

Forming, Through History Education, Critical Skills for Countering False Historical Interpretations and Disinformation

Ahmedov Nodir Kodiraliyevich

Independent Researcher, Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages Named After Is'hoqxon Ibrat, Uzbekistan

Received: 08 December 2025; **Accepted:** 27 December 2025; **Published:** 31 January 2026

Abstract: The article analyses the problem of forming, through history education, critical skills for countering the false historical interpretations and disinformation disseminated in the digital environment. Six types of false historical interpretation are identified: the unsourced claim, the decontextualised image, selective evidence, emotional manipulation, false authority and anachronistic interpretation with a distinguishing marker, a method of verification and a target skill specified for each. The principle of impartial engagement with sources in the legacy of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni is compared with the research of S. Wineburg, J. Roozenbeek and S. van der Linden. The didactic potential of the “lateral reading” and “pre-emptive inoculation” approaches in the history lesson is substantiated, and three conditions for their application are established.

Keywords: False historical interpretation, disinformation, critical skill, media literacy, historical thinking, lateral reading, civic online reasoning, pre-emptive inoculation, history of pedagogical doctrines, national pedagogical heritage.

Introduction: History has today become one of the most heavily manipulated fields of knowledge. Historical content circulating on social networks is frequently presented without sources, detached from its context and adapted to a particular purpose. It is precisely from such content that the student forms an initial conception of the past. Under these circumstances the task of history education is broadened: it must now not only impart historical knowledge but also form in the student the skill of independently evaluating the reliability of historical information.

The normative basis of the problem has been established: the document adopted within the framework of the priority directions of the country's development through 2030 designates the formation of a high-quality education system as a strategic task, while the Law “On Education” consolidates the principle of the unity and continuity of the education system. The aim of the article is to classify false historical interpretations and to substantiate the didactic means of forming, through history education,

the critical skills for countering them. The tasks are as follows: to identify the types of false historical interpretation; to determine a method of verification for each of them; to analyse the potential of contemporary approaches within the history lesson; and to substantiate the conditions for their application.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The most precise expression of the principle of impartial engagement with sources within the national pedagogical heritage is to be found in the work of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni. In “The Chronology of Ancient Nations”, the author set forth information concerning the calendars, customs and beliefs of various peoples in comparative form, indicating the source of each. Two principles of al-Biruni's method correspond directly to present-day critical skills: relating information to its source, and comparing information drawn from different sources. Abdulla Avloniy, for his part, examined the question of attitudes towards knowledge and truth among the moral qualities and assessed judgement not grounded in knowledge as a manifestation of ignorance. The modern theoretical

foundation is constituted by the research of S. Wineburg. The author identified the skill of ascertaining the author, date and purpose of a source as the supporting element of historical thinking. The state of this skill in the digital environment has been studied empirically: in a study conducted by the Stanford History Education Group in 2015–2016 across twelve states, 7,804 student responses were analysed and a low level of skill in evaluating the reliability of online information was recorded. An extended study involved 3,446 high-school students. According to its results, 96 per cent of respondents failed to identify the connection with the fossil-fuel industry of a site claiming to disseminate “factual reports” on climate issues, two-thirds were unable to distinguish news material from advertising, and more than half accepted a video disseminated from an unidentified source as strong evidence. These data demonstrate clearly that growing up in a digital environment does not of itself form critical skills. The principal method proposed as a solution is “lateral reading”. In a study by S. Wineburg and S. McGrew, the strategies employed by experts and by students in evaluating an online source were compared: rather than reading the page itself in depth, the experts turned immediately to other sources and gathered information about the owner of the page. Reliability, in other words, is ascertained not from within the source but from outside it. The value of this strategy in the history lesson is considerable, since it constitutes a form of the skill of source analysis adapted to the digital environment. S. Wineburg analysed this question in a separate work and substantiated the proposition that, under conditions in which historical knowledge is itself available on a

