



## Designing the Middle Ages: Knowledge emphasis and designs for learning in the history classroom

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**ABSTRACT:** Contemporary teaching and learning implies that pupils encounter curricular content in the form of multimodal representations such as film, museum visits, PowerPoint presentations, roleplay and digital games. Spoken language is no longer the only mode for knowledge representation and meaning-making. This means a new demand for teaching (and assessment), since the school tradition is heavily based on verbal language and assessments of verbal representations. In this article, we will present an analysis of the use of resources and different media in classroom work about the Middle Ages, and discuss the need for the development of assessment tools.

**KEYWORDS:** multimodality, framing, salience, learning design, curriculum, substantive knowledge, procedural knowledge

### Introduction

This article reports findings from a research project devoted to an investigation of the complex interaction of selections, interpretations, representations and actions that shape the basis for how a knowledge domain is being construed in history classrooms<sup>1</sup> (see Insulander, Lindstrand & Selander, 2015; Lindstrand, Insulander & Selander, 2016). Our focus is on what is considered meaningful knowledge about the Middle Ages in two different classrooms by looking at the procedures in the classroom as well as the resources that were introduced by the teachers in our study. Three sets of questions are asked: a) What is framed and represented as salient when learning about the Middle Ages concerning procedural activities, resources and content focus? b) How does the framing and salience change during learning design sequences? What is the characteristic of representations at different points of time? c) What are (tentatively) the consequences for assessment?

PLEASE CITE AS: Insulander, E., Lindstrand, F., & Selander, S. (2016). Designing the Middle Ages: Knowledge emphasis and designs for learning in the history classroom. *Historical Encounters: A journal of historical consciousness, historical cultures, and history education*, 3(1), 31-42.

## A multimodal design perspective on teaching and learning

Both teaching and learning can be understood as multimodal design activities (*for* respectively *in* learning), where knowledge is constantly interpreted and modally expressed anew (Selander & Kress, 2010). Thus, knowledge is not seen as a fixed entity that can be transmitted to the learner (Danielsson & Selander, 2014; Jewitt, 2006, 2009; Kress, Jewitt, Ogborn & Tsatsarelis, 2001; Kress 2003; Selander 2008).

In multimodal research of sign-making and knowledge representations, the notion of *salience* refers to content (or units) that has been attributed particular value or importance (Kress, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996/2006; van Leeuwen, 2005). We will use this concept in line with Roberts' (1982) notion of *curriculum emphases* – developed in relation to science education and defined as 'a coherent set of messages about science' (Roberts, 1982: 245) which organises what is seen as specifically important subject domain knowledge (cf. Seixas & Morton, 2013). Here, we will specifically highlight this in terms of *substantive* and *procedural* knowledge (Lee, 2006; Levesque, 2008). Substantive knowledge concerns content and central concepts like 'war', 'nobility' and 'merchant' (First Order Concepts), whilst procedural knowledge enhances processes and such aspects as 'cause/effect', 'change/continuity', 'historical empathy' and the 'taking of a perspective' (Second Order Concepts). We will also show how emphases may change during a learning design sequence (Selander, 2008).

The concept of *design* in this article refers to the organizing principles of a learning environment and resources, and its consequences for communication and learning (Rostvall & Selander, 2008; Insulander, 2010; Kempe & West, 2010; Selander & Kress, 2010; Elm Fristorp & Lindstrand, 2012). Designs for learning articulates learning as sign-making, transformative processes and knowledge representations in learning environments of different designs. *Learning design sequences* is an analytical tool that intends to capture activities such as teaching and learning in different learning environments, including sketching, negotiations and choices (Selander, 2008; Selander & Kress, 2010). This model consists of 1) a contextual framing for the outlines of teaching and learning 2) the primary transformation unit where pupils, by way of different resources (modes and media), work with information and represent their understanding 3) the second transformation unit where the work and the result of work is assessed, discussed and (sometimes) graded. One sequence may consist of a lesson, a theme or a series of lessons. It starts with the teacher's introduction of the subject area and continues throughout the evaluation and assessment.

