Arie Wilschut

‘Carrying with you what your ancestors have done…’.
The identification stance in Dutch history teaching

Abstract
National perspectives are a matter of course in history teaching, though academic history questions their rationale. Societal debates around sensitive issues like the slavery past, however, suggest that histories can ‘belong’ to groups or nations, because the first person plural is frequently employed in these contexts. This raises the question of how history education in a modern democratic country like the Netherlands, where the slavery past is one of the bones of contention, deals with questions of identification. The research reported here shows that, contrary to popular assumptions, episodes of shame rank high among the best known aspects of Dutch national history, while the use of the first person plural is virtually absent in the writings of Dutch students.

Résumé
Les perspectives nationales sont une évidence dans l’enseignement de l’histoire, bien que l’histoire académique remette en question leur logique. Les débats sociétaux autour de questions sensibles, comme le passé de l’esclavage, suggèrent cependant que les histoires « appartiendraient » à des groupes ou à des nations. En effet, la première personne du pluriel est fréquemment employée dans ces contextes. Cela pose la question de savoir comment l’enseignement de l’histoire dans un pays démocratique moderne comme les Pays-Bas, où le passé esclavagiste est un sujet controversé, traite des questions identitaires. La recherche présentée ici montre que, contrairement aux idées reçues, les épisodes de honte sont parmi les plus connus de l’histoire nationale néerlandaise, alors que l’usage de la première personne du pluriel est pratiquement absent des écrits des étudiants néerlandais.
1. Introduction

The so-called ‘identification stance’ in which students are asked to view the past from the perspective of the successes, trials and tribulations of their nation or their ancestors is described by Barton and Levstik as “arguably one of the most common historical activities” in the United States (US), pointing out that the use of the first person plural in this context is seen as perfectly natural. They contend that US teachers differ in this respect from those in Britain, who would never use ‘we’ when talking about the nation’s past, because that would be considered unprofessional. We have no evidence to check whether that is true for British teachers, but we do have some data about British students using the first person plural, e.g.: “When the Roman Empire fell we were open to attacks from the barbaric Vikings and were raided frequently over the next few centuries... We was invaded by Normandy, a region of France and was defeated”, or: “And then industrially, there was the Industrial Revolution, we’ve been continually at the forefront of that...”.

There may be national differences in the occurrence of the we-perspective, but it has also been reported for Greece, Spain and Argentina. In the case of Germany, which obviously faces a troubled recent national past, the use of the we-perspective may be less popular; nevertheless a turn towards a nationally inspired attitude became noticeable after reunification in 1990, a change which

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3 Barton and Levstik, *Teaching History*, 51.
4 Peter Lee and Jonathan Howson, “Two Out Of Five Did Not Know That Henry VIII Had Six Wives: History education, historical literacy and historical consciousness”, in Linda Symcox and Arie Wilschut (eds), *National History Standards: The problem of the canon and the future of teaching history* (Charlotte (NC): Information Age Publishing, 2009), 211-261, quote 232. The incorrect usage of the English language by British youngsters (‘we was invaded...’) has been maintained as it was originally quoted.
5 Lee and Howson, “Two Out Of Five”, 237.
was characterized by the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (1998-2005) as a “return to normalcy”\textsuperscript{8}. In the wake of this, some books were published in Germany in 2002 and 2007 which clearly displayed the we-perspective in their titles: “How we became what we are”\textsuperscript{9}. Collections of essays about history teaching in a range of countries around the world published in 2010 and 2016 show that national perspectives are often regarded as a matter of course, at least as far as the choice of subject matter is concerned, even in advanced democratic countries in which curricula of ‘disciplinary thinking’ have been introduced\textsuperscript{10}. In short, we may assume that the we-perspective in the representation of national histories is a factor of some importance.

2. Identification and Historical Consciousness

How does identification with ‘owned narratives about the past’ come about? The coexistence of people living in groups (a family, a village community, an ethnic or religious group) stimulate feelings of fellowship, feelings of being ‘us’. Such feelings cannot, in principle, exist between people whose lives are separated by larger temporal gaps between past and present because of a lack of personal contact. However, connections with people in the past may come about because of the coexistence of different generations. In spite of the fact that older generations have partly lived in a time preceding one’s own, feelings of fellowship are possible. In turn, older people can tell about the people they personally knew, resulting in an indirect ‘us-relationship’ with previous generations. Carr points out that the coexistence of generations boils down to people “with different overlapping narratives” living at the same time, each at a different stage of life with their own backgrounds and aims\textsuperscript{11}. Giesen refers in

\textsuperscript{8} Dietmar Pieper and Klaus Wiegrefe, “Geburt einer Nation”, in Klaus Wiegrefe and Dietmar Pieper (eds), \textit{Die Erfindung der Deutschen: Wie wir wurden was wir sind} (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2007), 14-23, quote 15.

\textsuperscript{9} Peter Alter, Joachim Rohlifes, Edgar Wolfrum and Stefan Wolle, \textit{Deutsche Geschichte: Wie wir wurden, was wir sind, 20. Jahrhundert} (Stuttgart etc.: Klett Verlag, 2002); Rüdiger Hachtmann, Joachim Rohlifes and Volker Ullrich, \textit{Deutsche Geschichte: Wie wir wurden, was wir sind, 19. Jahrhundert} (Stuttgart etc.: Klett Verlag, 2002); Wiegrefe and Pieper, \textit{Die Erfindung der Deutschen}.


this sense to divided memories\textsuperscript{12}. According to Carr this results into a kind of historical continuity in which inheritances are constantly passed on, giving rise to a long-term ‘us-relationship’. Something similar is stated by Zerubavel\textsuperscript{13}.

The emergence of ‘we-perspectives’ is also stimulated by the human search for identity which not only implies a quest for ‘same-ness’, but also an inclination to distance oneself from ‘the other’\textsuperscript{14}. Differences as well as commonalities are sought and found in narratives about the past. Contrary to intuitive assumptions, identity is not a ‘given’ produced by the past, but a construction based on decisions taken by groups or individuals in order to identify with or take a distanced position towards certain phenomena and people in past and present\textsuperscript{15}. This is specifically the case within contemporary Western culture “which does not provide its members with a stable and coherent definition of self. Instead, it views the self as an accomplishment to be constructed”\textsuperscript{16}.

In short: the phenomenon of taking a we-perspective towards the past may be explained by the historical continuity of heritages created by the coexistence of different generations as well as by the human quest for identity manifesting itself in terms of adopting certain narratives about the past that imply associations with an alleged ‘we’-group and dissociations from alleged ‘others’.

