Appendix 1

Assessment of Student ability to see that facts may lend themselves to more than one interpretation (1a)

Appendix 1
Example 1a

Modeling the Current Nature of the Historical Discipline to Students: One Example

H211: Latin American Culture & Civilization I

L210: The Latin American Experience I

~History~

• As a field of study, history refers to the study and interpretation of the past through the record of human societies.
• "a learning or knowing by inquiry, history, record, narrative" (Greek)
• "narrative, account" (Latin)
• "relation of incidents, story" (French)

[I start the discussion by analyzing different definitions of history and finding a common thread in them.]

The Problem: An Event in Mexico, 1520

[I then gave students a "historical problem": an event that happened in Mexico in 1520.]

[Broken Spears. A visual of the event as produced by an European and another drawn by an Aztec.]

[I distributed two brief accounts of the events: one by the Europeans and another by the Aztecs. I also gave them a chronology of the events from the landing of Hernán Cortés until the fall of the Aztec capital in 1521.]
Small group exercise

1. Discuss what information you can get from each of the five sources.
2. If you were a historian, what is the main issue that you would address in a writing?

- The exercise did get the point across.
- However, that did not mean that the students knew how to produce an interpretative history themselves. For that reason, my course now also focuses on helping students learn how to build arguments drawing on a number of sources.