## Method and empirical setting

Various materials were gathered during several visits to two different classrooms in two different schools in Sweden. The pupils were 10 – 11 years old and were in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. In Sweden, pupils do not start receiving official grades until the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. One of the schools, here called the Urban School, had around 550 pupils and was located in a multi-cultural suburb, while the other was a small rural school, here called the Countryside School, with around 50 pupils. In both schools, a researcher attended a series of lessons, starting from the introduction of the unit and continuing until its finish. Several lessons on the Middle Ages were documented. These data consist of video recordings of classroom interaction and visits to museums, a compilation of educational material such as local educational plans, lesson plans, textbooks, films, PowerPoint presentations, worksheets, instructions and text files produced during teaching. Tests and pupils' writings such as stories, factual texts and notes, were also collected as data.


The video data consist of 22 hours of film, recorded during ten lessons at each school and during two museum visits. The entire video collection was viewed several times during the process of transcription. The transcription, which was made in linear form, focused on teachers' and students' speech, body posture and gestures. In the first step of the analysis, all the material was printed and processed several times, using different colours for the codes. The analytical concepts of procedural activities, resources and content focus was used as a filter, through which the material was coded. In the second step of the analysis, condensed meanings concerning the procedural activities, resources and content focus were summarised in a matrix that also took into account the time aspect, i.e. the different phases of learning design sequences. Thus, the analysis was organised chronologically: as educational material was introduced or produced in class, condensed meanings concerning the content's focus was noted in the matrix. Our intent has not been to make a detailed multimodal analysis of human interaction, but rather to study transformative processes and instances where modes and media are used by teachers and students. Our empirical examples are used to illustrate how different didactic designs produce different images of a knowledge area and create different opportunities for learning. This research has been performed in accordance with ethical guidelines set by the Swedish Research Council, including confidentiality, consent, information and autonomy, with an emphasis that participation in the study was voluntary.

## The Urban School

*The setting:* In the first lesson, the teacher demonstrated a local educational plan, using PowerPoint, on a computer and projector. This plan is part of the teacher's didactic design and based on re-formulations from the syllabus. It shows that both substantive knowledge and procedural knowledge is important. In terms of substantive knowledge there is a list of concepts, e.g. 'being a Christian', 'baptism', 'saint', 'crusade', 'a suit of armour'. Procedural knowledge concerns source criticism, historical empathy and cause/effect. The teacher also gives examples of how pupils can demonstrate their knowledge of history and asks them to compare the past with the present.

### Medeltiden år 5

Genomgång av medeltiden, under ca 3 veckor.  
Vikingarna försvinner och kyrkan tar över, hur var det att leva i Norden då?



#### Syfte och innehåll

I arbetsområdet ska du få möjlighet att utveckla din förmåga att...

- kunna redogöra för hur det var att leva i Sverige under medeltiden.
- förklara vad vi lärt oss om medeltiden med hjälp av de fynd arkeologerna gjort.
- redogöra för hur människor påverkades i det dagliga livet av kyrkan och prästerna.
- beskriva hur Sverige styrdes och vilka lagar som kom till och jämföra med dagens styre och lagar.
- använda dig av historiska begrepp.

#### Undervisning

**Arbetsätt:**

- Gemensam och enskild läsning.
- Föreläsning av lärare.
- Diskussioner i större och mindre grupp.

**Till din hjälp:**

- Lärobok, annan litteratur
- Internet
- Diskussioner

#### Begrepp

**Allmänna begrepp:** Resonera, jämföra, granska, analysera, konsekvens, orsak.

**Områdesspecifika begrepp:** Kristna, kejsare, dop, hedning, apostel, missionär, helgon, legend, skrifter, rustning, korståg, stift, biskop, kloster, munk, nunna, skatt, en tondel, bruka, borg, boningshus, eldstad, bete, självhushåll, trä, avsrätt, kyrkofrid, tingsfrid, hemfrid, kvinnofrid, fredlös, tinget

**För högre nivå (omdömesmässigt):** Beskriver varför något sker och konsekvenser, använder ämnesspecifika begrepp, jämför och drar slutsatser, stor innehållsmässig bredd.

