

CONTEXTUALIZING HISTORICAL EVENTS

Snapshots  in Time

THE  ²
CRITICAL THINKING
CONSORTIUM

CONTEXTUALIZING HISTORICAL EVENTS

Activity Description: Make observations and inferences about the context of historical events to organize them into a chronological timeline.

Historical Thinking Concept(s): Evidence and interpretation; Continuity and change

ACTIVITY	INSTRUCTIONS
Launch the inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Display two SIT cards (do not show the date on the back of the cards) and ask students the following inquiry question: Which one of the events featured on the cards happened first?• Invite students to share their answers and the evidence that supports their reasoning.• Inform students that the ability to situate historical events and people in time and place is called contextualization and it is important for making sense of people, events, and objects from the past.• Explain that in this activity students will use contextualization strategies to organize historical events featured on cards into a chronological timeline.
Introduce and model thinking strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide an example of an observation and inference such as: If you see someone crying (observation) you infer they may be upset (inference). Ask students to provide examples of observations and inferences to confirm their understanding.• Explain that contextualization involves making specific observations (something seen, heard, or noticed) and plausible inferences (logical, informed conclusions) about when and where a historical event occurred.• To introduce students to criteria for assessing observations and inferences, display one SIT card and provide an inaccurate observation and an implausible inference about when and where the event took place. Ask students if they agree with your observation and inference and to explain their reasoning. Using examples from students' responses, explain that observations should be specific and accurate, and inferences should be plausible and supported by specific observations.• Introduce four strategies for making specific observations and plausible inferences about the context of historical events. Explain that students already used some of these strategies in the introductory activity, but the goal now is to name and describe them.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draw on background knowledge: Use historical background knowledge to make plausible inferences about who, what, where, and when an event occurred.• Read the text: analyze text on the card to make plausible inferences about who, what, where, and when the event occurred.• Read the image: analyze the image on the card to make plausible inferences about who, what, where, and when the event occurred.• Anchor and adjust: Use knowledge about the historical context of other historical events to make plausible inferences about who, what, where, and when an event occurred.• Display two SIT cards and model how to use each of the four strategies to make observations and inferences about the context of the two events featured on the cards.

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ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS

Practice the strategy

- Distribute copies of the *Contextualizing historical events* Blackline Master (BLM) and explain how to use it to make observations and inferences about who, what, where, and when the historical events on the cards occurred.
- Select three SIT cards and display them for students. Do not show the dates on the back of the cards.
- Ask students to follow the prompts on the *Contextualizing historical events* BLM and use the most appropriate of the four strategies to contextualize each event, then arrange them into chronological order.
- If students have little background knowledge about the event, encourage them to be tentative when making inferences. Suggest that they modify their conclusions by using terms such as "maybe," "possibly," and "perhaps."

Check understanding

- Invite students to share their observations and inferences about who, what, where, and when the historical events on the cards occurred, and the strategies they used.
- Reveal the dates on the back of the three cards and invite students to identify which observations and inferences were most and least helpful for contextualizing the events on the cards.
- Ask students to use the assessment criteria on the *Contextualizing historical events* BLM to self- or peer-assess their abilities to make specific and accurate observations and plausible inferences about the context of the historical events on the cards. Invite students to share what they might have overlooked or might do differently next time.
- If students need support making plausible inferences about the historical context of the events, provide additional cards for students to practice with.

Apply learning

- Select game play option (competitive, cooperative, individual) and the specific cards for students to work with.
- Select specific cards that are relevant to the historical topic(s), time period(s), or theme(s) being investigated and appropriate for the age and background knowledge of the students. For students with limited knowledge about the historical events featured on the cards, consider starting with a limited number of cards or cards students already know about, before introducing cards focused on new events.
- Using one of the game play options, ask students to contextualize the events and organize them into chronological order.
- Teachers can use the *Supporting Teacher Assessment* chart to make observations about students' learning, provoke conversations with students about their learning, and assess student's products.

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ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS

Reflect and assess thinking

- Invite students to use the assessment criteria on the *Contextualizing historical events* BLM to self- or peer-assess their abilities to make specific and accurate observations and plausible inferences about the context of the historical events featured on the cards.
- Invite students to reflect on the following questions and share with a partner:
 - Which events were most difficult to contextualize? Which strategies were most effective?
 - How accurate was their timeline?
 - What might they do differently next time?

Extend understanding

- Teachers can extend students' understanding of contextualization by using the following methods:
 - Ask students to contextualize historical events they have not learned about.
 - Increase the number of events students are asked to contextualize.
 - Invite students to work on their own, in pairs, or small groups.
 - Time students to see if their ability to contextualize sources quickly and accurately improves.

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Contextualizing historical events

Make specific and accurate observations and plausible inferences about the historical context of historical events.

Contextualization Questions	Observations (What I see)	Inferences (What I conclude)
Who was involved in the event? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider age, gender, class, ethnicity, occupation/job, relationships?		
What happened? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What decisions were made and actions taken?		
Where did the event take place? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Country, region, or territory?• Rural or urban?• Geographical features and landmarks?		
When did the event happen? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Century, decade, year, month, day, hour, minute?		

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Supporting Teacher Assessment

The table below provides prompts to help teachers make observations about students' learning, provoke conversations with students, and assess students' demonstrations of learning performances.

Observation What teachers should look and listen for when observing students.	Conversation Question prompts for teachers to provoke a conversation with students	Demonstrations of Learning Criteria for assessing students' products or demonstrations of learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do students make specific and accurate observations and plausible inferences about the historical context of historical events? • Do students organize historical events into chronological order? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did this event happen? • Where did the event happen? • Who was involved? • What happened? • Did this event happen before or after this event? • How do you know? • What evidence supports your conclusion? • Are your answers justified by the evidence you provided? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students make specific and accurate observations and plausible inferences about the historical context of historical events? • The historical events included in the timeline are in accurate chronological order.

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Assessing the contextualization of events

Specific and accurate observations: observations about the context of historical events are specific and accurate.

Evidence from sample answer:

Suggestions for improvement:

I can make specific and accurate observations about the context of historical events.



I've got it

I'm still working on it

Plausible inferences: inferences about the context of historical events are plausible and supported by specific observations.

Evidence from sample answer:

Suggestions for improvement:

I can make plausible inferences about the context of historical events and support them with specific observations.



I've got it

I'm still working on it