
CONNECTION TO SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING STANDARDS

The New York State Regents Exam (and many other high school standardized tests) include a Document-Based Question, which constitutes a significant portion of the overall scoring. The Tower Tube helps students develop the skills necessary for these exams and offers a unique approach to skills-based learning. Specifically, it enhances students' ability to analyze historical documents and think critically about their findings, laying the groundwork for a document-based analytical essay.

The Regents Exam requires students to craft an essay that:

- Is more analytical than descriptive (analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information)
- Incorporates relevant information from a majority of the documents
- Incorporates substantial relevant outside information
- Richly supports the theme with many relevant facts, examples, and details ¹

The Tower Tube also helps students fulfill the New York State Standards, which require Commencement Level students to:

use information collected from diverse sources (e.g., diaries, census reports, city directories and maps, newspaper and journal accounts, graphs and charts, cartoons, autobiographies, government documents, and other primary and secondary sources) to produce cogently written reports and document-based essays.²

¹ New York State Regents Exam Document Based Question Scoring Rubric

KEY TEACHING STRATEGIES

The Skyscraper Museum’s programs and educational materials rely on **document-based inquiry**. This approach requires close looking and critical analysis of the documents and images used to create and represent skyscrapers as part of our built environment. By exploring the material culture of skyscraper design and construction, students will learn about New York City and some of its most characteristic and majestic buildings. They will come to appreciate the role skyscrapers have played in the history and development of New York City as one of the world’s most important centers of business and culture.

Why document-based inquiry?

The Tower Tube includes photographs, historic drawings and images, maps, and plans used in the design and construction of New York City skyscrapers. These documents and images provide information about the people, places, and ideas that shape the world in which we live. Asking questions about the buildings seen every day, how they came to be, and how they have changed over time helps to understand the past, present, and future possibilities of the city in which we live.

Document-based inquiry teaches students to use what they already know to uncover new meanings. Through careful observation, students practice the skills of inquiry, analysis, and inference to find and examine evidence, make connections to their own experiences, and support conclusions based on evidence and reasoning.

Teachers are encouraged to use the methods of document-based learning to support the following social studies skills¹:

Thinking

- Identifying cause and effect
- Drawing inferences and making conclusions
- Evaluating
- Handling diversity of interpretations

Research and Writing

- Getting information
- Organizing information
- Interpreting information
- Analyzing information
- Synthesizing information

Sequencing and Chronology

- Using the vocabulary of time and chronology
- Placing events in chronological order
- Understanding the concepts of time, continuity, and change

Graph and Image Analysis

- Decoding images
- Interpreting images
- Making predictions

¹ From New York State Social Studies Instructional Strategies