

# What is it

In order to make sense of specific events or developments, historians often put them in a comparative context in order to see a larger picture. Comparison also helps in understanding the complexity of historical change, since different groups in society often have different experiences of the same event or same development. Comparison is a skill used on a daily basis by historians, who must take into account differences among sources, both primary and secondary.

# You've Got Mad Skills: Compare & Contrast

## About this Skill...

### What You Should Do

Describe similarities and/or differences between different historical developments or processes.

Explain relevant similarities and/or differences between specific historical developments and processes.

Explain the relative historical significance of similarities and/or differences between different historical developments or processes.

### Underlying Questions

How is one development like/unlike another development from the same time/a different time?



Why did an event or development affect different groups in different ways?

How does a viewpoint (from a historical actor or historian) compare with another when discussing the same event or historical development?



Pre-Writing Tip:  
Venn Diagram It!

## Checklist! Have You...

-  Described similarities AND differences?
-  Explained the reason for/significance of/effect of these similarities and differences?

# What is it

Every event, pattern or trend, or action has a cause- a reason or set of reasons why it happened. Historians do not simply arrange events in chronological order; instead, they seek to understand why things happened as well as what effects an event, pattern, or trend or action had. Most events, actions, or trends have many causes; historians seek to identify the most significant short- and long-term causes and effects. Significance can be understood in different ways. Sometimes the most significant causes and effects are those that are the most direct. Sometimes they are defined as those that contributed the most. Other times, historians look for specific types of causes and effects, such as political causes or economic effects. Additionally, historians understand that events are not the result of predetermined outcomes or inevitable progress. They recognize that all events are contingent on many factors, from individual choices to unforeseeable events- change one of these factors and history could have been very different. Focusing on contingency, historians explore concepts of agency and individual action when discussing the significance of a particular cause or effect.

# You've Got Mad Skills: Causation

## About this Skill..

### What You Should Do

Describe causes or effects of a specific historical development or process.

Explain the relationship between causes and effects of a specific historical development or process.

Explain the difference between primary and secondary causes and between short- and long-term effects.

Explain the relative historical significance of different causes and/or effects.

### Underlying Questions

What were the reasons for this event? What factors contributed to a specific pattern or trend? What prompted this person/group to act/react this way?

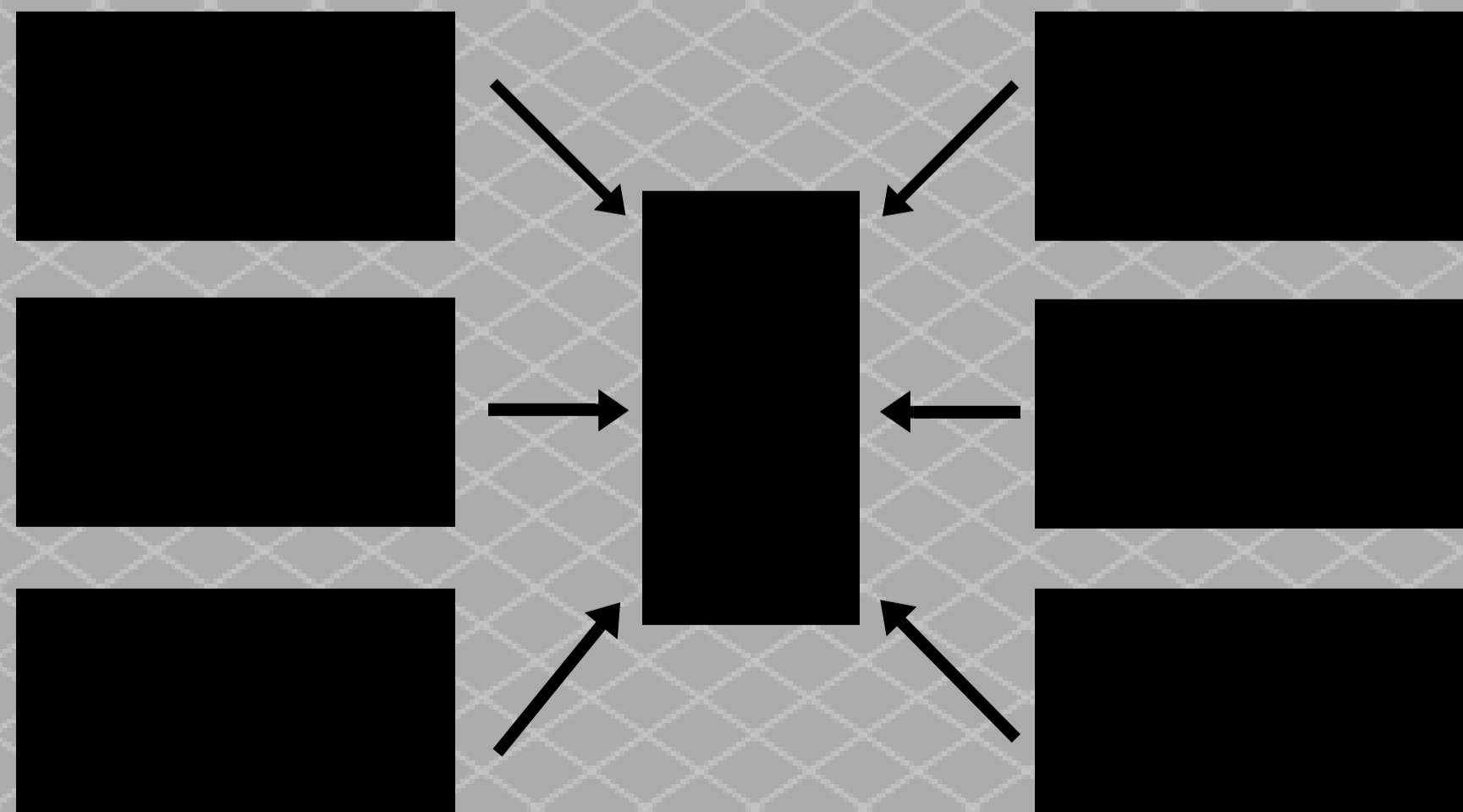
What resulted from this event, pattern, or action? What were the short-term effects? What were the long-term effects?