An example of how such processes of identification may materialize is provided by debates about the sensitive issue of the slavery past in Western multicultural societies like the Netherlands. In these cases the identities of ‘we’-groups resulting from a “self-designation process”\textsuperscript{17} may develop into divisive forces among diverse populations. In the Dutch case the white population usually associates with former slave-owners (the perpetrators), while the population of Caribbean descent often identifies itself as the heirs of the former

\textsuperscript{15} Straub, “Telling Stories”, 64.
slaves (the victims). These associations may result into claims about a desirable national narrative: Caribbean-Dutch tend to regard slavery as an underestimated aspect of the national past, to which far more attention should be paid, or as an issue which up to now has been interpreted from a white-biased perspective and therefore as an issue of minor importance. It is frequently assumed that history education in schools is still focusing on national glories, while shameful aspects of the past are being neglected. For example, in an article published in the Dutch quality newspaper *NRC-Handelsblad* in 2015, two Caribbean-Dutch ladies commented that even if schoolbooks had improved, there was still insufficient attention for the Dutch slavery history.

Just like personal memories, national or group memories are subject to selection and forgetting, depending on certain criteria. Triumphs are easily remembered in national collective narratives, thus setting nations apart from each other, as is illustrated by Assmann’s example of Paris commemorating Napoleon’s victories but none of his defeats, while London commemorates his ‘Waterloo’ by naming an important railway station after that battlefield location. However, defeats may also contribute to remembered collective narratives, provided they are ‘emplotted in the martyriological narrative of the tragic hero’. But moments of shame and guilt, as well as the heritage of perpetrators, cannot be so easily integrated into collective memory, says Assmann. Applying this to the slavery debate mentioned above, this may explain the tension between the ‘tragic memory’ of those who identify themselves as descendants of former slaves as opposed to those who are regarded as the heirs of former perpetrators. It may also explain why shameful episodes like colonialism and slavery are regular bones of contention in Dutch public debates. Something similar applies to the history of the occupation during the Second World War, in which collaboration with the occupier is often seen as a national shame (as opposed to heroic resistance). The question whether ‘we’ behaved honourably or shamefully

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19 For example: Guno Jones, “De slavernij is onze geschiedenis (niet): Over de discursieve strijd om de betekenis van de NTR-televisieserie”, *BMGN Low Countries Historical Review*, 127.4 (2012), 56-82.
during these historical episodes is paramount in such discussions. Collective memories can become sensitive if they are associated with pride or shame. Both are seen as playing a role in shaping national identities, although the nature of such identities may be contested.

Thinking in terms of the first person plural is clearly a manifestation of collective memory rather than history. It is part of the process of self-designation, which can be described as: “how ‘we’ choose to name ourselves, how ‘we’ designate ourselves in language”. In cases in which identities are not self-evident, contested or unclear, people tend to feel a greater need for self-designation and turn to the past, “or rather, to a certain image of the past, which we call memory”.

There are important reasons to make a clear distinction between the academic discipline of history and (collective) memory. As Megill formulates it: “Memory is an image of the past, constructed by a subjectivity in the present. It is thus subjective; it may also be irrational, inconsistent, deceptive and self-serving. In any case, neither memory nor testimony can serve as a marker of the historical past without independent corroboration. On the other hand, history as a discipline has the obligation to be objective, unified, orderly, justified. Another difference is the ‘ownership’ which plays a role in memory, but not in history: “ ‘history in general’ is reconfigured into a particular and emotionally charged version of ‘our history’, absorbing it as part of collective memory”.

If there is such an important difference between collective memory and history, what about national perspectives and the use of the first person plural in the case of academic history? The authors

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28 Ibidem.


30 Megill, “History, Memory, Identity”, 56.

of the *History Manifesto* observe: “The attempt to transcend national history is now almost a cliché, as most historians question the territorial boundaries of traditional historical writing”\(^{32}\). Jordanova also takes a critical stance towards present national boundaries as an organising principle: “To lump historical processes together because they occurred in areas we now name France, China, and so on, is intellectually weak”\(^{33}\). She wonders whether history can be ‘owned’ and describes how sometimes the erroneous view is taken that Jewish history should only be written by Jews, Afro-American history by Afro-Americans, and women’s history by women, because an ‘outsider’ would not be able to understand these histories. This would imply that women, Afro-Americans or Jews are timeless categories, which is obviously untrue\(^{34}\). The boundaries of time setting us apart from our ancestors – not to mention those who were not our ancestors but happened to live in the same area as we do today – are such, that thinking and speaking in terms of ‘we’ can hardly be reconciled with true historical thinking\(^{35}\). Historical thinking implies recognising the fact that other times were essentially different from ours, which means that postulating the existence of a transhistorical identity of a ‘we’-group is arguably problematic. This academic point of view, however, clashes with societal reality in which thinking in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’ seems almost unavoidable.

Summing up, we have seen that choosing a we-perspective and the phenomenon of appropriation of certain narratives about the past are characteristics of collective memory, not of history. We have also noted that collective memory is selective in stressing certain aspects about the past while forgetting about others. This implies that, if we would like to assess to what extent history teaching results into true ‘historical thinking’ of an academic nature, we should investigate whether students’ historical narratives are selective, in other words: what do they remember well, and what is largely being forgotten? Another question that needs to be answered is what attitude students take towards these narratives: do they show signs of ownership reflected in using the we-perspective? And if so, in what kind of contexts?

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\(^{34}\) Jordanova, *Practice*, 144.

3. Research questions and method

In order to disentangle the complicated knot of history, memory and identity as they play their roles in history teaching, we should find out some facts about the amount of knowledge about the national past existing among school graduates and the perspectives students take when talking or writing about the national past, especially in the context of sensitive and contested issues like slavery or the Second World War. Debates about desirable rearrangements of the curriculum or of the content of textbooks are often based on mere assumptions, like the comments in the newspaper *NRC-Handelsblad* quoted above or the impressions reported by a Rotterdam historian in 2007 based solely on his own school-textbook from 1954 in which the slavery past was not given very much attention. It is the aim of this study to find out what Dutch secondary students actually know about the national past and whether they identify with (parts of) the national past by means of using the first person plural when writing or talking about it. In this context, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Which topics of Dutch history are well known among graduates of Dutch secondary schools and which topics are less well known?
2. Do students in Dutch senior secondary schools use the first person plural in their writing or talking about the national past, and if so, to what extent and in relation to which historical topics?
3. Which associations do students in Dutch senior secondary schools have with a number of sensitive issues in the national past?