### Bedömning

**Underlag för bedömning är:**

- o Diskussioner i klassrummet och i små grupper.
- o Texter ni skriver.
- o Redovisning i klassen.

När kunskapskraven.	När kunskapskraven väl.	När kunskapskraven mycket väl.
Eleven har <b>grundläggande</b> kunskaper om livet under medeltiden och vilka personer och händelser som var viktiga under medeltiden.	Eleven har <b>goda</b> kunskaper om livet under medeltiden och vilka personer och händelser som var viktiga under medeltiden.	Eleven har <b>mycket goda</b> kunskaper om livet under medeltiden och vilka personer och händelser som var viktiga under medeltiden.
Eleven kan se och förstå vad som finns kvar i dagens samhälle av det som fanns redan på medeltiden och prata om det på ett enklare sätt.	Eleven kan se och förstå vad som finns kvar i dagens samhälle av det som fanns redan på medeltiden och prata om det på ett utvecklat sätt.	Eleven kan se och förstå vad som finns kvar i dagens samhälle av det som fanns redan på medeltiden och prata om det på ett mer utvecklat sätt.
Eleven kan använda och vara kritisk mot information från olika böcker och sidor från internet på ett enkelt sätt.	Eleven kan använda och vara kritisk mot information från olika böcker och sidor från internet på ett utvecklat sätt.	Eleven kan använda och vara kritisk mot information från olika böcker och sidor från internet på ett mer utvecklat sätt.
Du kan föra enkla resonemang kring historia och använda historiska begrepp på ett i huvudsak fungerande sätt.	Du kan föra enkla resonemang kring historia och använda historiska begrepp på ett väl fungerande sätt.	Du kan föra enkla resonemang kring historia och använda historiska begrepp på ett väl utvecklat fungerande sätt.

Fig. 1. Local educational plan, the Urban School

During the subsequent PowerPoint presentation, called *A quick presentation of the Middle Ages*, substantive knowledge is considered salient through the use of words like: 'king', 'realm' and 'Hundred Years War'. As stated in the educational plan, the teaching methods are related to verbal language: reading, listening to a lecture and participating in discussions. The presentation includes both text and images, but the text is orally presented and discussed. The teacher regularly asks the students to explain subject-specific words and words connected to the knowledge requirements. Examples included explaining the implication of 'the most powerful', 'tyrant', 'to account for', 'pedagogical', and 'to have basic or a good knowledge'. Each week, the pupils' homework was to learn some subject-specific concepts and words. Apart from these examples, the focus was on substantive knowledge, where political and social history is discussed. In terms of political history, the teacher emphasized members of the ruling classes, kings and queens, their jobs, abilities and ways of controlling the realm. Sweden as a realm is placed in relation to England, France, Germany and Russia. The struggle for power between Sweden and Denmark is exemplified through the historical event, the Stockholm Bloodbath. The computer and projector were used as resources to present the local education plan and the PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint presentation and educational plan was also printed into hand-outs and distributed. The knowledge representations in this setting concern both procedural and substantive knowledge, but it is substantive knowledge that is being stressed.

