps are very useful because they allow you to acquire historical knowledge in a visual and intuitive way and serve as a basis for subsequent processing.

In consideration of the relationship between history and theater, conceptual maps certainly act as a basic element for the elaboration of a text or information, which can then be elaborated during the dramaturgical drafting.



## 2. THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The definition of cultural heritage is quite recent. According to the international non-governmental organization called *International Council on Monuments and Sites* (ICOMOS), “*cultural heritage is a broad concept that includes the natural as well as the cultural environment. It encompasses landscapes, historical places, man-made sites and environments, as well as biodiversity, collections, past and present cultural practices, life experiences and knowledge. It records and expresses the long processes of historical development, which form the essence of different national, regional, indigenous and local identities and is an integral part of modern life. It is a dynamic point of reference and a positive tool for growth and change. The specific cultural heritage and collective memory of each locality or community cannot be replaced and is an important basis for present and future development*”<sup>3</sup>.

This definition is the result of a long debate that has contributed to changing the meaning of “cultural heritage”, broadening the field not only to material goods, but also to immaterial, intangible and spiritual ones.

The identification and selection of heritage is a complex process that involves the present, putting it in relation with the past, with tradition, with memory, and especially with the general characteristics of a people, which are recognized within a path, of a story, of a landscape, capable of delineating the contours of the community.

This effort is not made once and for all, but needs constant review, discussion and analysis. Each generation identifies a cultural heritage and establishes the sets of assets that must be preserved. Now, because this not only happens but becomes more and more urgent today, two well-known scholars explain it to us. John Tunbridge and Gregory Ashworth argue that the need to trace their cultural roots, to defend them and pass them on to future generations is mainly due to the intrinsic need that communities have to provide answers to the identity question of the present. In an increasingly global and fragmented world, recognizing oneself around a clear core and heritage becomes indispensable. “The interpretation of the past in history” write Tunbridge and Ashworth, “the surviving artifacts and buildings, the individual and collective memories are all used to respond to current social-identity and economic needs. Thus, on the one hand, cultural heritage is the indispensable material for building and defining the social, ethnic and territorial identity of individuals, on the other it is an

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<sup>3</sup>Definition of “cultural heritage” proposed by ICOMOS at the 12th General Assembly held in Mexico in October 1999.

economic resource that can be used within the production and marketing schemes of the creative industries”<sup>4</sup>.

In the process of rediscovering its own identity, each community traces the material and immaterial heritage that characterizes it through the folds of history. A building, a structure, a monument, a landscape, an archaeological site are certainly configured as cultural heritage. But in equal measure so are also the myths, the spirit, the sensitivity and the language of a people.

Precisely in this sense, in 2003, on the occasion of the meeting in Paris, Unesco adopted the Convention for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which in article 2 reads as follows: “Intangible cultural heritage means practices, representations, the expressions, knowledge - as well as the tools, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, passed down from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, account will be taken exclusively of that intangible cultural heritage compatible with international instruments in the field of human rights, and with the requirements of mutual respect between communities, groups and individuals and of sustainable development”<sup>5</sup>.

What this means is that by *intangible cultural heritage* we mean the set of rites, traditions, oral expressions, which allow the heritage to be conveyed from generation to generation. Added to this are the myths, the arts, the shows, the social customs, as well as the traditional craft activities linked to a specific territory.

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<sup>4</sup>J. Tunbridge and G. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past As a Resource in Conflict*, New York 1995.

<sup>5</sup>The original text in English reads: “The intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development “.

## 3. DRAMATURGICAL STRATEGY

### 3.1. From history to theater; from theater to history

The way of teaching history has changed over the years. We have moved from a mainly mnemonic learning method to methods inspired by cognitive psychology or even by the art of actual storytelling. In this regard, think for example of the considerations that Keran Egan presents in his *Teaching as storytelling: An alternative approach to teaching and curriculum in the elementary school*. The author criticizes the traditional model of history teaching, inviting the teacher to conceive the lessons as spectacles or as real stories to be told, and not as arid objectives to be achieved. History, in fact, is not a set of notions to remember, but is the result of human encounters and clashes that have always taken place every day, and which narrate the difficulty of being in the world.

For Keran Egan then, the storytelling, as well as being the fulcrum of the learning process, stimulates the imagination of the students, who will also be able to memorize the notions better. Learning history can satisfy our curiosity; it can help us discover how our predecessors lived and what they did; it can strengthen our sense of belonging to a community; it can provide us with interesting information about the origins and causes of the conflicts, difficulties or successes we experience today.

The study of history also stimulates open-mindedness. We are confronted with the difference, the otherness, the stranger, which is basically our fellow man, even if he lives on the other side of the world. Exploring the past can help us understand how people lived on other continents. Just as knowing distant cultures, different religions can make us more open and able to grasp the complexity. It can put us in a position to understand that, regardless of the differences, there is something in the depths of each of us that makes us similar to each other: humanity. And humanity consists precisely in that ability to ask itself the three famous questions of meaning: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going?