What cause seemed to be the most significant? What effect seemed to be the most significant and why?



How do the assessments of historians concerning causation differ from those who experienced the event, pattern, or action?

How might the chain of cause and effect have changed and at what point? What causes were contingent on previous effects? What individual choice(s) made a significant difference in the lead up to a particular event or trend? Was there a moment of chance that influenced the chain of events?

## Pre-Writing Tip: Flow-Charts!



## Checklist! Have You..

-  Described causes and/or effects of a historical event, development, or process?
-  Explained the reasons for the causes AND/OR effects of a historical event, development, or process?

# What is it

Discussions of cause and effect focus on change, but both change and continuity are important to historians. Even in moments of tremendous change, such as the American Civil War, for most people who lived through it, attitudes concerning the family and gender roles remained the same. Some of the most interesting questions that historians investigate ask why, at the same moment in history, some things change while others did not.

# You've Got Mad Skills: Continuity & Change Over Time

## About this Skill...

### What You Should Do

Describe patterns of continuity and/or change over time.

Explain patterns of continuity and/or change over time.

Explain the relative historical significance of specific historical developments in relation to a larger pattern of continuity and/or change.

### Underlying Questions

What has changed within a specific time period?

What has remained the same within a specific time period?

What can explain why some things have changed and others have not?

How are continuity and change represented in different types of sources; for example, in graphs, charts, political cartoons, and texts? What might be the reasons behind different depictions of continuity and change?

