

Conceptual narrative: Historical understanding

Big ideas of historical understanding

What concepts do we want our students to understand?

Continuity and Change - Foundation and Year 1

Continuity and change is developed by looking at similarities and differences in family life, roles and structures and thinking about how some aspects of daily life have changed over recent time and some have remained the same.

Cause and Effect - Foundation and Year 1

Students make comparisons between daily life today and when their parents and grandparents were children by examining objects and listening to the stories others tell about the past. They think about why people may have done things such as cooking or communicating differently in the past. It is the 'why' question that asks students to think about what causes change.

Significance - Foundation and Year 1

The focus is on student's own memories and the stories that their families and friends tell about the past. This includes events and milestones that families commemorate, celebrate or remember such as birthdays, holidays and religious festivals.

Empathy - Foundation and Year 1

The focus is on student's own lives and the stories that others tell about the past. Students imagine what it would have been like to experience daily life the way their parents and grandparents did in the past by comparing their own lives to the stories they hear.

Evidence - Foundation and Year 1

Historical inquiries focus on stories that people tell about family and daily life in the past. Students uncover these stories by listening to people they know and looking at photographs, books and digital media. They also examine objects from the past, making observations and comparing the features of these objects with similar objects from the present.

Perspective - Foundation and Year 1

We want students to explore a point of view about the past by listening to the stories that other people tell. We want students to understand that people say different things because they have different points of view.

Contestability

The concept of contestability is introduced at Year 7 although as students in younger year levels are examining sources, objects and information about the past there are many opportunities for them to ask critical questions and compare information and points of view.

See Appendix 1 which shows how these seven key historical concepts develop in sophistication and complexity across Foundation to Year 10. Questions that teachers and students ask often fit more than one historical concept. In the example that follows, only one 'best fit' historical concept has been chosen for each question.

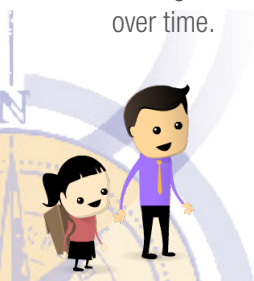
Introduction

Let's look at the concepts for developing historical understanding in Year 1. At this level, historical inquiries focus on present and past family life. In this example we explore this historical understanding by looking at how families have changed over time.

Year 1 example

If I were to ask students to bring in photos of their families...

Now, to bring the essence of historical understanding to life, we will use the questions from the Bringing it to Life (BitL) tool with this inquiry about photos of students' families.



What are the stories?

These questions help students to identify stories about the past relevant to the content. They require students to draw upon prior knowledge and experiences, and place stories in time and context. I want students to be curious about the past and seek the stories behind objects, issues and situations. The questions encourage students to use accurate language to talk about the past.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *Who are the people in your family? What is happening in your photograph? What do you remember about this time? Why did you choose this particular photo?* (significance)
- *Can you tell someone else about your family? What do other students say about their families?* (perspective)
- *What stories do you know about when your parents' and grandparents' were children? What were their families like then?* (evidence)

I want my students to think about their own families, and think about other families, in the present and the past.



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What questions do we have?

Stories promote curiosity and prompt students to ask questions, seek answers and fill in the gaps in stories. These questions help students to identify, pose and refine their own questions, leading to an historical inquiry.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *When you hear stories about other people's families what do you wonder? Why are some families different to yours?* (perspective)
- *How have families changed, or stayed the same over time?* (continuity and change)
- *Why have families changed over time? What happened to make things change?* (cause and effect)
- *What else do you want to know about your parents' and grandparents' families when they were growing up? What surprises you?* (evidence)
- *What do you wonder?*
- *"I wonder what my Mum's favourite stories were when she was a child? Who read stories to Mum?"* (perspective)
- *What is the same? What is different?* (continuity and change)



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What can we use to find out?

These questions help students plan an evidence based inquiry and identify and locate sources of evidence to support their inquiry.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *Who could we ask about how families have changed over time? Could we ask parents or grandparents? Do they have any photos of their families?* (continuity and change)
- *Can we search for photos of other families from a long time ago? What about families from other countries?* (perspective)
- *Are there any story books about families that might help?* (evidence)

How can we use this to find out?