In the *primary transformation unit*, where the pupils' designs for learning were the focus, the pupils were able to watch ten episodes of a film series called *With Ahmed in the Middle Ages*. The computer and projector were used as resources, and the pupils were encouraged to take notes and write down questions. The film is focused on procedural knowledge in terms of source criticism and historical empathy, and deals with social history within themes such as food, entertainment and love. However this emphasis is downplayed by the teacher through the comments and questions posed, as these concern substantive understanding, where pupils are asked to explain words like 'brawn' (a meat dish), 'hygiene' and 'to be burned at the stake'. Subsequently, pupils were told to work individually with study questions, using the PowerPoint handout as a resource. The teacher's role appeared to be to motivate the pupils to work, suggesting answers and arranging work in pairs as some pupils had a hard time concentrating on the assignment. The questions posed can be characterised as convergent (closed) and connected to substantive knowledge and political history: 'How could the king find out what happened in the realm?', 'Who was Birger Jarl' and 'How many people died during the Stockholm Bloodbath and why were they killed?'. The class went through the answers collectively - pupils raised their hands and several suggestions were given. Word comprehension appeared important, and words like 'corpulent' and 'barn' were explained. In another assignment, social and cultural history was emphasised as pupils had to select key words for a factual text and oral presentation concerning the themes of food, professions, housing and the church. Here, and in the following assignment, substantive knowledge appeared as the central theme. The next assignment was to form groups and work with specific themes, including food, professions, housing and the church. The pupils were encouraged to take turns reading a text about their theme, a resource which was produced by the teacher. The focus was on social history and substantive knowledge. The pupils read aloud and then worked individually to find key words, such as 'merchant', 'guild' and 'town wall', which were written down and used as semiotic resources during the presentation. New groups were formed, with representatives from each theme and the pupils presenting their themes to one another. The teacher instructed them and had a supporting role during the lessons. During the presentation, pupils had a few minutes to read their notes and make preparations, then they took turns telling one another about their theme. Next, the class read aloud from their textbook. The focus was

on cultural history and the influence of church, procedural knowledge and cause/effect. Additionally first order concepts and substantive knowledge are emphasised and explained: 'pious', 'preach', 'missionary' and 'apostle'. Their next assignment, as presented in a handout, was to write a story through using a set of given words. The pupils had to write at least two pages, using pencil and paper. Most of these words were discussed in class, and pupils gave suggestions of what 'tournament', 'to knight somebody' and 'noble' means. The focus was on social and cultural history. In the story-based assignment, pupils had to learn words related to the everyday lives of people in the countryside and in towns during the Middle Ages.

**Ordkista**

Skriv historien om Ida, Nils och den mystiska gästen.  
Vilka är de? De flesta ord och namn i kistan ska vara med men du får ändra form på dem, till exempel loppa – loppor, sälja – sålde, stadsport – stadsporten.

stadsport	vakter	rustningar	sköldar
spjut	loppa	färger	vapenrockar
vagn	oxe	tornering	dubba
sälja	tunna	öl	stekar
torget	gycklare	bröd	köpman
kungen	präster	kåpa	rädda
	knektar	buga	gömma
	riddare		mystisk gäst

**Handwritten story:**

Olof, Ida och Per står på gatan och gycklar. Det går trögt och det är ingen som stannar för att kalla. Alla är på väg mot torget där folk står och säljer bröd. Per är den som är erfaren, han har uppträtt hos flera adelsmän. Per är nitton år. Plötsligt kommer en adelsman förbi. Han stannar och ser på de. Olof blir nervös och vet inte vad han ska göra. Ida står och janglerar med färgglada kläder. Per viskar i Olofs öra: "Skynda dig, säg något poligt!" "Ehm... Olofs kinder blir lika röda som hans hår." "Kungen... Han hade så smutsiga sockor att... att... Han tvättade de i en tunna öl!" Den förnämde adelsmannen såg arg ut. Han sade: "Hur vågar du tala om kungen?!" "Det här ska jag tala om för honom!" Adelsmannen gick raskt vidare. Ah, nej! tänkte Olof. "Varför talar du om kungen?!" Frågade Per argt. "Jag vet inte... Jag blev nervös," säger Olof. "Det var ju inte ens poligt!" säger Per.

Fig. 2–3. Assignment and essay, the Urban School

Even though the assignment was focused on historical empathy, it is the substantive knowledge that remained in focus. The pupils had to use most of the given words in the story. The teacher gave examples of how to write and held up certain phrases as an example. During their work, they got to see an episode of the film series to get inspiration for writing and as yet another model for how to tell a story. After this assignment, the class read aloud from their textbook - a chapter on the plague - which was focused on social history and substantive knowledge. They also watched a film, which discussed the plague. During the primary transformation unit, knowledge representations mostly concerned substantive knowledge.