A research question like the first one has been explored in other publications by means of assignments to write essays about the national past. Such an assignment is difficult to perform. For exam-

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ple, quite a few students in the case described by Foster et al. came up with disappointing products containing hardly any meaningful information. The results of these assignments may reflect what comes to the students’ minds when given a writing task, but not necessarily what students actually know about the past. Therefore a different approach was chosen for this study.

A questionnaire was administered to 293 students who had just started their studies at three universities of applied sciences in different parts of the Netherlands: Saxion University of Applied Sciences in Deventer, Fontys University of Applied Sciences in ’s-Hertogenbosch and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. The questionnaires were filled out in the month of September 2015. Because the students had just started their higher education (the questionnaire was completed within the first three weeks of their studies), they are being regarded here as secondary school graduates, not as tertiary students. Most of them (209) started in the track for primary school teachers, while the others (84) were prospective secondary history teachers. This last group may be assumed to have had a more than average interest in history, while the others may be considered representative for the mainstream of Dutch secondary school graduates. There were 110 males and 183 females; the mean age was 19, while the largest age group (77) were the 18-year-olds. A large majority (225) of these students had completed the middle level of Dutch secondary education, while the others had completed the higher level. Most students (207) had taken history for their final examinations.

The questionnaire consisted of fifty items, each describing a topic from the so-called Canon of the Netherlands in one sentence, e.g.: “Erasmus was an important humanist scholar who criticized the medieval version of Christianity”, or: “In the 17th and 18th centuries Dutch merchants were actively taking part in the slave trade” (see Appendix I for a complete list). The Canon of the Netherlands was chosen because it represents the items which are considered to belong to the knowledge about Dutch history that every secondary school graduate should have. For each of the fifty sentences,

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38 In Dutch secondary education there are three streams: pre-vocational education (4 years), secondary general education (5 years) and pre-university education (6 years). About 50% of the Dutch students go to the first (lowest) stream, about 30% to the middle and about 20% to the highest stream. In the lowest there are two years of compulsory history teaching, in the middle and highest stream there are three years of compulsory history teaching.

39 Frits van Oostrom, A Key to Dutch History: Report by the committee for the development of the Dutch canon (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007). The canon of the Netherlands describes fifty items of Dutch history which should be studied in primary schools and the first stage of secondary education (during which history education is compulsory). Appendix 1 describes the items of the Canon in short sentences. The information available to schools is of course more extensive (see the description by Van Oostrom).

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the respondents were asked to rate themselves on a scale from 1 to 10, bearing in mind the question: “How much do you know about this subject?”. The scale was clarified exemplarily as: 1 this means totally nothing to me, 3 this means hardly anything to me, 5 I know something about this, but very little, 7 I have a reasonable amount of knowledge about this, and 10 I know a lot about this, I can easily elaborate on this topic. The rating scale from 1 to 10 was chosen because it is the common scale which is used throughout Dutch education, which means that students were familiar with the symbolic ‘feeling’ of the ratings (the norms in education being that ratings from 1 to 5 are considered insufficient (‘fail’) and ratings from 6 to 10 sufficient (‘pass’), ranging from barely sufficient (6) to excellent (10)). The second question in the questionnaire which respondents were asked to answer with ‘yes’ or ‘no’, was: “Do you remember ever having been taught about this topic?”. The data from the questionnaires were processed in a database which allowed for statistical analysis and testing of the results.

The second and third research questions were addressed by means of a writing task (see Appendix II) administered to 73 students of three secondary schools in the Netherlands in three middle sized towns (Woerden, Tiel and ‘s-Hertogenbosch) from three different provinces in the 10th (36 students), 11th (15 students) and 12th grades (22 students) of the middle level (12 students) and the higher level (61 students). Instead of giving them an unstructured writing task, students were prompted to write about eight topics from the Dutch past, four of which can be considered negative (like slavery), and four positive (like the introduction of universal suffrage). The items were chosen from a more distant and more recent past:

- The Duke of Alba punishes the perpetrators of the Iconoclasm (1566) – neg., long ago
- The Dutch win the war of independence against Spain (1648) – pos., long ago
- The Dutch Golden Age in the 17th century – pos., long ago
- The Dutch slave trade 17th and 18th century – neg., long ago
- General suffrage for men and women (1919) – pos., recent
- The German occupation of the Netherlands – neg., recent
- The liberation of the Netherlands in May 1945 – pos., recent
- The colonial war in Indonesia (1945-1949) – neg., recent

During the analysis of the essays produced in this way, the use of the first person plural (i.e.: the sentences in which ‘we’, ‘us’ or ‘our’ was used) was identified in connection to the topic for which it was used.
Subsequently, ten students at one of the three schools were interviewed individually along the lines of an interview guideline (Appendix III). From the male and female group of students taking part in the experiment, five were chosen randomly from each sex without taking into consideration their choice of perspective in their essays. Two of these ten appeared to have used the first person plural in their essays. The interview was structured as follows:

- **Phase 1**: Talk about historical topics (Golden Age, slavery, German occupation, liberation).
- **Phase 2**: Confront the interviewees with what they had written in their essays; point out where they had used ‘we’ and where they had used ‘they’. Ask their reaction to those choices: were they made deliberately? What did they think about this with hindsight?
- **Phase 3**: Confront the interviewees with what they had said during the first part of the interview; point out where they had used ‘we’ and where they had used ‘they’. Ask their reaction to those choices: were they made deliberately? What did they think about this with hindsight?
- **Phase 4**: Ask their opinion about whether the we-perspective should be used at all in history.

All interviews were transcribed and analysed for the use of the first person plural in connection to the topic for which it was used. The essays and the interviews together produced the data for research question 2.

Finally, the students’ associations in the essays with the topics they discussed were coded and the codes were quantified. The coding scheme partly arose from the contents that appeared to be present in the essays (open coding), and partly from aspects commonly considered important in historiography (See Table 4). This produced the data for research question 3.