These questions help students to analyse and be critical of the evidence they find in sources. The questions ask students to interrogate and interpret evidence and use it to inform their inquiries.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *We have collected pictures and stories about lots of different families. What do these pictures and stories tell us about the families?* (evidence)
- *What is the same about these families? What is different?*
- *Who might have taken this photo? Why did they take it? Who kept this photo? Why did they keep it?* (significance)
- *Could the family in the story be a real family? What else do we need to know to find out how families have changed, or stayed the same over time?* (continuity and change)
- *Who are the people in the photo? Why are they there?* (significance)
- *What are the family doing in this photo? How is that the same, or different to things you do with your family?* (continuity and change)



shutterstock_219559882.jpg San people on September 09, 2014 in Ghanzi, Botswana: The San people (or Saan), also known as Bushmen are the first people of Africa. They live in Kalahari desert area.

How can we make sense of this?

These questions help students to draw and test conclusions, identify patterns of change, and think about their inquiry from a range of perspectives. Through these questions students are applying the concepts of significance, continuity and change, cause and effect, perspective, empathy, and contestability to the evidence they are using in their inquiries.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *How have families changed over time: Do they have more, or less people in them now? What jobs do people in the families do?* (continuity and change)
- *Why are some things different? Why do people do different jobs in families now?* (cause and effect)
- *Why are there many different types of families?* (cause and effect)
- *What stories do people tell about their families? Why do they remember, talk about, and tell stories about these particular things?* (significance)
- *Do people in the same family remember different things? Why?* (perspective)
- *Imagine what it would be like for the people in the photos? How would you feel if this was your family? What would be the same? What would be different?* (empathy)
- *How do you think the people in the photographs are feeling? How do you know?* (empathy)
- *Is this an activity that families might do together today? Why? Why not?* (continuity and change)



shutterstock_245300056.jpg Osango, Sulawesi, Indonesia - August 17, 2014: Children of Toraja ethnicity in the countryside of Osango, Mamasa region, West Tana Toraja, Sulawesi, Indonesia

How can we communicate this?

These questions support students to communicate and explain their findings to others in powerful ways. Through these questions students communicate their own historical interpretations, connect their inquiries to their own lives and consider the implications for the future.

Using the BitL questions, I could ask:

- *What stories can we share about families? Who might want to hear these stories?*
- *What are the best stories to show people that all families are different, and some things change over time, and others stay the same? How can you tell these stories? Will you write about it? Will you use photos or will you make a role play?*

Concluding comments

How does this learning fit with the essence of history – thinking, working and processing like an historian?

By exploring historical understanding through these questions, we can help our students to be able to think, work and process historically. Students can connect history to their own world and consider how the historical concepts of continuity and change, cause and effect, empathy, perspective and significance relate to their personal and family histories.

Appendix 1

Appendix 1 shows how these seven historical concepts develop in sophistication and complexity across Foundation to Year 10.

Continuity and change

The concept of continuity and change asks us to think about how things change over time. What changes have occurred and what has remained the same? Are aspects of the past still here today, and how can we use this thinking, to examine developments, progress and decline?

Foundation

Students look at continuity and change in terms of their own lives, and the things, they and other people, remember about the past.

Year 1

Continuity and change is developed by looking at similarities and differences in family life, roles and structures, and thinking about how some aspects of daily life have changed over recent time and some have remained the same.

Year 2

This is extended in Year 2 by looking at how developments in technology over time have shaped our daily lives.

Year 3

Moving to a community focus in Year 3, students look at how things have changed in their local area over time. They might examine changes and continuities in such aspects of the community as transport, work and the environment.

Year 4

We want students to think about how life in Australia changed in the past and how some aspects remained the same. We also want students to start thinking about why these changes occurred. We are particularly interested in the changes that occurred for Aboriginal people as a result of European contact, colonisation and exploration.

Years 5 - 6

The focus remains on changes and continuities in Australia by moving chronologically to the 19th and 20th centuries. By comparing the experiences of people in the past we want students to examine the changes that occurred as a result of colonial development, migration, Federation and Australian citizenship.