telephone, the task of education shifts from transmitting knowledge to evaluating it. The second approach is pre-emptive inoculation. In the method elaborated by J. Roozenbeek and S. van der Linden, the user assumes the role of a producer of false information and thereby learns from within six techniques of manipulation — polarisation, appeal to emotion, dissemination of conspiracy theories, provocation, attribution of blame, and impersonation through fake accounts; in an evaluation conducted with N = 15,000 participants, an increase in the ability to detect false information was recorded. The pedagogical significance of this method lies in the fact that it forms critical skill not through prohibition but through an understanding of mechanism. In determining the specific contribution of history as a discipline, the foundational concepts of evidence and historical perspective identified by P. Seixas and T. Morton, together with the conception of the inquiry arc set out in the 2013 social studies standards framework of the United States, were taken as the point of departure. The research methodology comprised theoretical analysis, retrospective analysis of sources relating to the history of pedagogical doctrines, classification and didactic modelling.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The first result of the research consists in the classification of false historical interpretations. Six types were identified in the course of the analysis, and for each of them a distinguishing marker, a method of verification and a target skill were determined (see Table 1).

Table 1. Types of false historical interpretation and methods of verifying them

Type of false interpretation	Distinguishing marker	Method of verification	Skill to be formed
Unsourced claim	A factual claim is present, but no reference is given	Searching out the primary source	The habit of returning to the source
Decontextualised image	The image is genuine, but its caption refers to a different event	Verification by means of reverse image search	Analysis of visual sources

Type of false interpretation	Distinguishing marker	Method of verification	Skill to be formed
Selective evidence	The facts are accurate, but contradictory evidence has been omitted	Comparison with other sources	Evaluation of completeness
Emotional manipulation	Strongly emotive language, polarising tone	Ascertaining the purpose and audience of the text	Awareness of the factor of interest
False authority	An anonymous reference of the “scientists have proved” type	Verification of the author and the organisation by means of lateral reading	Independent verification of authority
Anachronistic interpretation	The past is construed in terms of a present-day political demand	Reconstruction of the context of the period	Historical perspective

Analysis of Table 1 reveals an important regularity: of the six types, only one the unsourced claim is connected with factual error; in the remaining five the facts may be accurate, while the manipulation is affected at the level of context, selection or tone. From this a pedagogically decisive conclusion follows: increasing factual knowledge does not of itself afford protection against disinformation. A student may accept a decontextualised interpretation even while being in possession of the facts. For this reason, history education must specifically form the skills of reconstructing context and evaluating sources alongside factual knowledge.

The second result of the research consists in the didactic form of the lateral reading strategy within the history lesson. In traditional source analysis the student works within the text, ascertaining the author, the date and the purpose from the text itself. In digital content, however, this information is frequently absent or false. Analysis must therefore be moved outside the text: the student first gathers independent information about the account or site that disseminated the content and only then proceeds to the substance of the text. This inversion of sequence — the principle of “first who, then what” — constitutes the core of the technology. The third result of the research consists in a variant of the pre-emptive inoculation approach adapted to the

history lesson. Within it, students are given the following assignment: using a genuine historical source, to construct a one-sided interpretation supporting a particular conclusion. The groups then analyse one another’s interpretations and identify the techniques that have been employed. In conclusion, the students openly discuss instances of selection, omission of context and intensification of tone in their own interpretations. The strength of this assignment lies in the fact that the student comes to understand the mechanism of manipulation not from outside but from within.

