

Dear All,

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD HISTORY WORKSHEETS.

After much thinking, I've decided to use Kenneth Burke's Pentad (to be explained below) as a way to question, discuss, and elucidate the readings we are doing this year from The Story of the World, Vol. III by Susan Wise Bauer.

Kenneth Burke was a vastly influential 20th century rhetorician—there is lots of information about him, the Pentad, and its usefulness in the link below. Burke believed that when thinking about and/or writing about drama, fiction, and non-fiction--such a history, one needs to primarily analyze and understand motives. And to master motives one needs to ask the following questions:

1. **Act:**What happened? What is the action? What is going on? What action; what thoughts?
2. **Scene:**Where is the act happening? What is the background situation?
3. **Agent:**Who is involved in the action? What are their roles?
4. **Agency:**How do the agents act? By what means do they act?
5. **Purpose:**Why do the agents act? What do they want?

Notice that these questions replicate the what, where, who, how, why (and when) questions asked by journalists; however, Burke wants us to look at the relationships between these questions. How did agency affect the act? Did the agent undermine the purpose? To think along the lines of the Pentad is to begin the process of thinking rigorously along analytical lines, leading eventually to writing the analytical papers our children will need to write in the years to come. With that in mind, I will put out questions/worksheets every week that are influenced by the Pentad. You can use the questions for discussion, or you can ask your child to write answer—whatever is appropriate.

By the way, notice that Burke did not care a lot about *when* something happened. Many people think that learning history is primarily a question of mastering *when*, mastering dates and time-lines. Learning history is about understanding purpose and act and agency. If on top of that you happen to know 20 or so dates, you are golden.

Here is more information on Kenneth Burke and the Pentad:

http://www.smarthinking.com/static/document_library/docs/writeman/3_03_04.cfm

Best wishes for the next academic year.

Drop me a line if you have questions.

Best, Claudia