4. Validity and reliability of the self-rating questionnaire

Does self-perception of knowledge result in a valid measurement instrument? And how reliable is it? Several steps were taken to answer these questions. First, Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated for the 10-points rating scale for all fifty (self-perception of) knowledge items. This turned out to be 0.94, which is a very high value. It shows that the scale was internally consistent to a high degree, which could not be expected if it would have been filled out by the respondents in an inconsiderate and random way.
Furthermore, three hypotheses were tested to explore the validity of this measurement method. If the results of the self-rating would mean something about the knowledge that respondents in fact have, this would probably imply that:

1. the ratings of the students in the track for history teachers for secondary schools would be higher than those of the students in the other track;
2. the ratings of male students would be higher than those of females for traditional ‘male’ topics and vice versa (e.g.: in the ‘Youth and History’ Europe-wide enquiry among 14-15 year old students, ‘family history’, ‘daily life’ and ‘influence of humans on their environment’ appeared to be preferred by girls, while ‘adventurers and discoverers’, ‘wars’ and ‘nations and democracy’ were preferred by boys).
3. the correlation between the self-estimated knowledge and remembering having been taught about an item would be stronger for items less generally known from sources outside school (e.g.: a high score on self-perception of knowledge about Anne Frank would be likely even if there had not been any history lessons on that topic, but for self-perception of knowledge about the philosopher Spinoza this seems less likely).

Testing results for these hypotheses were as follows.
- Hypothesis 1. The mean score for the students from the history teacher track was 6.12 (SD 1.14) on the 10-points scale, for the students from the primary school teacher track this was 5.81 (SD 1.06) on the 10-points scale. An independent samples t-test showed that this difference was statistically significant (F=0.128; df=252; p < 0.05). The effect size was 0.28 (Cohen’s d), which is a small to medium effect. This means that students from the history track – at least in their own estimations – scored better than students from the primary school teacher track, implying that hypothesis 1 was confirmed.
- Hypothesis 2. A multivariate analysis of variances showed that there was a statistically significant difference in self-estimated knowledge based on the participants’ gender, F (50, 197) = 4.44, p <.0005, Wilk’s Λ = 0.470, partial η² =.53.

40 Magne Angvik and Bodo von Borries (eds), *Youth and History: A comparative European survey on historical consciousness and political attitudes among adolescents*, volume A (Hamburg: Körber Stiftung, 1997), 221.
significant differences between males and females (p < 0.0005). In all of these cases the male results were higher than the female results. Table 1 specifies these items with their respective statistical data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>partial η²</th>
<th>Estimated marginal mean (males)</th>
<th>Estimated marginal mean (females)</th>
<th>Difference in estimated marginal means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47 Dutch UN troops</td>
<td>31.50</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>5.404</td>
<td>3.494</td>
<td>1.910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Admiral Michiel de Ruyter</td>
<td>31.34</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>7.777</td>
<td>6.312</td>
<td>1.465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Amsterdam canals</td>
<td>30.77</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>6.043</td>
<td>4.260</td>
<td>1.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Napoleon</td>
<td>29.45</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>7.287</td>
<td>5.890</td>
<td>1.397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 Indonesia</td>
<td>18.80</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>8.053</td>
<td>7.045</td>
<td>1.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 Caribbean Netherlands</td>
<td>17.60</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>5.511</td>
<td>4.130</td>
<td>1.381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 Hanseatic League</td>
<td>15.85</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>5.968</td>
<td>4.708</td>
<td>1.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 King William I</td>
<td>15.74</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>6.553</td>
<td>5.416</td>
<td>1.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Romans</td>
<td>15.65</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>7.500</td>
<td>6.396</td>
<td>1.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Beemster polder</td>
<td>13.36</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>6.000</td>
<td>4.909</td>
<td>1.091</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numberings of items refer to the full sentences in Appendix I.

Table 1: Results of the multivariate analysis focusing on the differences between males and females

This analysis partially confirms the hypothesis. Among the ten items mentioned in Table 1, six may be regarded as topics which are probably more attractive to males, because they deal with wars, military commanders and princes (items 47, 20, 27, 40, 28 and 02). The other four (15, 46, 07 and 14), however, cannot be regarded as belonging to that category.

Though the multivariate analysis of variances did not reveal items with stronger female scores, a plain comparison of means did reveal nine out of the fifty topics on which females – according to their self-estimated knowledge – scored higher than males. Application of independent t-tests to these differences revealed that only two of these were statistically significant (p < 0.005): 36 De Stijl (modern art) and 45 Musical author Schmidt. Although there may not be much significance in these differences (given the results of the multivariate analysis of variances), it still stands out that these two do belong to the category of topics which are traditionally seen as preferred by females. Hypothesis 2 may therefore be judged as partially confirmed.
- Hypothesis 3. To test this hypothesis, the question “Do you remember ever having been taught about this subject?” was coded ‘1’ if answered with ‘Yes’ and coded ‘0’ if answered with ‘No’. The mean variable for self-estimated knowledge of the subject varied between 1 and 10. Pearson’s correlations between ‘remembering having been taught’ and ‘self-estimated knowledge’ were then calculated for each of the 50 items. In all cases but five, the correlation appeared to be statistically significant, which showed that the questions were answered consistently, for it is logical to suppose that for items with high self-estimated knowledge levels respondents would also remember having been taught about them, and vice versa. But the strengths of the correlations varied considerably, which could be expected, because for some topics (like the World Wars or Anne Frank) knowledge would not solely or predominantly have originated in history lessons, but would also have been acquired to a relatively large extent via different channels. The results in Table 2 confirm that correlations were weak in these cases and strong in cases in which knowledge could not so much be expected from other sources than history lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five topics with weakest and statistically insignificant correlations</th>
<th>Five topics with strongest correlations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Pearson’s correlation between ‘self-perception of knowledge’ and ‘remembering having been taught’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 German occupation</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 East India Company</td>
<td>0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 Anne Frank</td>
<td>0.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 World War I</td>
<td>0.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 William of Orange</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Correlation is statistically significant (p < 0.05)
Numberings of items refer to the full sentences in Appendix I.