Every man of every time, of every civilization, has always asked himself these questions. History accustoms us to discovering the relativity of things, and shows us how ideas, faiths and doctrines, in different forms, repeat themselves in a similar way.

The theater uses and blends together verbal, auditory, visual and bodily languages. It exploits memorization, interpretation, improvisation, attention, as well as spatial organization and verbalization to enable the actor to express

himself at his best and establish a good relationship with other actors and with the audience.

To carry out the acting mission with awareness it is also necessary to know literature, the arts, culture in general, as well as history. All these competences imply the mobilization of cognitive, affective, social and motor aspects of the subjects; they also involve learning, repetitive exercise and knowledge processing.

The theater, by its very essence, allows to combine, in its own form of expression-communication, all these characteristics inherent in artistic expression, being one of the most precious and complete educational means. A medium, where the breadth of its action (which covers almost all important aspects of the development of children and young people) as well as the great diversity of forms it can take (it can be adapted according to objectives, age and means available) make it, par excellence, the main form of educational activity.

The use of theater as a pedagogical tool to learn the past allows the student to stop having an always passive position towards history and to recognize himself as an active and critical subject. The construction of a scene or a dramaturgical text requires the student to deepen the content and contextualization of what is to be elaborated. But history, in this case, becomes an instrument, it is no longer the end. You don't study history to know it. But history is studied with the intention of translating the fact into a work of art.

In a very recent study, Kisida, Goodwin and Bowen showed the pedagogical efficacy of a program that blends theater with the contents of history. The three authors concluded that students show more interest, empathy, and better assimilation and understanding of the story. They also state that *“educators can have confidence that standards-based learning is a viable outcome of arts-integrated learning settings and in some cases may be more effective than typical classroom learning environments. Educational leaders should explore partnerships with cultural institutions as a significant and efficacious tool for student learning across other subjects and arts experiences”*<sup>6</sup>.

From these considerations it is clear, therefore, that between history and theater a synergy can be set in motion that allows the learner to acquire knowledge of the facts of the past through theatrical art. History then becomes a means of artistic production. And art, in turn, in addition to manifesting itself as such, also assumes the appearance of an instrument of knowledge. Through the theater, the show or the script, the young student actively acquires skills that not only settle in a mnemonic way, but vibrate within, making the echo of artistic interpretation resound in his heart.

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<sup>6</sup>B. Kisida, L. Goodwin, DH Bowen, *Teaching History Through Theater: The Effects of Arts Integration on Students' Knowledge and Attitudes*, in 'AERA Open, 6' (2020), p. 9.



### **3.2. How to choose historical facts**

Faced with an endless series of events, all potentially transformable into a theatrical performance, which stories from history are preferable to choose, fishing in the great sea of past events?

It is clear that there is no valid method for everyone, and probably from a pedagogical point of view, it may perhaps be more useful to speak with the learners, perhaps finding a meeting point or prevailing interests.

In our opinion, the imagination and enthusiasm of young students could be more stimulated by the deepening of the history of the territory in which they live. However, we believe that it is even very interesting to choose to deepen the study of lesser known and famous episodes: that is to say, those hidden episodes and not adequately described by general historical treatises. In concentrating on the facts of a specific territory, the attention turns to the so-called micro-history: that is to that method of historiographic investigation set on the collection and examination of minimal facts and circumscribed environments, which are however understood only if inserted in the most general. In fact, it is precisely the small events that are often not mentioned, the events considered marginal that make up the great puzzle of human history. If the little event had taken place in another way, the history of the whole country or human history would be different. Add to this that the small fact is always linked to a well-defined territory, therefore, if you want to start from the interest in a specific territory, it is preferable to work on a minor event, but one that clearly characterized the place where it happened.

### **3.3. How to identify the situation within the historical fact**

After having chosen the event to investigate, it is essential to trace the main situation within it, taking into account that without a situation there is no theater. The event, in fact, in addition to being studied and deepened, must be transformed into a show. And the show is an event that artists - through speech, gesture, song, dance, or with a varied combination of different performing arts - stage in front of a live audience.

The historical fact must therefore be told and inserted within a dramaturgical structure - generally made up of a written or improvised text - which has a clear narrative intent, with both informative and expressive purposes. That is to say that in addition to making the event known, theater - as an art form -

also has the task of indicating readings of the present or the past, through representations that facilitate or stimulate reflection.

### **3.4. How to dramaturgically transform a historical notion into a theatrical text**

After tracing the fact and studying the main situation we want to tell, we need to ask ourselves how to transform historical knowledge - or a set of documents - into a real theatrical performance.

To arrive at the composition of a dramaturgical text, two alternative writing paths can be followed: the path that goes from the pen to the body, and the path that starts from the body to get to the pen.

The procession from the pen to the actor's body is the traditional method. Those who choose this path, dramaturgically elaborate the historical sources, the notes, the notions acquired, constructing a text that, at a later time, the actor may perhaps modify slightly, but which he finds, however, already well defined.

The way, on the other hand, that starts from the body to get to the pen overturns the creative process. Historical notions act as a meeting ground between the playwright and the actor, who cooperates in the realization of the text with improvisations and scenic intuitions.

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