Reading and thinking like a historian means to use critical thinking in studying history like a “detective” looking for historical truths, instead of memorizing the facts being pushed.

We think before we read. “thinking historically” means to look at a historical fact critically. First, it helps the historian to develop a genuine curiosity and interest to the historical fact. Say, how will studying this part of history will benefit people today, or change our view of the history. I believe if a historian wanted to know more about a history, he/she would ask more questions, and dived deeper into information. Second, as Professor Sam Wineburg says in his powerpoint film, "Why Historical Thinking Matters", the process of thinking historically includes sourcing, contextualizing, close reading, and collaborating. Sourcing means to think about the author’s background, and identify the validity of the source by considering the overall meaning. Contextualizing, is to put the source in the historical context to examine. Close reading refers to read the source closely to figure out the author’s tone and claims, and validate the reliability of the claims by cross-referencing other sources from the same time and area. Lastly, formulate your own interpretation of the source, identify the agreement and disagreement of the sources.

As mentioned above, “reading like a historian” is one part of the active thinking process of the historian. Professor Moore's document "How to Read" illustrates this process. “Always historicize”, always consider the historical context which inspired the author to become interested in the topic, the author’s thinking process and resources to make the claims. “Always biographize”, refer to the author’s background to think about how it influences the author’s writing. “Always genericize”, consider the genre of the documents. Read carefully the meanings, the mood, the voice conveyed by the words used.

“There are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand people’s eyes”. A historian takes into account the author’s background, gather as many sources as possible, and refer to different views when they read evidence, form the interpretation of the source, and point out the agreement and disagreement. This is how a historian read and think.