Table 2: Correlations between ‘self-estimated knowledge’ and ‘remembering having been taught’

All three hypotheses having been confirmed to some degree and Cronbach’s Alpha turning out to be high, there were enough reasons to suppose that the questionnaire had provided reasonably reliable and valid data about self-estimated knowledge with the fifty topics of the Dutch Canon and about the degree to which students remembered having been taught about them.
5. Results

Research Question 1. In Table 3 results are presented for the fifteen best known items from the Canon of the Netherlands and for the fifteen least known items, based on the self-estimation scores by the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best known items</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>Least known items</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39 Anne Frank</td>
<td>9.04</td>
<td>25 Planetarium builder Eisinga (18th c.)</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 German occupation</td>
<td>8.96</td>
<td>24 Country estates (18th c.)</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 East India Company</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>5 Oldest Dutch Phrase (M.A.)</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 World War I</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>6 Count Florence V Killed (M.A.)</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 William of Orange</td>
<td>7.67</td>
<td>17 Estates Bible (17th c.)</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Iconoclasm 1566</td>
<td>7.67</td>
<td>16 Lawyer Hugo Grotius (17th c.)</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Rembrandt</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>19 Blaeu’s Atlas (17th c.)</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 Colonial War in Indonesia</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>47 Dutch UN Peacekeepers Srebrenica</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 Feminist Aletta Jacobs</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>3 Willibrord 1st bishop Utrecht (M.A.)</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Vincent van Gogh</td>
<td>6.99</td>
<td>22 The philosopher Spinoza (17th c.)</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Dutch Slave Trade</td>
<td>6.98</td>
<td>29 First Dutch railway</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Thorbecke’s Constitution</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>41 Prime Minister Drees (1950s)</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 Migration after WWII</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>46 Autonomy Caribbean islands</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 Crisis 1930s</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>21 Scientist Christian Huygens (17th c.)</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Admiral Michiel de Ruyter</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>15 Amsterdam Canals (17th c.)</td>
<td>4.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numberings of items refer to the full sentences in Appendix I.

Table 3: Self-estimated knowledge scores for best and least known items

Next to obviously well-known items like Anne Frank, Rembrandt and Vincent van Gogh we find high scores for self-perception of knowledge about the World Wars, the 16th century Dutch Revolt (Iconoclasm and William of Orange), as well as colonialism (East India Company and Indonesian War) and slavery. The items Aletta Jacobs and Thorbecke’s Constitution represent important moments in the development of Dutch democracy. All of these are in the range of scores from about 7 to 9, which is interpreted traditionally in the Netherlands as the range from ‘amply satisfactory’ to ‘excellent’.

Among the least known items, scoring below 5 which is traditionally interpreted as the limit for ‘clearly insufficient’, are some important items about Dutch culture, like the first Dutch Bible translation (comparable to the English King James Bible), the oldest Dutch phrase (marking the origins of the Dutch language in the 11th century), baroque country houses and the Amsterdam Canals (architecture in the Golden Age), Blaeu, Grotius, Huygens and Spinoza (representing
the flourishing of philosophy and science during the Golden Age), and planetarium builder Eisinga (representing the Dutch Enlightenment). Items about the Middle Ages, like the first archbishop of Utrecht, the murder of Florence V, count of Holland, and again the first Dutch phrase, indicate poor performances for that era.

Looking at the results for ‘remembering having been taught’, the scores in Appendix I can be interpreted in terms of percentages of the respondents who remembered having been confronted with lessons about a topic, because the variable was either 0 or 1 (no or yes). We can see that all respondents (100%) remembered having been taught about the German occupation during World War II and almost all (99%) about World War I. If we look at colonialism and slavery, the scores for remembering having been taught about these topics are: 98% for the Dutch East India Company, 93% for the slave trade and 92% for the colonial war in Indonesia.

**Research Question 2.** The first person plural (whether it be ‘we’, or ‘our’ or ‘us’) was found in 11 essays out of the total number of 73, i.e. 15%. In ten cases it was used in only one sentence of the essay, in one case in four sentences. These four sentences as well as four other ones in different essays mentioned the words ‘our country’ to indicate the geographical location of what was happening: “To punish the Netherlands, king Philip II sent the Duke of Alva to our country”; “Our country was attacked by France and Spain”; “In May 1940, the Germans attacked our country”. In the remaining six sentences, the more direct perspective of ‘we’ was used, e.g.: “We were governed by a Spanish king”; “We started founding colonies in the West-Indies and Suriname”; “We did not have an army that was up to the Germans”; and “In May 1945 we were liberated”.

If we look at the contexts for which this perspective was chosen, in the majority of the cases it was the Dutch Revolt against king Philip II of Spain (four sentences) and the Second World War (five sentences). But the number of sentences was so limited, that meaningful quantification is not really possible.

Several of the fourteen sentences in which the ‘we’-perspective was used, show a rather careful use of this perspective, like: “For the Dutch this is often an uneasy subject, because we still feel bad about it, but our share in the slave trade was comparatively not very large”; or: “Another example of our special position were the trade and international relations of the Netherlands in the Golden Age”. These sentences combine the more distanced ‘the Netherlands’ or ‘the Dutch’ with the use of ‘we’. For the 73 essays as a whole this was always the case, because the first person plural appeared in only one or just a few sentences.
There were also examples of extremely careful reasoning, such as: “Around the year 1500 the area we now call Netherlands was administrated by the (Holy Roman) German Empire; because king Charles V of Spain became German Emperor too, Spain obtained authority in the Netherlands”. Another less successful example of this type was: “Around the year 1500 the country we now call Netherlands was occupied by the Spaniards”. This sentence starts carefully (though the word ‘country’ is less appropriate than ‘area’), but then it derails by the anachronistic concept of ‘occupation’, which also seems to imply a certain national perspective. This kind of more or less ‘concealed’ perspective taking was apparent in a few sentences in which the first person plural did not figure, like: “Luckily the Netherlands won this conflict”. Over all, this concealed perspective taking was found five times in the 73 essays.

During the ten interviews that were conducted after the writing of the essays had taken place, the results were slightly different. In most cases, students still talked about ‘the Netherlands’ or ‘the Dutch’, but in the context of the slave trade six out of the ten students used ‘we’, and in the context of the German attack on the Netherlands four out of ten. Three students used ‘we’ when talking about colonies and exploitation of slaves on plantations. For the other topics, such as power, trade and culture during the Golden Age, or the role of the Netherlands during World War I, the first person plural was used hardly or not at all.

In the second part of the interviews, in which the writing of the essays was discussed, six out of ten students said they had deliberately chosen a perspective when writing the essay. Two of these had used the ‘we’-perspective and thought with hindsight that this was strange; they thought they wouldn’t do such a thing: “I cannot imagine that I wrote ‘our country’ because I never do things like that”. When discussing the first part of the interview, one of the ten students said she had been conscious of her perspective choice when speaking during that part of the interview; the others were not conscious of their choices during speaking. The one student that was conscious of her perspective taking had said about the German attack in 1940: “Yes, and we were not prepared. Because yes, we wanted… Well I’m talking about ‘we’, but that was of course not… The Netherlands wanted to stay neutral”.