At the same time, three conditions must be strictly observed in applying this assignment. The first condition is the obligatory nature of a reflective conclusion: the assignment must not end with the construction of a one-sided interpretation but must without fail be carried through to the stage of analysis and open discussion. The second condition is caution in the selection of subject matter: topics that carry an emotional charge within society or that touch upon interethnic relations are not to be chosen for this assignment. The third condition is the consolidation of the outcome as an acquired skill: after the exercise, the student should perform an assignment involving the analysis of real online content. The fourth result of the research consists in substantiating the connection between critical skills and the moral worldview. At first

sight, the detection of disinformation appears to be a purely cognitive skill. In practice, however, it possesses a moral dimension: the student assumes responsibility for not disseminating unverified information. Critical skill is thus manifested in the behavioural-practical component of the moral worldview — it is not confined to knowing but regulates conduct. It is precisely this connection that justifies regarding critical skills as a constituent part of the system of upbringing. In discussing the results obtained, two limitations must be noted. First, all the empirical data adduced were obtained from foreign samples; a national study of the skill of Uzbek students in evaluating historical content is required. Second, the effectiveness of the didactic solutions proposed must be verified through experimental work.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical research conducted has made it possible to arrive at the following conclusions. First, of the six types of false historical interpretation only one is connected with factual error; in the remainder the facts may be accurate, while the manipulation is affected at the level of context, selection or tone. Second, increasing factual knowledge does not of itself afford protection against disinformation; the skills of reconstructing context and evaluating sources must be specifically formed. Third, the essence of the lateral reading strategy is manifested in the inversion of the sequence of analysis — in the principle of “first who, then what”; this constitutes a form of source analysis adapted to the digital environment. Fourth, the pre-emptive inoculation approach may be adapted to the history lesson, provided that the conditions of a reflective conclusion, caution in the selection of subject matter and consolidation of the outcome on real content are strictly observed. Fifth, critical skill is not purely cognitive: it is manifested in the responsibility for not disseminating unverified information, that is, in the behavioural-practical component of the moral worldview.

REFERENCES

1. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-21 of 16 February 2026 “On additional measures for the consistent continuation of reforms and their advancement to a new stage within the framework of the priority directions of the country’s development through 2030” // National Database of Legislation. — URL: <https://lex.uz/uz/docs/-8050769> (accessed: 22.08.2026). (in Uzbek).
2. Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Education” of 23 September 2020, No. O’RQ-637 // National Database of Legislation. — URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/-5013007> (accessed: 22.08.2026). (in Uzbek).
3. Abu Rayhan al-Biruni. Tanlangan asarlar. Vol. I: Qadimgi xalqlardan qolgan yodgorliklar [Selected Works. Vol. I: The Chronology of Ancient Nations] / trans. by A. Rasulov. — Tashkent: Fan, 1968. (in Uzbek).
4. Avloniy A. Turkiy Guliston yoxud axloq [The Turkic Gulistan, or Morality]. — Tashkent, 1913. — Electronic text: <https://archive.org/stream/TurkiyGulistonYoxudAxloq-AbdullaAvloniy> (accessed: 22.08.2026). (in Uzbek).
5. Wineburg S. Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past. — Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.
6. Wineburg S., McGrew S., Breakstone J., Ortega T. Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning. — Stanford: Stanford Digital Repository, 2016. — URL: <https://purl.stanford.edu/fv751yt5934> (accessed: 22.08.2026).
7. Breakstone J., Smith M., Wineburg S., Rapaport A., Carle J., Garland M., Saavedra A. Students’ Civic Online Reasoning: A National Portrait // Educational Researcher. — 2021. — DOI: 10.3102/0013189X211017495.
8. Wineburg S., McGrew S. Lateral Reading and the Nature of Expertise: Reading Less and Learning More When Evaluating Digital Information // Teachers College Record. — 2019. — Vol. 121, No. 11. — P. 1–40.
9. Wineburg S. Why Learn History (When It’s Already on Your Phone). — Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.
10. Roozenbeek J., van der Linden S. Fake News Game Confers Psychological Resistance Against Online

Misinformation // Palgrave Communications. — 2019. — Vol. 5, Art. 65. — DOI: 10.1057/s41599-019-0279-9.

- 11.** Seixas P., Morton T. The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts. — Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013. — 218 p. — ISBN 978-0-17-654154-5.
- 12.** College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. — Silver Spring, MD: National Council for the Social Studies, 2013. — URL: <https://www.socialstudies.org/standards/c3> (accessed: 22.08.2026).