During the *secondary transformation unit* some of the pupils' stories were read out loud in class. This selection highlights what is considered as recognized knowledge. These stories concern everyday conditions and situations, and mention housing, professions and social classes. Again, it is the substantive knowledge that appears as the central theme. During the last lesson, the teacher hands out an evaluation form, where pupils are encouraged to write down what they have learned, what they liked the most, and where they would have liked to live: in the countryside or in a town. Paper and pencil are used for this purpose. In the evaluation of this unit, only a small part of the pupil's representations are mentioned aloud in class. A few weeks later, the class pays a visit to the Museum of Medieval Stockholm. A museum educator



shows them the display and takes the class on a guided tour of the Old Town. The emphasis here is on social and cultural history.

## The Countryside School

*The setting:* During the first lesson, the teacher started by asking the pupils to write down what they already knew and what they wanted to learn during this unit. Social history and topics like clothing, hygiene and punishments appeared to be important to the pupils. As the pupils finished writing, using pen and paper, they jointly make a mind map on the Smart board. In terms of content, first order concepts like ‘gallows’, ‘plague’, ‘castle’ and ‘knights’ were suggested by the pupils. Then, the teacher displayed a document on the Smart board. It was a re-formulation from the syllabus focusing on core content and learning goals, which covered political, social and cultural history. The content included Cultural interchange between Europe and other parts of the world through e.g. trade and migration; The evolution of the Nordic countries (How Sweden came to be); The introduction of Christianity in the Nordic area; The importance of religion for cultures and states in Sweden and other Nordic countries; How religion and other changes affected peoples’ living conditions. Goals: To have basic knowledge of social changes (cultural meetings, migration, religion etc.); To know the consequences of these changes for peoples’ living conditions and actions (how the changes affected people); To be able to account for the effects of cultural meetings and migration in our own age; To be able to account for how peoples’ living conditions have effected today’s society.

The teacher then introduced the pupils’ main assignment: they were supposed to make their own history book. On the white board, next to the mind map, the teacher displayed a prepared book page as a source of inspiration.

