

Historical Thinking Mentorship Project:
Change and Continuity

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Chosen Historical Thinking Concept:

Change and Continuity

Student-Friendly explanation for learners:

The central idea behind Continuity and Change is to help students notice what has changed over time and what has remained the same. It is also integral to understand that Continuity and Change are not separate things as Peter Seixas and Tom Morton explain, “continuity and change are interwoven: both can exist together” (Seixas and Morton, 74). In this view, it is understood that change is measured by a background of continuity. Change refers to the process in which things are altered throughout history. Historians use change to measure the differences between either a point in the past and present, or two points in the past. But it is important to keep in mind that, “change is a process, with varying paces and patterns” (Seixas and Morton, 74). It may not be as obvious as it appears. Therefore, historians look for patterns or ‘turning points’ which are, “moments when the direction [or pace] of change shifts” (Seixas and Morton, 74). These help Historians to identify these moments more clearly and record what exactly has changed. Continuity refers to the process in which things stay the same. Continuity helps Historians measure how much has not changed in the past and use it to compare against how much has changed, and why. Once put together Change and Continuity allows us to evaluate progress and decline at different points in history.

Another central concept to Continuity and Change is the assumption that history is improving, whereas Seixas argues, “progress for one group may be decline for another” (Seixas and Morton, 74). This complicates traditional ideas of ‘progress’ and ‘decline’ but encourages us to consider other perspectives. As Seixas points out, it is easy to mistake progress or decline as one definitive historical timeline. This prompts historians to go beyond the obvious of what has changed, but to ask who benefits from this change and who does not? Additionally, Historians use all of these patterns to try to categorize different ‘periods’ of time to better understand the bigger

picture. This is a process known as “periodization” which is a “way of organizing our thinking about continuity and change” (Seixas and Morton, 74). Yet, periodization is imperfect and highly debated but still proves one of the many useful strategies to consider Continuity and Change in history.

Curricular Alignment

Grade level: Grade 10 Academic

Ontario curriculum Overall Expectation: C2 Communities, Conflict, Co-Operation.

C2. Communities, Conflict, and Cooperation: analyse some key interactions within and between communities in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, and between Canada and the international community, from 1929 to 1945, with a focus on key issues that affected these interactions and changes that resulted from them

Teacher facing curricular note:

The concept of Change and Continuity fits extremely well with the CHC2D overall expectation C2. It gives students the tools to think critically about multiple affective perspectives that led to conflicts and co-operations in and amongst different communities in Canada. This period of history provides ample opportunity for students to analyze different Canadian conflicts at home and abroad lending itself to discussion about how Canada has changed and how it has not. In the realm of technology, society, and war, this expectation offers many avenues to explore and evaluate progress and decline through history as well. As students still grapple with new historical thinking concepts this expectation provides opportunities for learning across ability levels and provides a good foundation for cultivating this skill.

