

Two Places at Once: Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) in a Hybrid Course

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BACKGROUND

Funded by the 4-VA initiative, *Teaching Hidden History* was a graduate course that taught students in education and history how to research, write, and develop their own online history learning modules.

INQUIRY-BASED COURSE

Students chose their module topics, learned historical research skills, digital skills, and read scholarship on using digital methods to teach history. They then conducted research using primary and secondary sources and developed an original online module directed at an audience of their choosing.

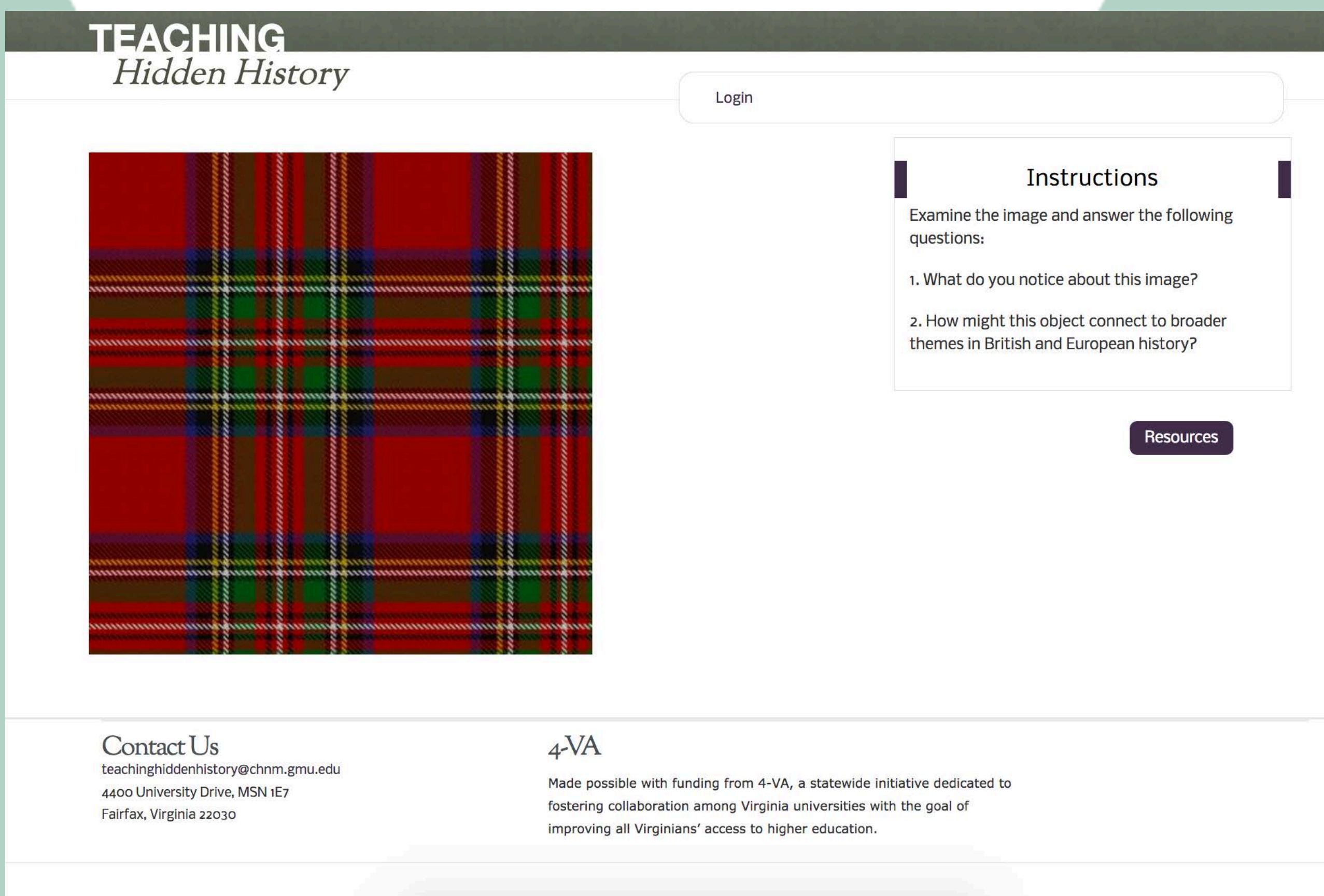


Fig 1. The online modules used a format that emphasized examining evidence closely. Users began by developing a hypothesis about a source such as this Scottish tartan.

STUDENT QUOTES

“I thought this was a more enjoyable project ... because it provided more freedom, reported one student. He also appreciated the opportunity to “choose something I was interested in” and “explore something on my own rather than trying to fit it into the narrative of a class.”

“To design this whole unit from scratch, using primary sources... And that I did it on my own,” said another. He continued, “I got to say what I wanted to do and then, piece by piece, put it together. It was a lot more original work without reading or reflecting on other people’s work, so it was more satisfying.”

HYBRID (ONLINE + IN-PERSON) ENVIRONMENT

- 10 week summer course
- The first 5 weeks were conducted in person.
- The next 3 weeks of the course were online and asynchronous as students researched the history and developed their modules.
- The final 2 weeks were in person as students shared their projects and reflected on the process.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The course’s hybrid structure seemed especially conducive to the inquiry process. In the first in-person phase, students learned about research and digital skills in a structured, scaffolded environment. Together they brainstormed topics, possible audiences, and approaches they might take in developing their modules. They built a rapport with their classmates and instructors. In the hybrid phase students were allowed the time to research on their own with the collaborative support of classmates and structures via required virtual meet ups.



