

Social Studies Whole-Class Instructional Strategy:

Contextualization

The Basics

What? A protocol to help students consider historical events and developments within their own context (the situation within which something exists or happens).

When? At the start of a new unit or topic, before doing any in-depth primary source analysis.

Why? To help students grasp the context of events, rather than viewing them in isolation, and to evaluate the significance of specific developments.

How to Implement

1. Select an event, process, person, or source that students have been learning about, or are preparing to learn about.

Either as a class, in groups, or individually have students:

2. Answer the first two questions on the [organizer](#).
3. Locate the event, process, person, or source in its place in time, and then add it to the timeline. Make sure they include the date this occurred, when the source was created, or the general starting and ending dates.
4. Locate the event or source in its place in space on a map. Then have students place an X on the map where the event or source happened (it may be one location or many).
 - If the location of the event changed over time, instruct students to draw arrows between their X's to show the movement.
5. Make a list of other historical events in the List of Events box. Include those that were happening
 - at the same time as the event being studied, no matter the location,
 - in the same place(s) and at the same time as the event being studied,
 - immediately before this period, and
 - 50 to 100 years before the event.
6. Have students look at their list and put a star next to any of the events that might help explain what they are studying.
7. Add relevant details to their list and label any events that connect to the themes with P (political), I (innovation), E (environment), C (culture), \$ (economy), and S (social).
8. Add any relevant events to their timelines, including those that connect to the themes.

9. Have students use their timeline and map, to write a contextualization paragraph using the information they have gathered about the event in question. Have students consider:
- The time frame: What else was happening during that time?
 - The location: Was your topic of study local, regional, national, or global? What type of location was it (for example, farm, city, on land, on water)?
 - How do modern-day attitudes, values, and concepts differ from those at the time of your topic of study?

Resources and Additional Information

- [Graphic Organizer](#)
- [Research](#) supporting contextualization
- [Video Model](#) of this strategy
- Examples of activities: [Grades 9-12](#)
- Example topics in [Bayou Bridges: A Louisiana Social Studies Curriculum](#) in which the contextualization strategy would be helpful:
 - **Grades 3-5:** Technological advancements (BB G3 U5, LSSSS 3.9), Bubonic Plague (BB G5 U1, LSSSS 5.9g)
 - **Grades 6-8:** Espionage during the American Revolution (BB G6 U4, LSSSS 6.11k), Dred Scott decision (BB G7 U4, LSSSS 7.12a)