With regard to the relatively high frequency with which they had used ‘we’ during talking about slavery, most students did not know how to explain this. One of them said: “Perhaps because you feel partly responsible? Unconsciously, like, it is our country after all. That you are carrying with you what your ancestors have done”. This uttering may indicate a feeling of responsibility for one’s ancestor’s
deeds, even in cases where there is no direct or indirect personal connection (the exact ancestors in question remaining unidentified), or of what Assmann describes as ‘the ethical claim to shared remembering’\(^\text{41}\) As such this should be regarded as a manifestation of collective memory rather than academic historical thinking.

The last part of the interviews was devoted to the question whether using the ‘we’-perspective is desirable at all in history. Eight out of the ten students thought very straightforwardly that the ‘we’-perspective should not be used, because they thought history should be as ‘objective’ as possible. One student thought that ‘we’ was allowed, “because one’s history is something with which to distinguish oneself”, an example of identification which employs the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘the others’. Another student thought that ‘we’ could be useful to accentuate that something from history also counts for you: “Like ‘me too’, so to say”. This may have been a reference to collective responsibility taking. These last two students therefore showed signs of collective remembering, while the other eight took the point of view of academic history only.

**Research Question 3.** As described above, the essays were coded for the references made by students in the context of the eight topics they had to deal with. Table 4 shows in percentages in how many of the essays certain references were made. This allows us to analyse to a certain extent what are common associations with a number of sensitive topics in Dutch national history.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Punishing of iconoclasts</td>
<td>1a Calvinism</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1b Poverty as cause of unrest (as opposed to wealth of the Church)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1c Political motives for unrest</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Dutch victory over Spain</td>
<td>2a Causes of Spanish defeat</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2b Dutch became Republic because no prince could be found</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Dutch Golden Age</td>
<td>3a Dutch Republic one of the most powerful European nations</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3b The East India Company (VOC)</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3c Economic prosperity</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3d Flourishing of the arts</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3e Flourishing of philosophy and science</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Dutch slave trade</td>
<td>4a Dutch transported relatively many slaves</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4b Dutch transported relatively few slaves</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4c Cruelty and inhuman character of the trade</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4d Triangular trade route</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4e Rise of abolitionism</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Carrying with you what your ancestors have done...’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 General suffrage</th>
<th>5a True democracy as a result of this change</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5b Connection to emancipation of women</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6 German occupation</th>
<th>6a Neutrality policy of Dutch government before the war</th>
<th>39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6b Bombardment of Rotterdam</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6c Persecution of Jews</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6d Resistance to Germans</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6e Collaboration with Germans</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6f The last ‘hunger winter’</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7 Liberation of Netherlands</th>
<th>7a An event of great national joy</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7b The role of the Allies in the liberation</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8 Colonial War in Indonesia</th>
<th>8a Acts of war against Indonesian nationalists</th>
<th>26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8b International pressure caused the Dutch to stop fighting</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Percentages of essays referring to associations with topics**

The top five references, appearing in more than half of the 73 essays, were: the economic prosperity of the Dutch Republic during the Golden Age (82%), the role of the Allies in liberating the Netherlands from the Germans (71%), the persecution of Jews during the German occupation (59%), the Dutch East India Company as an important feature of the Golden Age (55%) and the flourishing of philosophy and sciences during the Golden Age (51%). This last result was somewhat surprising, because one would expect mentioning of the arts (Rembrandt, Vermeer) prior to philosophy and sciences. The explanation here appeared to be that one of the teachers in the researched classes had stressed the role of philosophy and sciences in an unusual way.

The iconoclasm in the 16th century is clearly connected with Calvinism, the Dutch East India Company and economic prosperity are standing out among the aspects mentioned for the Golden Age, slavery is seen as something inhuman and cruel and it is assumed that the Dutch played an important role in it (a common misunderstanding, because in reality the Dutch share in the transportation of slaves across the Atlantic was less than 5%42, women’s suffrage is being interpreted as an aspect of emancipation rather than democratisation, and the role of the Allies in liberating the Dutch is more prominent in the picture of the Second World War than the persecution of the Jews.

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6. Conclusion and discussion

We have seen that knowledge about the World Wars, the 16th century Dutch Revolt, as well as colonialism and slavery ranks high among the best known items of Dutch history, according to the self-estimations of graduates from Dutch senior secondary schools. Large percentages of high school graduates (over 90%) remember having been taught about these topics. Some items concerning the development of Dutch democracy also score well. That the names of Anne Frank, Rembrandt and Vincent van Gogh are well known is of course no surprise. But if we are looking for national heroes of the traditional type, we only find William of Orange and Michiel de Ruyter, and the last one at the bottom of the list of fifteen.

Among the least known items we find quite a few related to Dutch national culture, five of which date from the 17th century, the ‘Golden Age’. So if self-perception of knowledge about the Golden Age is scoring well, this is only true for the most obvious aspects like the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and economic prosperity in general. Cultural history seems to be not much appreciated and self-perception of knowledge about some ‘monuments of Dutch national culture’ like the Estates Bible, the achievements of Spinoza, Huygens and Grotius, or even the baroque architecture along the Amsterdam Canals and in country estates along the rivers outside Amsterdam, is lagging behind.

These findings partly confirm and partly contradict those by Kropman et al.43. They also found the Dutch Revolt, the Golden Age and the World Wars well represented in the narratives of students. Their contention, however, that not much attention is being paid to negative experiences such as the slave trade, is contradicted by the results presented here.

Whether ‘national glory’ appeared to be better known than ‘national shame’ or vice versa can be concluded from these data as well. In the list of least known items there is only one which is clearly associated with national shame, i.e. the incident at Srebrenica in Bosnia in 1995 during which Dutch UN-troops failed to protect the Muslim population of that ‘safe haven’. Many of the other least known items could be associated with national glory, like the Amsterdam canals, the philosopher Spinoza, the scientist Huygens and the lawyer Hugo Grotius, founder of international law. In the best known list there are a few items which can arguably be associated with national shame (slavery and the colonial war in Indonesia)

43 Kropman, Van Boxtel and Van Drie, “Small Country, Great Ambitions”.

46
and some which are frequently associated with national shame, though they could also be interpreted otherwise: the Dutch East India Company (colonial exploitation versus success of Dutch entrepreneurship), the German occupation (collaboration and failure to protect the Jewish population versus heroic resistance to the Nazi’s). Only William of Orange and Admiral Michiel de Ruyter (the fiercest opponent of the English during the naval wars of the 17th century) can be seen as national heroes of the traditional kind.