Fig 2. After the hypothesis the modules features resources to learn more about the topic while engaging with historical evidence. In this case, Scottish nationalism and identity.

READ MORE

Sleeter, Nate, Kelly Schrum, Amy Swan, and Justin Broubalow. “‘Reflective of My Best Work’: Promoting Inquiry-Based Learning in a Hybrid Graduate History Course.” *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, (March 2019).

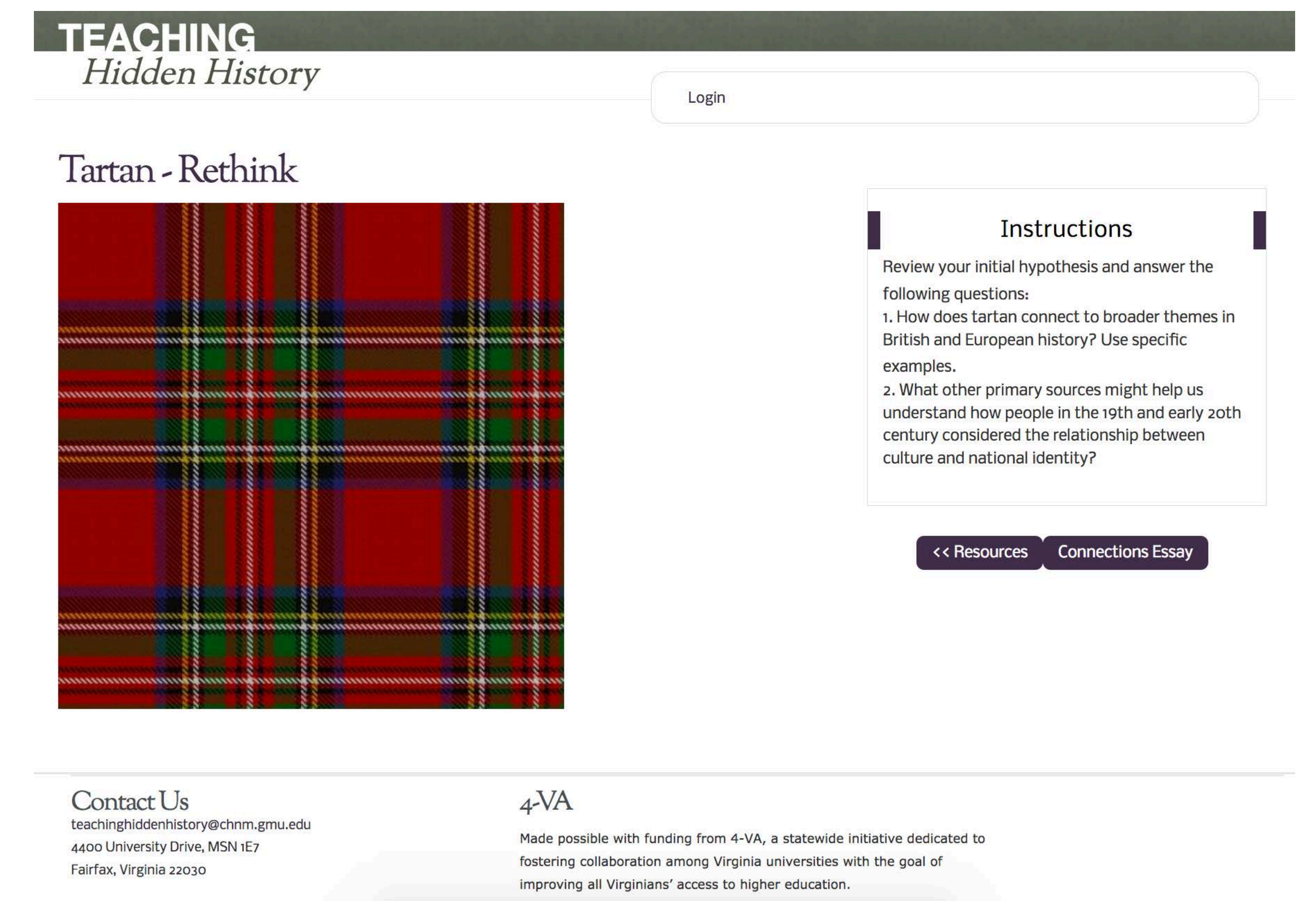


Fig. 3 The online modules took an iterative and reflective approach. After viewing the resources, users have the chance to rethink their original hypothesis in light of what they have learned

BROADER APPLICATIONS

We believe the inquiry/hybrid model *Teaching Hidden History* can also be effective for undergraduate courses in a variety of disciplines. In creating real online modules, THH students reported that they had learned valuable real-world skills such as:

- Research,
- Developing digital content,
- Writing for the web,
- Presenting accessible information for a defined audience

Even if students did not plan to use their module in the classroom, they still valued learning these skills. These are broadly applicable to other disciplines and the ability to engage in self-directed research would be likely be similarly motivating for undergraduate learners. Providing collaborative structure and support during the online portion of the course is also vital.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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