Primary Sources and Worked Example

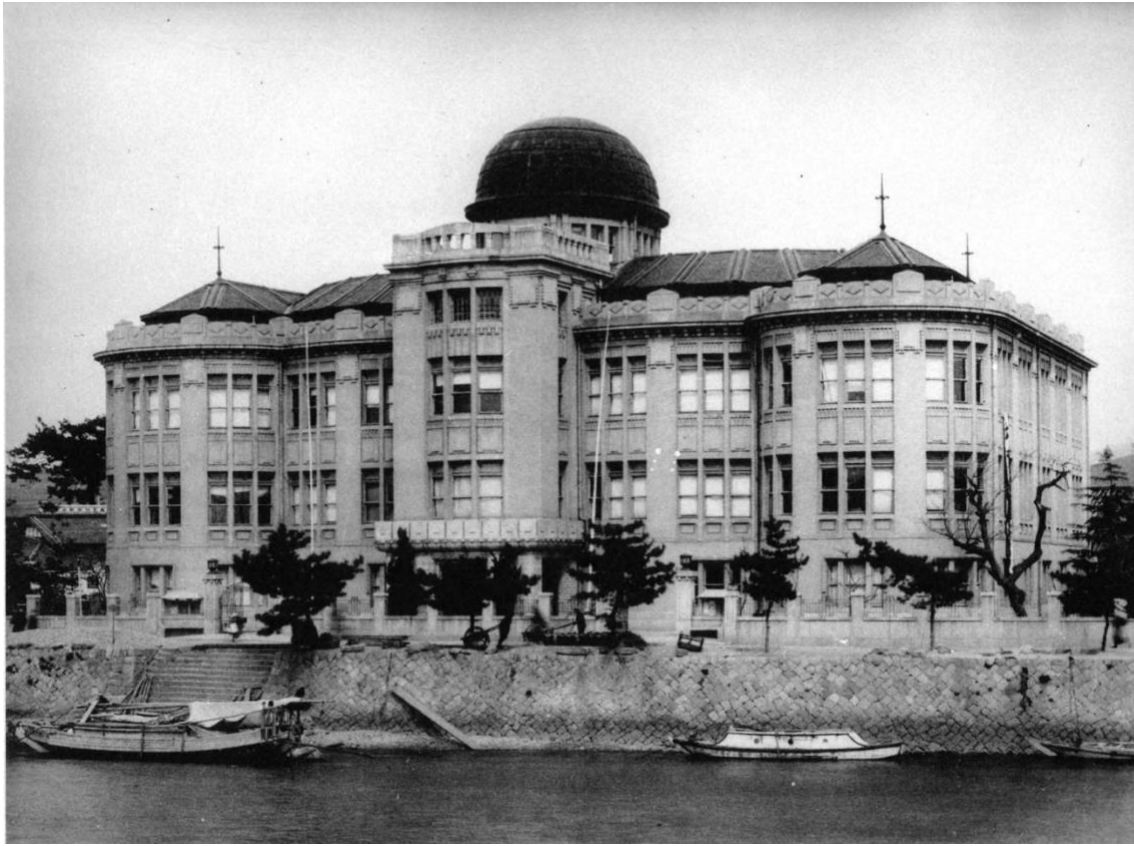


Figure 1: Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotional Hall Pre-Bombing (Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum)



Figure 2: Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotional Hall Post Bombing, September 1945 (Matsushige)

The two primary sources I have chosen for Continuity and Change are two different photos taken of the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotional Hall before the atomic bombs fell, and after. They were taken by an unknown photographer and bombing survivor photojournalist Yoshito Mastushige.

Context for learners:

The two primary sources used for this activity show the Hiroshima Industrial Promotional Hall pre and post atom bombing. Leading up to the end of the second world war the Japanese Empire refused to surrender to the Allied forces. The conflict would continue until the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th, 1945, after which Japan surrendered. The two images show a prominent building in Hiroshima far enough away from the centre of the blast to leave remains.

Modelled historical thinking:

The historical thinking concept of Change and Continuity lends itself well to guiding questions for this activity. For the purposes of demonstration, I will answer some of the discussion questions to model student responses. The questions would be as follows:

- **What do you notice first in image 1?**

EXEMPLAR ANSWER:

The first thing I noticed in image one was the central framing of the building and the lack of colour. The lack of colour makes me think this was an era before colour cameras were accessible or even existed. The image shows a normal well-built building and thus I do not think this was taken during a time of war or conflict. There are plenty of live trees and boats outside in front of the building too. This gives me an impression of life even without any people in the frame. Overall, it is an impressive building that makes me think it might be a symbol of pride or the efficiency of this nation's architecture. There are no visible identifiers of where this photo was taken.

- **What do you notice first in image 2?**

EXEMPLAR ANSWER:

The first thing I noticed in image 2 was the sense of destruction and mayhem. The same building is now in tatters, and the roof has caved in. There is destruction everywhere and the sky has changed colours. The camera quality has gone down as well it looks like the photo may be damaged. Pieces of the building has fallen off. As well, any signs of nature or wildlife have disappeared. The only sign anyone was ever here is one lone rowboat sitting on the water. It gives an impression of death, or that something very wrong has happened.

- **What is the primary subject matter?**
- **Between the two images, what has remained the same?**
- **What has changed?**
- **What historical event do you think has occurred based on the images alone?**
- **Would you classify this as a turning point? Why?**
- **Between the two images would you say there has been progress or decline? What evidence brings you to this conclusion?**
- **BONUS: What is the cause of the white spots on image 2?**

Students will work to answer these questions to interpret the past in tandem with self-inquiry and class discussion.

Teacher note:

This example works very well to support learning about the big six historical thinking concepts as it provides ample opportunity for students to practice Change and Continuity on their own and as a class. This would work as a great first formative assessment when covering the thinking concepts as it would give students a foundation to refer to and the instructor a diagnostic

assessment as well. Instructionally, these resources should be utilized after discussing the historical thinking concepts, and near the end of the unit on the second world war. When running this activity, it is important for the teacher to be aware that students may get confused and start applying other thinking concepts or guessing blindly. It is important to keep an eye on the class as they work through this. The teacher should emphasize that students should only answer the first four questions alone. Then they should emphasize that everyone tries the fifth question and then take it up as a class. Then move to a class discussion model for the rest of the questions. Student response may aim to be humorous or struggle to answer the questions. In this event pull out the exemplars and guide the class through one or two of the questions modelling historical analytical thinking.