Bearing in mind that the East India Company may be interpreted in negative terms of colonial exploitation, and that the history of the German occupation is frequently connected with collaboration and failure to protect the Jews, we may conclude that four out of the fifteen best known items from Dutch history (German occupation, East India Company, slavery and colonial war in Indonesia) may be connected with episodes of national shame. This is also important with respect to discussions in Dutch society in which the suggestion is being made that national successes are too much stressed and national shame (like slavery) is underrepresented in school history teaching. Based on the results presented here, there is no reason to think that this is true.

Looking at the essays, one of the most striking phenomena is the virtual absence of the first person plural. This was also found by Kropman et al., which means that it is safe to conclude that Dutch students in general do not behave like the American students described by Barton and Levstik, the English students described by Lee and Howson, or the Spanish and Argentinian students described by Carretero, Lopez, González and Rodriguez-Moneo. In all of these cases, students were asked to write essays about the national past. The only difference between the other studies and the one described here, is that students were given some specifications of topics to write about to make sure that all of them would describe the same historical contents.

Most of the ten interviewed students disapproved of the use of the we-perspective in history when explicitly asked about this. Whether or not this renunciation of the use of the we-perspective is the result of deliberate teaching advising students not to use this perspective because it shows a lack of distance, is something that should be taken into consideration. At present, we do not have enough data to be able to give a definite answer to this question. In this context, it is telling that students did use the first person plu-

44 Ibidem.
45 Barton and Levstik, Common Good; Lee and Howson, “Two Out Of Five”; Carretero, Lopez, González and Rodriguez-Moneo, “Students’ Historical narratives”.

47
rally sometimes when *talking* about history, not so much aware of a deliberate choice of perspective. The context in which it was used most frequently during the interviews was slavery and colonialism. This might be connected with an inclination to take responsibility for the wrongs that have been done by ancestors. Another conclusion is that the first person plural might be something that befalls people when they are not deliberately choosing a perspective – in which case it would be an issue of deliberate education to learn how to avoid it.

How could the difference in attitude between Dutch students and students of some other nations be explained? National pride has never been a strong characteristic of the Dutch. In a research executed among sixteen European nations, the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, the Philippines and Russia, the Netherlands appeared to be almost the lowest scoring nation on ‘pride in history’ (with only Sweden and Germany scoring lower)\(^\text{46}\). Another study among fifteen European nation showed the Netherlands to be the one but lowest scoring nation on ‘cultural and national pride’ (Germany scoring lowest)\(^\text{47}\). This is reflected in the Dutch history curriculum, in which national history plays a relatively limited role\(^\text{48}\). Dutch history is incorporated into a general, mostly European-western curriculum. The only instances in which explicit attention is being paid to Dutch history are the Dutch Revolt of the 16\(^{\text{th}}\) century (though connected to the history of the Reformation in Europe) and the Dutch Republic in the Golden Age. All other major episodes, such as the Democratic Revolution around 1800, the Industrial Revolution, the development of Parliamentary Democracies, the period of World Wars and economic crisis, the Cold War and phenomena like colonialism, imperialism, and decolonization, will usually be discussed in a general framework, mentioning Dutch examples in comparison to others.

Dealing critically with perspectives and learning how to avoid the first person plural is, given the insights from academic history, a necessary addition to the list of skills of historical thinking which

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\(^\text{48}\) Though the *Canon of the Netherlands* exists, it is not an obligatory program for the Dutch history curriculum, but only ‘a starting point for illustration’ advised by the Dutch government. The fifty items are now mainly discussed in primary schools, which usually focus their history lessons on the Dutch past. In secondary education, history lessons are usually not focusing on the Dutch past (with the exceptions mentioned), but on general European and world history. Canon items may be mentioned as examples in the margin, only in junior secondary education. In senior secondary education they are usually not mentioned, because the Canon is no part of the program for final examinations.
‘Carrying with you what your ancestors have done…’.

is commonly employed in modern history education research. It is a skill which deals explicitly with the role played by history in modern society, connecting the past with the present and the future\textsuperscript{49}. Taking a distanced position enables people to make their own choices with respect to their identity as a matter of free choice, not as a matter of something which is forced upon them because they happen to be born in a group which shares common ideas about their ‘we’-perspectives, whether they be national, ethnic, or religious. As such, dealing critically with this kind of perspectives is related to the autonomy of citizens in a democratic society in which freedom of choice is one of the most important assets.

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## Appendix I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-rating on knowledge</th>
<th>Remembering having been taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 The builders of Dolmen belonged to a prehistoric farming culture in the present Netherlands.</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 In the Roman Era the south of the present Netherlands belonged to the Roman Empire, the north did not.</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Willibrord was the founder of the Utrecht diocese and therefore the founder of Christianity in the Netherlands.</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 In the time of Charlemagne the present Netherlands belonged to his great Christian Frankish Empire.</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 The text ‘hebban olla vogala’ is the oldest Dutch phrase ever found.</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Florence V, Count of Holland, was assassinated by his disgruntled vassals.</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 During the late Middle Ages a few Dutch cities (like Zwolle, Deventer, Kampen) were members of the German Hanseatic League.</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Erasmus was an important humanist scholar who criticized the medieval version of Christianity.</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 In the sixteenth century, the present Netherlands belonged to the European empire of Charles V, who defended Catholicism.</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 In 1566 the Revolt in the Netherlands started by the outbreak of Iconoclasm.</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 William of Orange was the leader of the Dutch Revolt and is considered the founder of the Dutch state.</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12 The Dutch Republic was an unintended consequence of the Dutch Revolt with a particular form of government.
13 The Dutch East India Company was an early capitalist enterprise involved in world trade.
14 In the 17th century a large number of polders, including the Beemster, was drained by means of windmills.
15 The flourishing of the Dutch Republic is reflected in planned urban expansion, such as the Amsterdam canals.
16 Grotius was an eminent 17th-century legal scholar who has published on ‘the free sea’.
17 The first direct translation of the Bible into Dutch was the Estates Bible.
18 Rembrandt van Rijn is one of the most famous Dutch painters of the Golden Age.
19 During the Golden Age the Netherlands excelled in map making, as is apparent from the Blaeu Atlas.
20 Michiel de Ruyter is one of the most famous Dutch admirals, symbol of Dutch power at sea.
21 Christiaan Huygens was a famous Dutch physicist, who invented the pendulum clock and was a theorist of light.
22 Spinoza was a great Dutch philosopher of Jewish origin, known for his ethical and philosophical and religious views.
23 In the 17th and 18th centuries Dutch merchants were actively taking part in the slave trade.
<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>In the 17th and especially the 18th century wealthy citizens laid out estates along rivers such as the Vecht.</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>3.3107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>In the second half of the 18th century woolcomber Eise Eisinga built a planetarium in his own home in Franeker.</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>2.4312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>In the late 18th century the Patriot Movement in the Netherlands tried to establish the first democracy.</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>5.0279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>In the time of Napoleon the present Netherlands belonged to his empire, with many lasting consequences in legislation.</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>6.3497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Between 1813 and 1840, Frederick William of Orange ruled the Dutch kingdom as King William I.</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>5.7404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>In 1839 the first Dutch railway was built between Amsterdam and Haarlem.</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>4.4468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>In 1848 a constitution was established under the leadership of Thorbecke, which laid the foundation for the present Dutch democracy.</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>6.8711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>In 1860 Multatuli published his novel Max Havelaar which contained a critical view of Dutch colonialism in the East Indies.</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>5.4965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>In the second half of the 19th century protests began in the Netherlands against the then common child labour.</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>6.5699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Vincent van Gogh is a famous Dutch painter of the 19th century, one of the founders of expressionism.</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>6.9860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Aletta Jacobs was the first Dutch woman to study at a university and has meant a lot for women’s emancipation.</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>7.1525</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
35 During World War I the Netherlands remained neutral, but felt the effects of the European war.