Years 7 - 8

Students examine change from a global perspective by looking at how societies developed over time. In Year 7 they look at the characteristics of ancient societies with a focus on where and how they developed. In Year 8 the focus moves on to looking at the changes that occurred when societies came in contact with each other. We want students to suggest reasons for changes and continuities, and also, to begin recognising and explaining patterns over time. For example, we might examine patterns in social structures and hierarchies in different societies and how these change over time. We might look at how diseases have spread throughout the world as a result of societies coming in contact with each other.

Years 9 - 10

The focus is on global developments from 1750 to the current day. This period of history is characterised by rapid changes in the ways people lived globally, and in Australia's social, cultural, economic and political development. This context provides many opportunities for students to identify and explain changes and continuities over time. We want students to examine key events such as World War I and II, beliefs and values such as environmental movements, and developments, such as the migration of people throughout the world, and use these to explain patterns of change and continuity over time.

Cause and effect

The concept of cause and effect asks us to examine chains of events and developments over short and long periods of time. Why did things happen? What will happen in the future? What were the consequences of the actions, developments and decisions made in the past, and how can we use this thinking to identify patterns and relationships over time?

Foundation - Year 1

Students make comparisons between daily life today and when their parents and grandparents were children by examining objects, and listening to the stories others tell about the past. They think about why people may have done things, such as cooking or communicating, differently in the past. It is the 'why' question that asks students to think about what causes change.

Years 2 - 3

We want students to specifically think about how technology has developed over time and how this has had a direct influence on daily life.

In Year 2 and 3 students look at why things have changed in

their local area over time. They might investigate the remains of the past in the local community, such as memorials and historic sites and buildings. As they examine the changes that have occurred in the community over time and uncover stories about the area we want students to think about why these things occurred, and how they impacted on people's lives.

Year 4

We want students to start thinking about change in Australia from the times before European settlement up until the early 1800s. We can use this time period to examine what happened when people from diverse backgrounds came together through exploration, trade and colonisation. We think about what led to these developments, and what the effects were for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and other groups of people in Australia.

Years 5 - 6

We want students to identify causes and effects of change in Australian society during the 19th and 20th century. We focus on some of the key developments in Australia during this time, such as the establishment of the colonies, Federation and migration patterns. We think about the events, ideas and policies that led to these developments, such as Post World War II migration and the British influences on Australia's system of government, and identify short and long term effects, such as the contributions of migrant groups to Australian society.

Years 7 - 8

Students examine causes and effects of change from a global perspective by looking at how societies developed and influenced each other over time. In Year 7 they look at the reasons why ancient societies emerged and developed in particular places with defining characteristics. In Year 8 students examine what happened when different societies came in contact with each other and were exposed to each other's economic, political, social and religious beliefs.

At this level opportunities to look at long term effects can be found by looking at the lasting legacies and enduring influences of these early societies, such as democracy from Ancient Greece.

Years 9 -10

We want students to analyse the causes and effects of events and developments, both globally, and in terms of Australia's position in the world. This includes the short and long term effects of conflicts, and the spread of ideas, developments and new ways of thinking. We want students to analyse the causes of conflicts, developments and other changes in the world by examining evidence, considering multiple perspectives and reaching their own conclusions.

Significance

The concept of significance asks us to make decisions about which aspects of the past should be investigated and remembered. How will we decide which stories need to be told and which stories need to be investigated further to fill in the gaps? How can we use this thinking to examine events in terms of their importance to people at the time, and the extent to which these events impacted on people, over time and place? What relevance do these events have to life today?

Foundation–Year 1

The focus is on student's own memories and the stories that their families and friends tell about the past. This includes events and milestones that families commemorate, celebrate or remember, such as birthdays, holidays and religious festivals.

Years 2 - 3

The concept of significance extends to the local community and focuses on people, buildings, sites and places in the natural environment. These might reveal stories that were important to the community in the past, or stories that continue to be valued today, such as those stories held by war memorials and monuments.

At a local level, significance also involves stories which reveal the cultural diversity of a community, including the importance of Country and Place to Aboriginal people who belong to the area, and the roles that people of diverse backgrounds have played in the development of the local community over time.

