

Historical Thinking Mentorship Project: Modelling Continuity and Change

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Section 1. Historical Thinking Concept

Chosen concept: Continuity and Change

Continuity and Change is one of the six Historical Thinking Concepts coined by Peter Seixas. This particular concept helps us think about how things (i.e. social norms, beliefs, people, policies, etc.) have stayed the same or changed over time. **Continuity** thinks about what has stayed the same. **Change** thinks about what has become different. We look for patterns based on these continuity and changes. We notice **turning points**, which are moments when the process of change shifts in direction or pace.

Student explanation for learners:

When historians are looking at the past, they are not simply focused on the events that happened. Instead, they are looking at how and why the events happened. In other words, they are looking at what *changed* and *what stayed the same*. This idea is called Continuity and Change. Imagine you are looking at someone's life from 100 years ago. They had different technology, transportation, ways of communication, but they might have similar types of education and family values or expectations as someone today. By looking at the two different time periods, historians can spot patterns of events such as causes of wars, or something much simpler like fashion trends that come and go over time. This supports our understanding of history as a long connected story, not just a bunch of separate events.

Understanding continuity and change also helps historians ask the *why* behind things that happen. Looking at why certain traditions and ideas last for centuries while others disappear, or why new inventions are made. This way of thinking helps make sense of the world the way it is today. It shows that the world was not formed overnight, but was slowly built off choices made over centuries.

Section 2. Curricular Alignment

Grade level: Grade 10 Academic Canadian History (CHC2D)

Ontario curriculum Overall Expectation:

D1. Social, Economic, and Political Context: describe some key social, economic, and political events, trends, and developments in Canada between 1945 and 1982, and assess their significance for different individuals, groups, and/or communities in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals and communities (FOCUS ON: Historical Significance; Continuity and Change)

Teacher facing curricular note:

To have students reach a deeper understanding of how social, economic and political events, trends, and developments impact the experiences of different historical actors, thinking through a lens of continuity and change encourages students to identify historical patterns as they inform outcomes of historical actors' conditions and experiences, especially approaching the present-day. With continuity and change, students are asked to break down and compare details of historical events or figures at different points in time. Having students conceptualize continuity and change challenges them to think more specifically and deeply about the notion of historical context, moreover encouraging an orientation of historical-mindedness. For example, in examining the conditions of interactions between Indigenous communities and the colonial Canadian government from a lens of continuity and change, students might be primed to more effectively observe and understand the outcome of present-day Truth and Reconciliation advocacy campaigns. By promoting the mindset of historical developments and actors as interconnected conditions, students are challenged to think beyond historical events and timelines in isolation, neutral, and passively chronological.

Thinking about the more expansive benefits of continuity and change as a framework, it is interesting to consider how the concept can engage with several strands from the CHC2D curriculum's overall expectations at once, both those with a historical content focus such as Strands B (which covers 1914-1929) and Strand D (which covers 1945-1982), but also Strand A which engages with the development of historical inquiry and skills development. Looking at the curriculum expectations beyond the D1 overall expectation (social, economic, and political context), students are encouraged to engage in their own processes analyzing primary sources, gather evidence, and draw conclusions. To engage this pervasive curriculum expectation, continuity and change's framework encourages students to take on a comparative lens to identify specific details, or turning points, that incite historical developments.

Section 3. Primary Source and Worked Example.

Primary source selection:

Access the primary source docket using the following link: [Canadian Military Uniforms: Gallery Walk Resource](#).

The primary sources included in this activity are photographs depicting the evolution of Canadian Military uniforms from 1914 to 2026. Having students engage with these images, separated into stations roughly divided by time periods, asks them to reflect on the influence of wartime experiences on military-grade equipment such as helmets as well as a larger representation of changing notions of Canadian identity through military uniform developments. The photographs are derived from sources such as the Queen's Own Rifles Museum and Archive as well as Global News; both are linked in the primary source docket which is linked above. They are further accompanied by short, supplementary context paragraphs which briefly highlight the changes made in Canadian military uniforms.