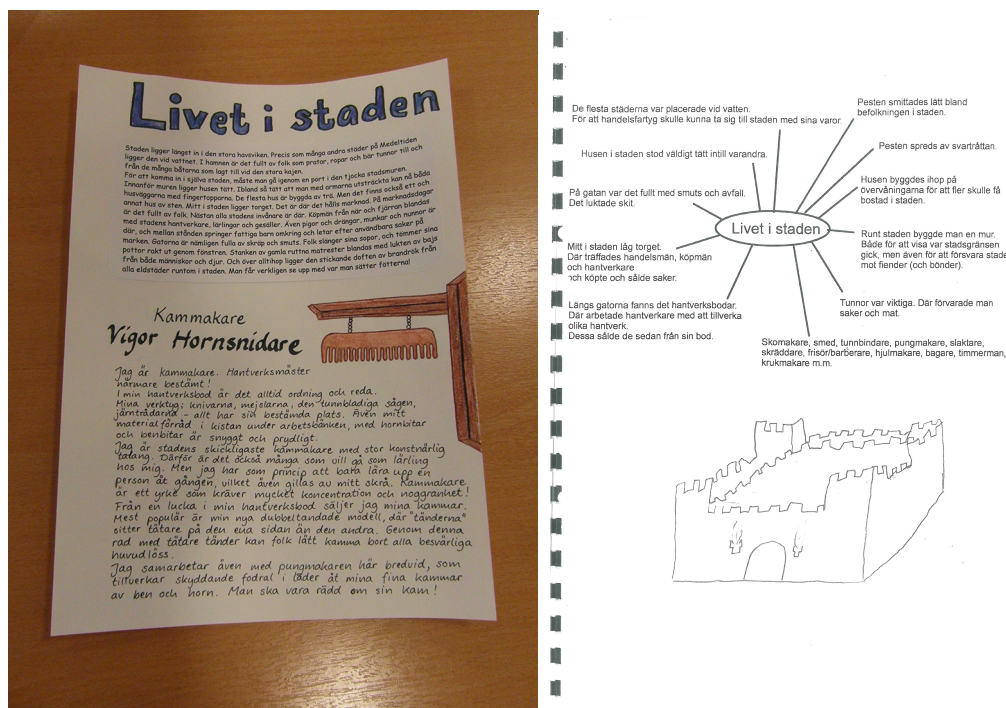


Fig. 4-5. “Life in town”, the teacher’s book page and a mind map made by the teacher and pupils, the Countryside School.

The class studied a timeline in the textbook; they discussed when in history this period was set and established the beginning and end of the period in terms of years. The teacher distributed homework with a text – which consisted of writing and images – and questions about ‘life

during the Middle Ages', addressing cultural and social history. In the setting, in the teacher's design for learning, it is the procedural knowledge that is salient.

During the *primary transformation unit*, the class read aloud from the textbook, dealing with cultural and political changes during the Middle Ages. The teacher wrote down first and second order concepts and phrases like: 'Christianity a new religion', 'Sweden as a united realm with kings and common laws' and 'bondsmen are set free'. These notes were later summarised into a text by the teacher, displayed on the Smart board and later distributed to the pupils as a handout. A film was shown on the Smart board, as an introduction to the period, focusing on changes in terms of a new religion, a united Sweden and common laws. Thus the emphasis was on procedural knowledge and political and cultural history. Next, the pupils began to produce material for their book; they designed *in learning*. They will use this text with content from their textbook to draw an image which is inspired from the film. They can cut-out sections of the text and glue them onto a white piece of paper and use colour pencils. In the following lesson, the teacher and pupils went through the homework. As pupils answered questions aloud, the teacher wrote down their answers on the whiteboard. The focus was on social history: 'What were the different occupations on a farm?', 'If you were living in the Middle Ages, what would you do during the day'? This activity could have been a way to encourage historical empathy. Next, there was some repetition from the previous lesson as the mind map was displayed on the Smart board. First order concepts such as 'self-subsistent household' and 'pay one's tithes' were explained. A new assignment was introduced, where pupils had to read a few pages in the textbook and then work on a worksheet called 'Life in a Medieval village'. From this worksheet, a new mind map is produced on the Smart board, with suggestions from the pupils about life in a typical village. Social history terms such as 'most people lived in the country', 'the houses were built from logs' and 'several people slept in the same bed' are articulated. The next step was to produce a new page for their book. Pupils started to work, using laptops, colour pencils, and occasionally paper and pencil. Some pupils printed their texts, cut-out sections of text and pasted them onto a new sheet of paper. The teacher assisted them in terms of providing a model from the page, technical support and help getting started.

As homework, pupils were asked to read a text about 'life in town'. In what followed, the teacher read a literary text about a boy arriving to medieval Stockholm. The teacher asked the pupils to consider what life was like in those days, thus focusing on procedural knowledge. The next assignment was a new worksheet with questions that focused on social and economic history and substantive knowledge in terms of 'craft', 'guild' and 'Hansan'. Some pupils worked individually, while others worked in pairs. From the worksheet, the teacher and pupils together produced a new mind map on the Smart board.

