**Doing World History: The Five Methods**

Purpose:

History may be defined as research into how cultures develop through time.

World History:

* Is more general than traditional history and emphasizes trends that go beyond cultural boundaries.
* Stresses the interaction between societies.
* Compares different patterns of development around the world.
* Tends to be more superficial and general than local or national histories.
* Often finds natural or human movements that affect many cultures, such as climatic developments, diseases, natural disasters, or human movements like invasions and migrations. They could include dealing with new technologies and lifestyles.

To simplify and limit these nearly infinite possibilities, we will use five methods, which capture the essence of the world history approaches.

Methods:

* Big Picture a time line of the most important events of those under study, accompanied by a written explanation of their ultimate significance
* Diffusion the spread of natural elements, people, artifacts, ideas, or other cultural creations from one civilizations to others
* Syncretism mixing of elements from two or more cultures that result in something new
* Comparison the pointing out of similarities and differences between two civilizations in terms of their histories, institutions, cultural accomplishments and economies
* Common Phenomena natural or historical events and developments that two or more societies share. Examples could be climate, disease, natural disasters or invasions, shared technologies, or other human developments. Basically, “What is shared?”

Notebook Suggestions:

1. Read over the chapter. Take outlined notes.
2. In the questions section of you notes, right before your reflection, write five questions reflecting the five methods of World History shown above for the assigned chapter.
3. Return to your notes and re-read them. Are the questions you created answered in your notes? Add necessary details.
4. For your Big Picture question, do your notes offer a general time line and an explanation of the ultimate significance of the selected events? Do you have too many dates and events to remember? Do the chosen events adequately reflect the most important points of the chapter?
5. For your Diffusion question, is the idea of something spreading explicitly stated in your question? Is this spreading process important to the themes of the chapter?
6. For your Syncretism question, is the idea of mixing cultural elements clearly stated in your question? Can you discern from your notes who borrowed from whom and with what results? Is the syncretism you mentioned important in understanding the events discussed in the chapter?
7. For your Comparison question, did you point out the similarities and differences between the cultures you discuss? Did you offer significant comparisons, or are they merely superficial and obvious?
8. For your Common Phenomena question, are the items mentioned really shared by the two or more civilizations you discuss? I other words, be careful to point out what is shared.
9. Did you go beyond merely repeating or rephrasing what is in the book? Remember, Doing World History means thinking and writing about the past.
10. Finally, write a reflective paragraph that responds to your questions giving pertinent details from your notes.