36 ‘De Stijl’ was a movement in modern abstract art characterized by clean shapes and primary colors.

37 During the nineteen thirties, the Netherlands suffered the consequences of the global economic crisis.

38 During World War II Netherlands was occupied by Nazi Germany.

39 Anne Frank was a Jewish girl who was in hiding for a long time in Amsterdam and wrote a famous diary.

40 In the years after World War II Netherlands conducted a colonial war in Indonesia.

41 During the nineteen fifties the Dutch government was led by Prime Minister Willem Drees, symbol of reconstruction.

42 In February 1953 a major flood disaster occurred in South Holland and Zeeland.

43 In the nineteen fifties television captured the Dutch living rooms as a new mass medium.

44 During the twentieth century the port of Rotterdam developed as one of the most important in the world.

45 In the second half of the 20th century Annie M. G. Schmidt wrote children’s books, musicals and songs.

46 The Dutch colonies in the Caribbean acquired post-colonial status in the second half of the 20th century.
47 In 1995 Dutch participation in a UN peacekeeping force turned out into a tragedy in Yugoslavian Srebrenica.

48 After World War II the Netherlands developed by migration into a multicoloured country.

49 The discovery of natural gas in Groningen meant tapping into an unprecedentedly rich source of energy and income.

50 In the second half of the 20th century, the Netherlands became increasingly evidently part of the European Union.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing task</th>
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<td>Write a text in which you broadly describe the history of the Netherlands from the year 1500 until now. Make sure it is an ongoing story, so do not write in schemes or keywords, but use complete sentences. It’s okay if you do not know too many details about the topics that you describe. Try to stick to the main outlines. Incorporate in your story at least the following topics:</td>
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1. The Duke of Alva punishes the iconoclasts.
2. The Dutch Republic wins the war against Spain in 1648.
3. The Golden Age.
4. Slavery and the slave trade.
5. The introduction of universal suffrage for men and women in 1919.
6. The German occupation during the Second World War.
7. The liberation on May 5, 1945.
8. The war in Indonesia, 1945-1949.
Appendix III

Interview guideline

(For each topic, start with the A-question, and if necessary, continue with B and/or C)

A Explain purpose of interview and start first part:

The interview is about the essay that you wrote. We will start to discuss four topics that you have written about in the essay. (During the interview the interviewer notes whether the students use the we-perspective and makes brief notes of this).

1. The Golden Age
   A. What can you tell me about the Dutch Golden Age?
   B. Can you tell about the flourishing of trade in this period?
   C. Can you mention some important people from this time (for example, artists or scientists or politicians) and explain why these were important?

2. Slavery
   A. What role did the West India Company play in the transatlantic slave trade?
   B. What do you think about politicians who are now apologizing for the Netherlands’ role in the slave trade and slavery?

3. The Second World War
   A. How did the Netherlands get involved in World War II?
   B. Can you give a general picture of the lives of the Dutch citizens during the German occupation?

4. Liberation.
   How did the Liberation come about?

B The student is now given back the essay he/she wrote. The interviewer notes whether the student used a particular perspective in the text and points out a number of examples.

1. In your essay, you always wrote about ‘the Netherlands’ or ‘the Low Countries’ and ‘them’ and not about ‘our country’ and ‘we’.
   A. Have you been aware of this when writing?
   B. If so, why did you choose ‘the Netherlands’ and ‘them’? If not: Why do you think you have used this perspective?
OR:
2. In the essay you sometimes wrote about 'the Netherlands' and 'them', and sometimes you used 'we' or 'our country.'
   A. Have you been aware of this when writing?
   B. If so, why did you choose in some cases 'the Netherlands' and 'them', and in other cases, 'we' or 'our country'? If not: Why do you think you have used this perspective?

C Discuss the first part of the interview.
Depending on whether or not the student while speaking used the 'we' perspective, the questions will be:
   1. During the interview you used the we-perspective and in your essay you did not use it.
      A. Were you aware of this?
      B. If yes: Why did you choose in this case for 'us' and 'our country'? If not: Why do you think you made the choice to use a different perspective?

OR:
2. Both during the interview and in your essay you only used the perspective of 'the Netherlands' and 'them'.
   A. Were you aware of this?
   B. If yes: Why did you choose to use this perspective? If not: Why do you think you made this choice?

OR:
3. Both during the interview and in your essay you occasionally used the 'we'-perspective and occasionally the perspective of 'the Netherlands' and 'them'.
   A. Were you aware of this?
   B. If yes: Why did you choose for the we-perspective in some cases? If not: Why do you think you made this choice of perspectives.

OR:
4. In the essay you occasionally used the 'we'-perspective but not during our interview.
   A. Were you aware of this?
   B. If yes: Why did you choose to speak about 'them' during the interview? If not: Why do you think you made this choice of perspectives.

D Principle opinion about perspectives
    -Finally, I would like to know what you think is better in history: Speaking about 'the Netherlands' and 'they', or talk about 'our country' and 'us'.

56