The next assignment was to produce a page about life in the city. During another lesson, the teacher was dressed in 'medieval' clothing. She demonstrated the different garments that she wore, and she also brought a large bag with clothing for the children to try on. We interpreted this as a focus on procedural knowledge. On the Smart board, the teacher also displayed images of men and women dressed in clothes from the 1100s, 1200s and 1300s. The different garments were named, thus focusing on substantive knowledge: 'surcot', 'tunic' and 'steeple cap'. The pupils took turns trying on the clothes, and most had their photographs taken. The photos were later presented in the book. The pupils also produced a new page which focused on clothing. A few days later, the class visited the Old Town of Stockholm, where the teacher took them on a guided tour. The class, dressed up in 'medieval' clothing, visited the Old Town in Stockholm and the museum, which involved a focus on cultural and social history. The teacher and the guide spoke about Christianity and everyday life in Stockholm. Here the emphasis was on social and cultural history and perspective-taking, as they stopped at the church and took a look at a large square and very narrow alley. At the museum, a museum educator spoke about

Christianity, life in the city, archaeology and history as disciplines, crime and punishment and diseases - thus focusing on social and cultural history.

During the visit the teacher took pictures. Back in school, the pupils were able to choose which pictures to use when making a new page on their visit to the museum. Some used their laptops to write captions, while others used pencil and paper. The images were printed on paper, and the pupils cut them out and pasted them onto new sheets of paper, along with captions. The teacher assisted with technical issues, encouraged pupils to continue writing, and she also used models to show the pupils what such a page might look like. For this project the pupils worked individually. The project ended with a short film that presented the core content of the Middle Ages. Altogether, the first transformation unit focused on both substantive and procedural knowledge.

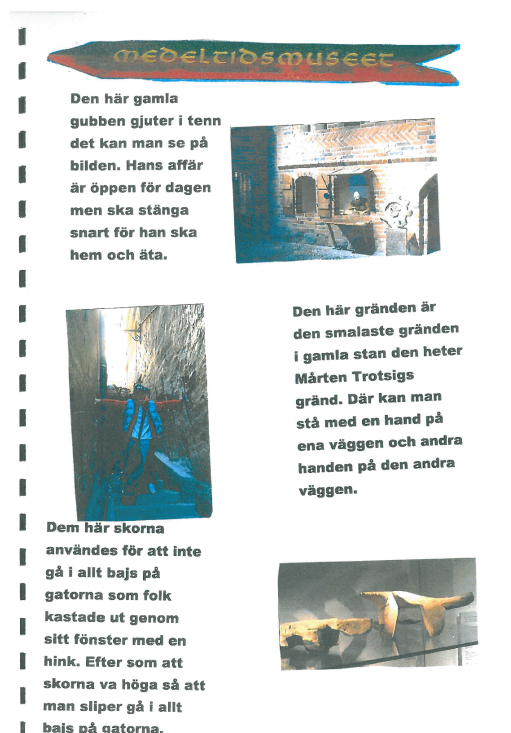


Fig. 6. "Medieval museum", Pupil's book page, the Countryside school

During the *secondary transformation unit*, the books were ready. They were presented to the pupils during a ceremony, where mead was served and 'medieval music' was played. As the class was about to evaluate the unit, the teacher repeated the central content and learning goals concerning cultural interchange between the Nordic area and Europe, the evolution of the Nordic countries, reasons for societal changes, the consequences of these changes and how they have affected today's society. The pupils were encouraged to discuss how they had been working with these goals. Jointly they concluded that Christianity was a big change for people, that Sweden was united as a realm, that immigration through trade had a large effect on the culture, that laws were legislated and that food, language and clothing changed as a consequence of the cultural influences. During the secondary transformation unit, procedural knowledge appeared to be central.

### Knowledge emphases and implications for assessment

We will now move on to a comparison between the two classrooms, concerning resources and content focus as well as procedural activities. In the Urban School, pupils worked individually



with verbal texts, while pupils in the Countryside School composed multimodal texts both individually and through collaborating with others.

Classroom conversations occurred in both environments: in the Urban School through pupils' understanding of first order concepts, and in the Countryside School on the pupil's previous knowledge and interests, entailing both first and second order concepts. The contextual framings of the two classrooms were also different: in the more multi-cultural Urban School, in the multilingual classroom, the focus was to scaffold the academic language proficiency in history. In the Countryside School there was a focus on multimodal literacies, and the pupils were offered other and more diverse ways of making meaning.