To provide additional context for this activity, educators may optionally have students engage in supplementary online secondary source research such as the following website: www.canadiansoldiers.com/uniforms/uniform.htm. To further supplement this gallery walk activity, the [Canadian War Museum](#)'s digital exhibitions and database offers a similar wealth of primary and secondary resources to contextualize military uniforms from the First and Second World Wars.

Context for learners:

This collection of source images explores how Canadian Military uniforms have changed from 1914 to 2026. During this period in time, Canada progressed from being closely tied to Britain to showing their growing independent identity as a nation. These changes were reflected in the military and their uniforms. The images and short passages show how uniforms were changed and adapted in response to different wars, environments, and technological changes. These images, drawn from The Queen's Own Rifles Museum and Archive, and a Global News article provide a starting point for examining how national identity can shape what soldiers wear.

Modelled historical thinking:

Continuity and change is used to understand how things change and develop over a period of time. This collection of sources that traces Canadian Military Uniforms from 1914 to 2026 is a great example of how that thinking can be applied. Using a series of exploratory questions, these sources can become parts of a detailed story of change and adaptation.

What has changed over time?

Take a moment to closely look at the images and descriptions. There might be a shift in materials, colours, or the design as a whole. For example, uniforms might go from being less practical to better prepared for a range of environments. Equipment changes might also be notable. These kinds of changes can be linked to specific experiences during wartime events, or even changes in technology over the years.

What has stayed the same?

As the uniforms evolve, there are many changes that are notable or even slightly hidden. However, there might also be some aspects which do not change as the years go by. Some elements of the uniform that might stay consistent include symbols or structure. These specifics might represent the traditions of the military or the identity of the nation they serve.

Why did these changes and continuities happen?

To discover more about this question, there needs to be some context to historical moments in history. Think about the role Canada has played in global conflicts and how the nation has become an independent country. How could participating in the wars have changed and influenced the uniform that the soldiers wore? Can there be changes that reflect the growing national identity in the uniform?

What does this tell us about the past?

As they look through history, Historians will use evidence like these photos to make interpretations, not only observations. Using these sources, one could begin to build an argument about how military needs and national identity shaped what Canadian soldiers were wearing over the century.

Teacher note:

This example can be used instructionally to model how historians apply the idea of continuity and change through guiding students to compare visual and written evidence from multiple periods in time and create their own supported conclusions. One activity that might be beneficial for this specific idea is a gallery walk with group discussion. Ensure emphasis on careful observation of sources through taking notes on shifts in materials, design, and technology used in images, as well as deeper thinking about Canada's growing role in their national identity and how this impacted global conflicts. Students might notice obvious changes such as improved helmets or the inclusion of the maple leaf on uniforms, while others might note deeper observations like developments to the nation's increasing independence. These sources support learning by helping students look beyond describing what they see, and diving deeper into explaining why evidence can provide patterns to aid in historical interpretations.

Section 4. Visual Accompaniment to the Primary Source

Visual Organizer Tool: [Primary Source Analysis and Comparison Chart](#)

Description of the tool:

With this chart, students are asked to look deeper into the primary sources that are provided during the gallery walk activity. Each station provides photographs of Canadian military uniforms from select periods of Canadian 20th century military history. Students are asked to look at the images and select two that they find most interesting, cool, or just seem like they would want to explore. Adapted from Harvard Project Zero's [See, Think, Wonder thinking framework](#) (STW), students receive a chart tool (link above) which helps generate notes about details they observe in their chosen primary sources. The first section of the STW chart tool provides guiding questions that ask students about what they see in the images, what these sources make them think about, and what they wonder about the details (e.g. people, objects, places, etc.) depicted or referenced in the primary sources. This tool supports inquiry-based learning strategies, as students are asked to examine their primary sources from a perspective of asking questions about what they do not know and making connections to their prior knowledge.