At Year 3 students also consider symbols, emblems, celebrations and commemorations that are recognised in Australia. These might include the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and days and weeks, such as ANZAC Day and National Reconciliation Week.

Year 4

The concept of significance is further developed at Year 4 level by examining the key events that brought about change in Australia and around the world up until the early 1800s. There is a particular focus on events and developments that impacted on Aboriginal people and led to the colonisation of Australia, including exploration, trade and the First Fleet.

Years 5 - 6

Students continue to investigate the stories, people and events that led to significant changes and developments in Australia over time. This includes aspects of Australia's history such as the development of colonies, migration patterns and policies and federation, as well, as the contributions of individuals and groups to the development of Australian society in areas, such as the economy, education, sciences, the arts or sport.

Years 7 - 8

The concept of significance is expanded to incorporate global perspectives. Students examine the individuals, groups, beliefs, values, practices, ideas, conflicts and developments that shaped societies from 60,000 BCE–1750 CE. Students also consider how the developments of these past societies have influenced the world today.

Years 9 - 10

At Year 9 and 10 students identify the new ideas, conflicts, events and technological developments that contributed to change from a global perspective from 1750 to the present day. This includes progressive ideas such as imperialism, capitalism and socialism, and movements such as human rights and environmental campaigns, and the influence of developments, such as the Industrial Revolution, and the movement of people throughout the world through migration.

There is a particular focus on World War I and World War II in terms of the significant short and long term changes in Australia, and globally, that occurred as a result of these wars.

At this level students develop an understanding of significance by investigating the stories of the past, but also, by examining the role these events and developments played in shaping life in Australia as it is today, Australia's relationship with Asia and Australia's position in the world.

Empathy

The concept of empathy asks us to understand the past from the point of view of a particular individual or group. It asks us to view events by walking in others' shoes and thinking about how they experienced these events. Empathy does not ask us to take sides, react emotionally or express sympathy, but it does ask us to make sense of the actions and decisions of others by considering the circumstances they faced, and the values, attitudes, knowledge and motivations behind their actions.

Foundation - Year 1

The focus is on students' own lives and the stories that others tell about the past. Students imagine what it would have been like to experience daily life the way their parents and grandparents did in the past by comparing their own lives to the stories they hear.

Years 2 - 3

Students are asked to specifically think about changing technologies and to consider what it may have been like for people in the past to carry out daily tasks, such as communicating and travelling, using the technology available at the time.

At Year 2 and 3, the concept of empathy also extends to a community level asking students to focus on what it was like to live in the local area in the past. Local buildings, monuments, sites and stories about people support students to visualise life in the past.

At Year 3, commemorations such as ANZAC Day and National Reconciliation Week are vehicles for developing empathy, as these events ask us to understand the ways individuals and groups experienced aspects of the past.

Year 4

The concept of empathy is further developed at Year 4 level through the context of Aboriginal history, European exploration and the colonisation of Australia up until the early 1800s. Students are asked to think about the experiences, feelings and possible motivations of different individuals and groups from this time, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, convicts, convict guards and free settlers.

Years 5 - 6

Empathy is developed by examining stories of individuals and groups of people in Australia over time and thinking about how different people experienced events and ideas, such as colonisation, democracy, citizenship, migration and human rights. These contexts provide opportunities to develop empathy by understanding the experiences and feelings of others, and also, by considering the motivations behind their actions and decisions.

Years 7 - 8

The focus shifts to a global view of how societies have developed from the earliest times. By examining the beliefs, values and ideas that shaped these societies students consider the motivations and experiences of individuals and different groups of people.

Empathy at this level also includes ethical considerations for investigating the past today, such as the question of how human remains from the past should be treated.

Years 9 - 10

At Year 9 and 10 students explain the motives and actions of people by understanding the contexts in which they were living. Developments, conflicts and ideas that influenced the world globally from 1750 until the present day provide opportunities for students to develop empathy for individuals and different groups of people. Conflicts such as World War I and II, developments such as industrialisation, and movements such as human rights and imperialism, significantly changed the way people around the world live their daily lives, and the concept of empathy can help us to understand the actions and motivations of people within the contexts of these changes.