## Pre-Writing Tip: Timeline



Continuities

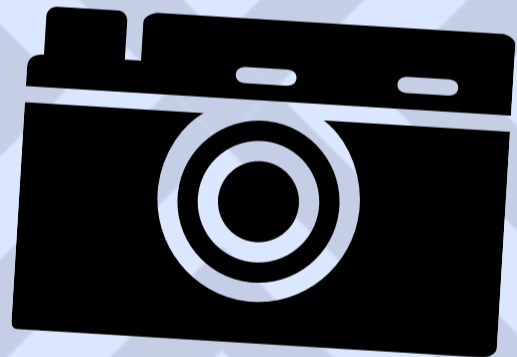
Changes

## Checklist! Have You...

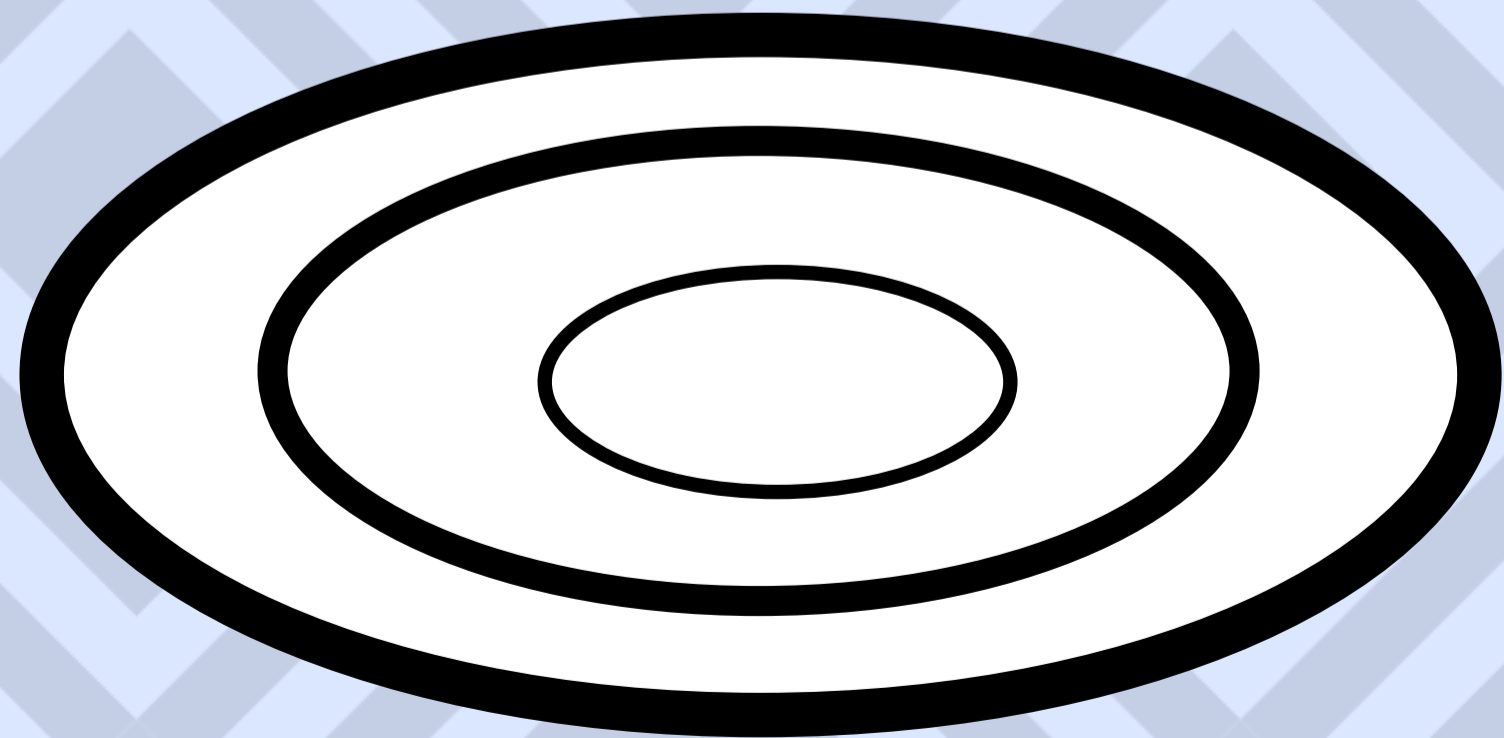
- Described historical continuity AND change over time.
- Explained the reasons for historical continuity AND change over time.

# What is it

Historians examine the historical context of events to understand why things happened the way they did. Context is different from causation in that instead of focusing on specific events or actions that may have caused another event to occur, historians refer to context as the larger constellation of developments and processes that may not have served as a specific cause but may still have influenced an event. In other words, the context of an event often influences its course, even if it did not cause the event. Context can operate on many different levels, from the local to the global. Understanding the historical situation that a source was created within is crucial in making sense of primary sources.



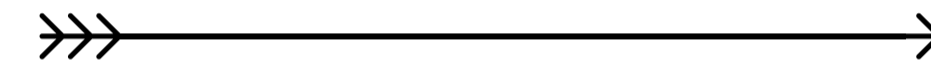
Pre-Writing Tip:  
A Greater Lens



# You've Got Mad Skills: Contextualization

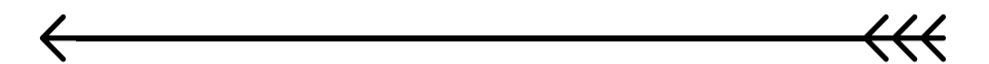
## About this Skill...

### What You Should Do



- Describe an accurate historical context for a specific historical development or process.
- Explain how a relevant context influenced a specific historical development or process.
- Use context to explain the relative historical significance of a specific historical development or process.

### Underlying Questions



- What was happening at the time the event occurred or the document was written/created that might have had an influence?
- What was happening at the specific place where an event occurred? In the country as a whole? In the larger region? In the world?
- How does a specific event relate to larger processes? How do larger processes shape a specific event?
- How does the context in which a source is read or viewed inform how it is understood?

## Checklist! Have You...

- Described what was happening at the time or place where an event occurred that might have influenced it?
- Explained with context the relative significance of an event, and how the event related to larger processes?