



# The Challenge of Rethinking History Education: On Practices, Theories, and Policy

*Bruce A. VanSledright*

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Every few years in the United States, history teachers go through what some believe is an embarrassing national ritual. A representative group of students sit down to take a standardized U.S. history test, and the results show varied success. Sizable percentages of students score at or below a "basic" understanding of the country's history. Pundits seize on these results to argue that not only are students woefully ignorant about history, but history teachers are simply not doing an adequate job teaching historical facts. The overly common practice of teaching history as a series of dates, memorizing the textbook, and taking notes on teachers' lectures ensues.

In stark contrast, social studies educators like Bruce A. VanSledright argue instead for a more inquiry-oriented approach to history teaching and learning that fosters a sense of citizenship through the critical skills of historical investigation. Detailed case studies of exemplar teachers are included in this timely book to make visible, in an easily comprehensible way, the thought processes of skilled teachers. Each case is then unpacked further to clearly address the question of what history teachers need to know to teach in an investigative way. *The Challenge of Rethinking History Education* is a must read for anyone looking for a guide to both the theory and practice of what it means to teach historical thinking, to engage in investigative practice with students, and to increase students' capacity to critically read and assess the nature of the complex culture in which they live.

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