Evidence

The concept of evidence asks us to examine primary and secondary sources of information to support a particular inquiry into the past. What sources can we use to uncover clues, construct narratives about the past and fill in the gaps in existing narratives? How can we use these sources to answer our questions, support our hypotheses, and prove or disprove, conclusions that have been reached?

Foundation - Year 1

Historical inquiries focus on stories that people tell about family and daily life in the past. Students uncover these stories by listening to people they know and looking at photographs, books and digital media. They also examine objects from the past, making observations and comparing the features of these objects with similar objects from the present. For example, students might collect toys that their parents or grandparents played with as children and compare them to their own toys today.

Year 2

Students inquire into the history of their local area by examining the remains of the past and considering why they should be preserved, recognised and appreciated. Sources to support these inquiries are held in the local community and might include buildings, local people, landmarks, street signs or war memorials. Records kept in local libraries, museums and online archives, such as newspapers, maps, photographs and objects are valuable sources to support students with their inquiries, and enable them to compare the past with the present.

Year 3

The historical inquiry continues to focus on the local area by examining the identity and diversity of the community, how this has changed over time, and how it is represented in symbols, emblems, celebrations and commemorations. Students locate information to support this inquiry by accessing a range of sources, including photographs, maps, the remains of old buildings and oral histories or interviews. For example, students might visit a local museum, or online collection, to identify examples of restaurants, religious buildings and shops that show how people from diverse cultural backgrounds have contributed to the local area over time.

Year 4

We want students to inquire into key events that led to change in Australia from the times before European settlement up until the early 1800s.

Students identify sources that might support their inquiry, such as, written records and accounts, maps, artworks and online museum collections. They locate information in these sources to answer inquiry questions, for example, a collection of colonial paintings might be examined to help answer questions about the nature of interactions between Aboriginal and European people.

Years 5 - 6

Students continue to investigate the stories, people and events that led to significant changes and developments in Australia over time. To support these inquiries students identify a range of sources by using search engines, library catalogues, museums and online archives. We want students to identify both primary sources, such as diaries, official documents, artworks and letters, and secondary sources, such as reports and descriptions. We want students to critically analyse the sources for accuracy and compare the information in a range of sources. For example, students might compare a text about Australian history published in 1965 with a text published in 2013 and compare the information and perspectives presented.

Years 7 - 8

Historical inquiries are expanded to incorporate global perspectives. Students examine the individuals, groups, beliefs, values, practices, ideas, conflicts and developments that shaped societies from 60,000 BCE–1750 CE. Students also consider how the developments of these past societies have influenced the world today.

At Year 7 there is a particular focus on the methods and sources used by archaeologists and historians to investigate the ancient past. For example, students might investigate the discovery of Mungo Woman in Australia in 1969 and the radio-carbon dating methods that were used by archaeologists to draw conclusions about the longevity of human occupation at Lake Mungo.

As students investigate societies from ancient and more recent times they identify and locate relevant primary and secondary sources, and interrogate information from the sources, to use as evidence to inform their inquiry questions. They identify the origin and purpose of sources, and draw conclusions about the accuracy and usefulness of sources. For example, students might use church records from the 14th century to provide evidence of deaths caused by The Black Death in Asia, Europe and Africa. We want students to consider the reliability and accuracy of these records and think about how they might be used as evidence to help make sense of conflicting theories about the impact of the plague.

Years 9 – 10

Students inquire into the new ideas, conflicts, events and technological developments that contributed to change from a global perspective from 1750 to the present day. This includes progressive ideas, such as imperialism, capitalism and socialism, and movements, such as human rights and environmental campaigns, and the influence of developments, such as the Industrial Revolution, and the movement of people throughout the world through migration.

To support these inquires students interpret, process, analyse and organise information from a range of primary and secondary sources and use it as evidence to prove or disprove a conclusion, answer an inquiry question or support a hypothesis. We want students to interrogate and evaluate source materials to compare different points of view and draw conclusions about the usefulness of sources based on their origins, purposes and accuracy. We want students to synthesise information and to start developing their own historical interpretations based on evidence.

