

# The Six **Historical Thinking** Strategies

## With Guiding Questions

Following are brief descriptions and guiding questions to help you understand and apply the six historical thinking strategies. This is document you will refer to throughout the year.

### A) Historical Significance

**Why does this person/story/event/image/object/etc. matter?**

**What makes it important?**

Guiding questions to help determine historical significance

- How was it important to people at the time it took place?
- How does it help give us, today, an understanding of the past?
- Is it important to a particular group or groups?
- Is it remembered today?
- What does it reveal about the past?
- Who does/did it impact?
- Did it impact or affect people's lives for a relatively short time or a longer time?
- Were many lives affected by it?
- How deeply did it affect people's lives?

### B) Primary Evidence

**Primary sources** are the historical documents or artifacts used by historians as evidence. Examples of primary sources include diaries, personal journals, government records, court records, property records, newspaper articles, military reports, military rosters, and many other things.

**Primary sources** were either created during the time period being studied or were created at a later date by a participant in the events being studied (as in the case of memoirs). They reflect the individual viewpoint of a participant or observer. Primary sources enable the researcher to get as close as possible to what actually happened during an historical event or time period

A **secondary source** is a work that interprets or analyzes an historical event. It is generally at least one step removed from the event is often based on primary sources. Examples of secondary sources include textbooks, articles, documentary videos, etc.

Guiding question to help determine whether something is a primary source of evidence

Is this a primary source of historical evidence? Why or why not?

### C) Identify Continuity and Change

**In what ways does this person/story/event/image/object/etc. show how things have changed between this point in history and today?**

**In what ways does it show how things are similar or have remained the same?**

**In what ways does it show how things have **progressed** (gotten better) or **declined** (gotten worse)?**

## D) Analyze Cause and Consequence

How or why did this happen?

- What were the actions, beliefs, and circumstances that led to this?
- Who was responsible for it?
  - What were the motivations of the person or people behind this?
  - What did they want?

What was the impact of this?

- What was the immediate or short term impact?
- What was the long term impact?

## E) Taking Historical Perspective

*“What were they thinking?”*

*“The past is like a foreign country”*

Why did they do this?

What did they believe?

How did they think differently then than I/we do today?

Were there different perspectives?

## F) Understanding Ethical Dimensions of History

*“How should we judge people’s actions in the past?”*

What is our responsibility today when it comes to historical injustices?

We must understand the differences between our beliefs today and those of people in the past.

Is it okay to impose our own standards on the past?

Are some things just wrong, no matter when they occurred?