In both examples, classroom work was not based on school textbooks. The Urban School used a mix of teacher-produced materials and other materials such as written texts and videos. Digital media was used both as a resource for dissemination and as a starting point for conversations of conceptual understanding. Additionally the Countryside School involved a variety of learning resources such as mind maps, role play, photographs and museum exhibitions. Digital media was used as a resource for collective meaning-making, co-authoring activities and as a tool for composing multimodal texts. Thus, the pupils at the Countryside School also acquired digital literacy.

In the Urban School, the teacher framed first order concepts as being central for the subject – an emphasis of history *as substantive knowledge*. The teacher at the Countryside School highlighted second order skills – *procedural knowledge*. The framing of the subject and what seemed salient changed during the learning design sequences: In the Urban School, there was a shift from procedural and substantive knowledge towards an emphasis on substantive knowledge. In the Countryside School, we noticed a shift from procedural knowledge to procedural/substantive knowledge and then back to procedural knowledge.

The Urban School had a focus on substantive knowledge in verbal texts, which meant that a rather abstract version of the Middle Ages was produced. In the Countryside School, procedural knowledge was stressed and other potentials for learning were offered through the use of many different modes and resources. In this way the Middle Ages was presented in a more concrete way where the pupils were able to see, taste, feel and *design* history. Additionally, the exchange between teacher, pupil and content was more intense in the Countryside School. This can be described in terms of modal density (Norris, 2009), if we look at the communicative modes at play in interactions. Modal density may come about through modal complexity, and in this case there was an intricate combination of spoken and written language, moving and still images, layout and object handling.

To conclude this paper, we would like to point at some tentative consequences for assessment. The multimodal character of the classroom – emphasised in the Countryside School – gave access to multimodal resources. The texts produced and used in this class were more diverse than the Urban School in terms of composition and possibilities for interaction. What was seen as significant knowledge (knowledge emphasis) about the Middle Ages differed in many ways between the two schools: a focus on verbal concepts versus a focus on wider multimodal representations. We can only reflect upon what influence the choice of schools was on the results of this study. The focus on verbal texts and conceptual understanding in the Urban School seemed to be connected to an explicit strategy and approach to develop pupils' language. As we will argue below, this may not always be the only way to teach history.

In the future, we assume that there will be a need for a wider understanding of assessment, where assessment is not only based on verbal language and representations. Ercikan & Seixas (2015:6) maintain that assessing historical thinking should not be dependent upon pupils' reading and writing skills. Recently, scholars have argued that in order to attend to pupils' learning, assessments need to address and include multimodal aspects of teaching and learning

(Jewitt, 2003; Wyatt-Smith & Cummings, 2003; Wyatt-Smith & Kimber, 2009). For such a change to come about, we need to reflect on the social arrangements of power and the authority of the teacher (Kress, 2009).

In a society which continues to be more culturally and linguistically diverse, it no longer seems valid to think of assessment in terms of single standards and targets (Johnsson & Kress, 2003). Johnsson & Kress (2003) argue that assessments need to be redefined so that the diversity of pupils and their different ways of knowing and making meaning will be recognised as being productive in class. They believe that the assessment of children's literacy can, and must, be democratic. Researchers in the field of assessment also stress the active role of students in assessments, such as in self-assessment and peer assessment (e.g. Black & William, 2005).

For instance, Seixas and Morton (2013) have emphasised students' active roles in the creation of historical narratives. Teachers can bring forward the importance of establishing historical significance with pupils in much the same way that a historian would do. In classroom discussions about historical change, teachers can ask insightful questions about sources and discuss how different sources have been selected and used to produce certain narratives. The Historical thinking project also (<http://historicalthinking.ca>) proposes that 'Historical literacy' should involve active engagement with a variety of historical texts.

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## **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> The paper reports findings from the research project, 'REMAKE: Representations, resources and meaning-making. The Middle Ages as a knowledge domain in different learning environments', funded by the Swedish research council.