Perspective

The concept of perspective asks us to consider whose point of view is being represented and to consider that people understand the events going on around them from their own perspective. How do our beliefs, values, age, gender, culture etc. determine our point of view, and how can we use this to understand events from a range of perspectives? Whose story is being told and whose story is missing?

Foundation - Year 1

We want students to explore a point of view about the past by listening to the stories that other people tell. We want students to understand that people say different things because they have different points of view. For example, if we asked a group of familiar adults what their favourite toy was when they were children we would hear different answers because we are asking them to share their own perspective.

Years 2 - 3

We are interested in examining a point of view about the local community and what people think about the local area in the past. The stories people tell about how life in the community has changed over time will reveal different opinions and points of view.

At Year 3 we can also look at commemorations and celebrations from different perspectives. For example, we might discover that people have quite different opinions about the importance of ANZAC Day, or we might find that some people consider Australia Day to be a great day of celebration whereas others are angered by it.

Year 4

We want students to identify different points of view from the past and examine aspects of the past from different perspectives. For example, we might think quite differently about the First Fleet if we are considering the perspective of an Aboriginal person, convict or Governor.

Years 5 - 6

Students identify both points of view held by people in the past and different points of view held by people about the past today. By examining a range of sources we want students to understand the different experiences of people in Australia during the 19th and 20th centuries. Students might look at the different reasons people had for migrating to Australia from other countries and compare different perspectives of migrant experiences.

Years 7 - 8

We want students to identify and describe points of view, attitudes and beliefs presented in primary and secondary sources as they investigate some of the world's earliest societies. They examine life in these societies from a range of perspectives, for example, they might investigate ancient Egypt from perspectives such as nobility, bureaucracy, women or slaves. We want students to interrogate sources by asking whose perspective it represents and what other perspectives there might be.

Years 9 - 10

The concept of perspective plays an important role in how students examine different interpretations of the past. As students inquire into the developments, conflicts and ideas that influenced the world globally from 1750 until the present day they identify and analyse the perspectives of different individuals and groups of people. They also identify different historical interpretations from source materials and understand that people interpret past events differently, depending on their perspective. For example, we might analyse the opinions of both men and women at different times regarding gender equality in Australia, and consider how these views might reflect changing values and attitudes.

After considering a range of perspectives we also want students to form their own historical interpretations.

Contestability

The concept of contestability asks us to critically examine evidence and stories of the past and contest discrepancies. What is up for debate? Is there a lack of evidence, or do we have limited perspectives on this, and how can we use this thinking to interpret the past with a critical lens?

The concept of contestability is introduced at Year 7, although as students in younger year levels are examining sources, objects and information about the past, there are many opportunities for them to ask critical questions and compare information and points of view.

Year 7

Students inquire into the ancient world. We want them to investigate what has already been discovered about societies, including Australia, Egypt, Rome, Greece, India and China in ancient times, and to be intrigued by what we still don't know about these societies. We want students to critically examine primary and secondary sources by identifying their purposes and origins, and recognising different points of view and perspectives. We want students to know that knowledge about the past is up for question.

Year 8

Historical inquiries look at what happened when major civilisations around the world came into contact with each other from 650 CE–1750 CE. We want students to investigate the social, economic, religious and political beliefs that were challenged and changed in different societies during this period. We want them to interpret primary and secondary sources by identifying their origins and purposes, distinguishing between facts and opinions, and recognising and describing points of view. We want students to be critical users of source materials and actively compare, contrast and question what they read, hear and view as evidence.

Year 9

Students inquire into the new ideas, developments and conflicts that led to rapid changes in the way people lived, worked and thought around the world from 1750 to 1918. We want students to interrogate a range of primary and secondary sources, making judgements about their usefulness to support these historical inquiries. We want students to understand that history is open to interpretation and that they can develop their own interpretations by critically examining evidence.

Year 10

Historical inquiries focus on political changes, global conflicts, international relationships and movements that transformed the world from 1918 to the present day, and had significant impact on Australia's development and global standing during this time. We want students to process and synthesise information from a range of primary and secondary sources, and use this as evidence in historical arguments. As students are analysing different interpretations of the past we want them to interrogate evidence, ask critical questions, identify conflicting points of view, and develop and justify their own interpretations of the past.