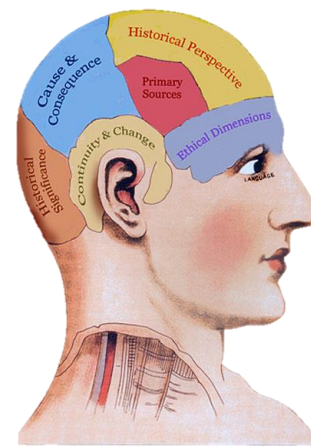


Historical Thinking Pillars



Pillar	Definition
Historical Significance	The past is everything that ever happened to anyone anywhere. There is much too much history to remember all of it. So how do we make choices about why something is significant and worth remembering?
Primary Source Evidence	The litter of history —letters, documents, records, diaries, drawings, newspaper accounts and other bits and pieces left behind by those who have passed on — are treasures to the historian. These are primary sources that can give up the secrets of life in the past. Historians learn to read these sources.
Continuity and Change	There were lots of things going on at any one time in the past. Once people start to understand history as a complex and interconnected mix of continuity and change, they reach a fundamentally different sense of the past.
Cause and Consequence	<p>In examining both tragedies and accomplishments in the past, we are usually interested in the questions of how and why. These questions start the search for causes: what were the actions, beliefs, and circumstances that led to these consequences?</p> <p>In history, as opposed to geology or astronomy, we need to consider human agency. People, as individuals and as groups, play a part in promoting, shaping, and resisting change.</p>
Historical Perspectives	Taking historical perspective means understanding the social, cultural, intellectual, and emotional settings that shaped people’s lives and actions in the past. At any one point, different historical actors may have acted on the basis of conflicting beliefs and ideologies, so understanding diverse perspectives is also a key to historical perspective-taking.
Ethical Dimensions	Taking historical perspective demands that we understand the differences between our ethical universe and those of bygone societies. We do not want to impose our own anachronistic standards on the past. At the same time, meaningful history does not treat brutal slave-holders, enthusiastic Nazis, and marauding conquistadors in a “neutral” manner.

These definitions are taken from <http://historicalthinking.ca/historical-thinking-concepts>

Letter from a Waterdown member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)¹

The ground conditions here for a battle were terrible beyond description ... Low-lying country where drainage was almost nil. A vast sea of mud was churned up by the fighting. The area had been so heavily pounded by artillery fire that few roads remained intact. There did not seem to be firm ground anywhere. Shell holes were so numerous that they overlapped, and were brim full of slimy, stinking water. The whole sector was littered with abandoned equipment from both sides, tanks, limbers, artillery of all sizes, dead horses and mules, and of course, the corpses of dead soldiers. The nauseating stench of death permeated everything, everywhere. The horses and mules were used as pack animals to move supplies. Since movement of supplies had to be carried out under the cover of darkness, many of the beasts faltered off paths into mud up to their bellies. Once mired, they were almost impossible to get out. They were often shot as they panicked in their struggles against being trapped in the mud, as those struggles only served to make them more intractably stuck ... [the captured pill box] we now occupied was proving to be too heavy for the underlying (and now saturated) chalky soil. It had sunk to such an extent that only

approximately one-third of its original height was above ground. Inside, someone had placed wooden support posts in the corners and constructed a floor of boards just above the water line. It reminded me somewhat of a beaver house—the outside entrance was rendered so low to the ground, one had to get on hands and knees to get in and there was barely any head room to even sit upright. Worse still was that the previous occupants had not bothered to venture outside when nature called, at least not when there were convenient cracks in the floor. When a shell would explode in the near vicinity, the force shook the ground and the water under the floorboards would ripple, followed by a gurgling and bubbling sound. Then up would come the most vile smelling stench. Still, this was better than taking one's chances outside.⁴⁴

Letter found in Jonathan Vance's *A Township at War* (Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2018)

¹ The Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) was the entire overseas force fielded by Canada during the First World War. Of the 630,000 Canadians who enlisted for military service, 424,000 went overseas as part of the CEF.

Part of a letter from an East Flamborough member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)

our transport went up the line and met with such opposition that a number were wounded and others so badly shaken and shell-shocked that they were either unfit or unwilling to proceed the following night. Our crew was, therefore, called upon for assistance ... For the first time we had each to lead up a horse to a forward dump carrying an assortment of goods. The transport men left behind soon had the horses loaded up and ready. Roughly there must have been something like 14 or 15 in our little convoy ... We started out and I found myself second last in the line. My horse was loaded up with cans of water, four on each side ... Up the road we went ... Shell holes were everywhere and most contained slimy, muddy water. The terrain was a wilderness of mud. Thank goodness, however, the road was fairly firm. We were warned to space out which caused quite a distance between the first and the last man ... The artillery was firing as we passed and Fritz was returning the fire. We soon saw that it would take practically a direct hit to do any damage. We watched the shells send up fountains of mud and water as they exploded. For quite a distance you could see eruptions taking place at various points resembling geysers or mud volcanoes ... Near the top, shells were falling beside the road ... Emerging from the hollow, we crept slowly up the ridge ... We were gradually getting through, when I sensed it was about time the next salvo was coming and with it trouble, and sure enough the shells came. I was thrown by the force of the explosion on to my face into the gutter at the side with the rest of me sprawled around the edge ... I was badly dazed and partially choked by mud and water ... my mind quickly cleared and I looked around and saw my horse lying dead half

Poem written by a member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)

My Tuesdays are meatless,
My Wednesdays are wheatless,
I'm getting more eatless each day;
My home it is heatless,
My bed it is sheetless,
They're all sent to the Y.M.C.A.;
The bar-rooms are treatless,
My coffee is sweetless,
Each day I get poorer and wiser;
My stockings are feetless,
My trousers are seatless,
By gosh—but I do hate the Kaiser.²

Letter found in Jonathan Vance's *A Township at War* (Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2018)