Further, the STW chart tool encourages students to engage with a different form of reading by looking into the details of the image to “read.” This results in students using these images as sources of information about the details observed. Questioning is pulled in through the “wonder” portion of the chart, where students are asked to explore what is missing from the source. Connecting with observation, students should be asking what is not shown in terms of voices, perspectives, and any other outside factors. This brings forth an opportunity to recognize any bias that might exist within the images they have chosen. Comparing an image that represents a bias to one that does not, is a great way of leading students to be aware of where there might be a lack in perspective and opportunity. Asking them to form their own questions about the sources brings more engagement and curiosity around the sources and prompts them to think critically about the context of the sources instead of simply what is shown on the surface level. Finally, students will compare the two sources they chose to explore how military uniforms have changed over periods of time. This involves having some context to provide pre-activity, but also building the ability to look deeper into the sources themselves.

Pedagogical purpose:

This Primary Source Analysis and Comparison Chart supports historical thinking through the development of observational skills into more interpretation-based skills. Students are scaffolded into noticing individual details about a source before they form an opinion through the use of charts. Its spaces for describing what students see, think, and wonder, offer a space with support to engage in a deeper manner. The chart reduces surface-level thoughts and instead brings forth a slower method of interpretation of sources. This allows students to start recognizing biases,

missing perspectives, and gaps in historical knowledge and description, supporting their development of historical analysis. This chart creates a space for thinking to be organized and visible, guiding students towards developing their analytical skills with historical sources.

Section 5. Scholarly Rationale for Pedagogical Design

Scholarly Rationale:

Continuity and change is critically implemented throughout this activity as a definitive aspect of the historical curriculum. Students are required to analyze the consistencies and variations of military uniforms as a method of drawing on their preconceived ideas of militia uniforms compared to what was presented in the past. Students are also able to draw on their present experiences, family relations, socio-economic placement, as a window to view historical events and artifacts within this gallery walk activity to drive classroom engagement.

Connections to historical events increased “engagement spots” as students drew connections from primary source experiences like being an adolescent, an immigrant, or a working class individual (Lazare, 2005). Lazare’s research found that engagement of historical sources outside of the classroom delivered by family members, friends, online sources, were often more engaging to the student due to the pre-conceived connection it fostered with acquainted individuals. Despite the level of engagement extracurricular sources offer, the content rarely aids in improving the students in-class understanding and grades in CHC2U/M courses (Lazare, 2005). Using methods of personalization through analyzing changes and continuity of identity groups students resonate with, can successfully improve the students’ historical thinking process and understanding of the present world. The personalization of history and “emotionalology” created intense connections of the student’s present with the historical past (Lazare, 2005). Presenting change and continuity through the lens of personalization influences student engagement classroom environments. Through learning about change and continuity, students are better equipped to handle historical conversations and controversies through exploring their personal connections and development of their historical identity. This reflects the work of Peter Seixias where he describes learning about the concepts of change and continuity will affect the role of individuals in the historical canon. Seixias uses historical evidence to Seixias emphasizes the importance of understanding the interplay of continuity and change through the various trends, consequences, and roles of individuality coming together to form historical conversations and accounts (Seixias, 2002).

The use of graphic organizers in the classroom is not only an effective method to implement UDL learning strategies, but to materialize abstract concepts to form connections between various sets of data and artifacts (Fisher & Schumaker, 1995). A flow diagram or a sequence chart is a great model of graphic organizers that can be used effectively with the concept of continuity and change. By visualizing the change and resilience of events and elements, students

are able to visually see the impact of changing series in Canadian history. A venn diagram is another organizer style that can be well-implemented within the concept of change and continuity. This organizer style focuses on the comparison/contrast elements of two distinct events or results. Students studying the variations and similarities between different events can effectively use this method of organization to structure their abstract concepts as physical representations of change on the diagram (Griffin & Tulbert, 1995).

Citations

- Fisher, J. B., & Schumaker, J. B. (1995). *Searching for validated inclusive practices: A review of the literature. Focus on Exceptional Children*, 28, 1-20.
- Griffin, C. C., & Tulbert, B. L. (1995). *The effect of graphic organizers on students' comprehension and recall of expository texts*. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 11, 73-89.
- Lazare, G. (2005). *A Feeling for the Past: Adolescents' Personal Responses to Studying History*. PhD. Diss., Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 2005.
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