Visual Accompaniment to the Primary Source

Type of visual or organizer:

This visual accompaniment will be a graphic organiser to facilitate discussion and provide students a framework for working with this skill.

Link for Graphic Organizer: <https://canva.link/fujqrwveeq1dd76>

Description of the tool:

In this graphic organizer students are asked to engage in both class discussion and self-inquiry to practice their change and continuity thinking skills. It asks students to look at two images of the same place after significant historical events. With little background students are asked to engage directly with a primary source to assess change and continuity. During the first half they will be on their own to practice the skills with guiding questions but still led by their own interpretations. The second half of the organizer is based off class discussion with the teacher facilitating the conversation. Each question will be addressed to the class and students will write down their answers and discuss. It focuses on having students engage with the separate concepts of change, continuity, turning points, progress and decline, to interpret the past.

Pedagogical purpose:

This graphic organizer helps students focus their attention to historical interpretation and not just memorization. With the help of the guiding questions students are made to engage directly with primary sources to interpret the past while utilizing change and continuity thinking skills. The graphics are only intended to provide space for students to clearly understand the instructions and engage with the primary sources focusing only on what is needed to complete the task. The mix between self-inquiry and class discussion also aids any students who are struggling or misguided. The organizer will be given with only the basic context and previous instruction to guide their interpretations. Students are still asked to do the primary cognitive load with enough support to guide them through the lesson properly. It also serves to support future inquiry as a reference and formative assessment to develop students use of Change and Continuity.

Section 5. Scholarly Rationale for Pedagogical Design**Scholarly rationale:**

When I designed this activity, I did so with the foundation of the Historical Thinking Concepts framework to guide me. This helped my development of lessons and materials to shy away from viewing history as a complete narrative and instead as an act of interpretation. By choosing to use a graphic organizer focusing on the duality of the Hiroshima atomic bombing the activity aims to force students to engage with Seixas concept of Continuity and Change, which he states “are not opposites. They are woven together in the complex flows of history.” (Seixas and Morton, 78), which can be challenging when first introduced to students. When further reviewing the research the need for visual structure became abundantly clear. As I came across Wineburg’s view of historical thinking as “in its deepest forms, [being] neither a natural process nor something that springs automatically from psychological development.” (Wineburg, 7). Students would need scaffolding to support their new thinking to allow them to engage with what Wineburg describes as “Mature historical knowing [that] teaches us to do the opposite: to go beyond our own image, to go beyond our brief life, and to go beyond the fleeting moment in human history into which we have been born” (Wineburg, 24). If historical interpretation is a bridge to mature historical thinking then the

graphic organizer would serve as the foundation upon which it is built. It works by reducing the cognitive load of the students with a focused visual layout to ensure students are able to “understand the Various claims made about the past, therefore, students need to be introduced to the disciplinary concepts and procedures that lead to the crafting of these historical claims” (Levesque, 30), and not get overwhelmed thinking of how to interpret the image but to just focus on answering the simple questions and forming their interpretation that way.

Philosophically my teaching style is mechanist in structure but with a dash of Contextualism in there as well. The graphic organizer is meant to function as a mechanist tool where it serves as “the machine” (Pepper, 186). This framework provides the mental mapping needed to guide observations in a pre-formulated fashion. Yet, interpreting the atomic bombing itself can be seen as a Contextualism element. As “The root metaphor of contextualism is the historic event... It is not the *past* historic event, but the *actual* historic event, the event in its context” (Pepper, 232), in tandem with the instructor’s approach to encourage students to view the images themselves as if they were standing there at that moment. This, in turn, reflects my instructional goal of fostering historical empathy to boost students’ interpretive skills and envision the past as a living thing and not a simple narrative. By providing only the basic context and having students do the primary mental work this lesson aligns closely to John Dewey’s definition of inquiry which states that “directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate” and combine them into one unified whole (Dewey, 104). Therefore, this lesson utilizes mechanist designs to provide stability for students to engage with a changing and dynamic interconnected Contextualist view of the past.

Citations:

Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The theory of inquiry*. Henry Holt and Company.

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Pepper, S. C. (1942). *World hypotheses: A study in evidence*. University of California Press.

Seixas, P., & Morton, T. (2013). *The big six historical thinking concepts*. Nelson Education.

Wineburg, S. (2001). *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: Charting the future of teaching the past*. Temple University Press.