



Tips for Teachers

Enriching projects with historical thinking concepts

Encouraging students to frame inquiry questions for their Heritage Fair projects around historical thinking concepts helps them go beyond the surface and explore deeper historical meaning.

While doing a Heritage Fair project invites critical thinking about the past, it does not guarantee it. Helping students effectively use one or more of the following historical thinking concepts to guide research and inquiry into their topics leads to Heritage Fair projects that are more historically rigorous and educationally valuable.

Historical thinking concept	Sample questions from Heritage Fair projects	How historical thinking enriches Heritage Fair projects
Historical significance <i>What and who should be remembered, researched and taught?</i>	What are the five most important facts that all Canadians should know about our country's early history? Why should we remember Japantown's forgotten streets? Why is the internment of Japanese people in Canada during World War II regarded as important? Is this incident's place in Canadian history more or less significant than the internment of Ukrainian Canadians during World War I?	Not everything that happens gets in the history books. This means that decisions have to be made about what aspects of the past are worth learning. Historical significance gives a purpose for studying a topic and invites students into a conversation about what events and individuals from the past are worth remembering.
Evidence and interpretation <i>Is the evidence adequate to support the conclusions reached?</i>	What can this book tell us about the people in the pictures? (The father of the student asking this question uncovered, on a construction site, the lost journal of a Canadian fighter pilot in World War I. His daughter explored the lives of the people shown in the journal's photographs, using the journal as a major source of evidence.) What is the story of my home? (The student used attic artifacts and archival information as evidence.) Does the evidence suggest that so-called "enemy aliens" posed a genuine threat to Canadian national security during the First and Second World Wars? Is there adequate evidence to support the conclusion that the crash of the New York Stock Exchange caused the Great Depression?	History is not simply a description of what happened in the past. Rather, the "facts" of the past are interpreted from clues. It is critical that students understand that different interpretations of the past are possible, especially if looked at from various points of view. Students need to assess interpretations of the past and weigh the adequacy of the evidence that they use to support their conclusions.

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<p>Continuity and change</p> <p><i>How are lives and conditions alike over time and how have they changed?</i></p>	<p>How has my school changed?</p> <p>How have equal rights developed in Canada over the years?</p> <p>How did the reception of Chinese immigrants to Canada change before and after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railroad? In what ways were the experiences of Chinese Canadians substantially similar during these periods?</p> <p>How have women’s rights changed since 1900?</p>	<p>When we study history, we examine both how things change over time and how things remain the same. Awareness of continuity and change encourages students to look for connections among events, and similarities and differences between events or periods in history. This approach makes history more coherent.</p>
<p>Cause and consequence</p> <p><i>Why did historical events happen the way they did and what are the consequences?</i></p>	<p>How did the Hudson’s Bay Company influence Canada?</p> <p>How did the Gold Rush shape British Columbia?</p> <p>Which Gold Rush had more significant impact on Canada’s history: the Fraser River Gold Rush or the Klondike Gold Rush?</p> <p>Did the Komagata Maru incident in BC in 1907 happen because of anti-Asian racism or because of economic conditions at the turn of the century?</p> <p>What are the likely long-term social, political and economic consequences of the Komagata Maru incident?</p> <p>Why were Ukrainian people interned in WW I and Japanese people interned in WW II?</p>	<p>Few things can be more engaging for students than to see the complex interplay of causes and consequences. Understanding this concept helps to counter the “single cause” interpretation of events that often leads to simpleminded explanations and scapegoats.</p>
<p>Historical perspective</p> <p><i>What does the past look like when viewed through the social, intellectual and emotional lenses of the time?</i></p>	<p>Why did so many people join the gold rush when they knew that the trip was hard and that conditions in the mining towns were bad?</p> <p>How did Europeans and Aboriginal peoples look upon the early exploration of Canada?</p> <p>Why did the government ban the potlatch and how did the First Nations react?</p> <p>Why did under-age recruits join the army in World War II?</p>	<p>The past is often seen to be so different from the present that students conclude that people in the past were foolish or peculiar. To take a historical perspective is to “put ourselves in their shoes” using all the evidence that we can find. Exploring the beliefs and actions of people in the past is fascinating for students and can expand their appreciation that not every generation has understood and experienced the world as we do today.</p>
<p>Ethical judgment</p> <p><i>Is what happened right and fair?</i></p>	<p>Was the government’s decision in the 19th century to force Aboriginal children to attend residential schools an unfortunate but well-meaning mistake or was it a shameful abuse of power?</p> <p>Should the government apologize for the treatment of immigrant children?</p> <p>Was the Prime Minister’s apology for the abusive treatment of Aboriginal people in residential schools appropriate and sufficient?</p> <p>Are there any possible lessons learned from the internment of Ukrainian- and Japanese-Canadians?</p>	<p>Questions of fairness or social justice are often compelling for students. If an issue in history is meaningful, there is usually an ethical dimension. Ethical judgment helps students to make sense of the past as they consider why some historical actions are defensible and others are not. Ethical judgment provides opportunities for students to draw their own conclusions about the ethics of events in the past.</p>