

APPENDIX: THE HISTORIAN'S TOOLKIT – CONCEPTS AND SKILLS

In Stage 4 History, you were introduced to a range of concepts and skills that historians use in their investigations. These historical concepts and skills can be thought of as the historian's 'tools of the trade', which form the basis of all historical inquiry (see Source HT.1). This toolkit reviews the range of historical concepts and skills that you need to keep developing in Stage 5 to become a successful student of history. Your understanding of them will continually improve as you gain experience working and thinking as a historian.

Source HT.1 The historical inquiry approach

Historians use an inquiry approach in their investigations. They:

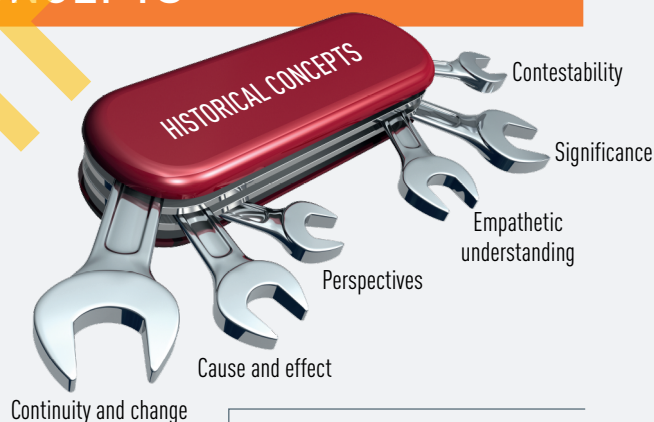
- develop an inquiry question to clearly identify the problem or question
- form theories or hypotheses – stating what they think the likely answer might be
- conduct research to gather evidence from a range of sources
- evaluate the usefulness of the sources and analyse the evidence gathered from them
- confirm or modify their hypotheses on the basis of this evidence.

HT.1 HISTORICAL CONCEPTS

You should already be familiar with the six key historical concepts that are shown in Source HT.2. Using these concepts correctly, either individually or in combination, is at the heart of all historical inquiry.

Continuity and change

Historians use the concept of continuity and change to help them understand the impact of developments and events on human societies – that while some things change over time, others stay the same. Those features that remain largely unchanged over time are referred to as continuities, while those features that change over time are known as changes. Throughout Stage 4 History, you would have practised identifying a number of continuities and changes over time. In Stage 5 History, you have also started to consider the causes of the continuities and changes you identify.



Source HT.2 Historical concepts

Examples of continuity and change

Responses by the Australian public to conscription provides an example of continuity and change in 20th century Australian history. During World War I, the introduction of conscription was twice put to a referendum in 1916 and 1917. If it was passed, men of military age would be forced to join the army and serve overseas. The debate leading up to the referendum divided the country, and both times, the government's proposal was defeated. The Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, failed to convince the public that the country was at risk, with the main battlegrounds far away in Europe and the Middle East.



Source HT.3 caption to come

During World War II, conscription for service overseas was introduced in 1943, although this was limited to an area south of the equator (an area that included islands then held by the Japanese). This form of conscription was passed by the governing Labour party with little opposition in the Australian community. The government and the public now felt that the threat of Japanese invasion was real, particularly after the fall of Singapore in 1942 and the bombing of Darwin and other Japanese targets in northern Australia.

During the Vietnam War, differing viewpoints about Australia's involvement in the war, and the sending of conscripts (National Servicemen) to Vietnam, bitterly divided Australian society. The government and its supporters believed that Australia's involvement in Vietnam was necessary to help fight the spread of communism and to protect Australia. During the Vietnam War over 60 000 National Servicemen were enlisted in the army, and over 15 000 served in Vietnam. Growing opposition to conscription during the war came from a range of people in Australian society, and tens of thousands took part in moratorium marches in protest against conscription and Australia's involvement in the war.

Cause and effect

Cause and effect is a critical concept in historical understanding. It is used by historians to identify the events or developments that have led to particular actions or results. It is rare that there is a single, straightforward cause of an event. Generally, there are many complex causes (reasons) that have led to an event or result. The effects can also be complex: there may be many effects or outcomes, both intended and unintended. Effects or outcomes may take place over a long period of time, so that the significance of the event or development may not be immediately apparent to people at the time.

Sometimes the link between cause and effect is very clear. For example, heavy rain over many weeks (cause) leads to flooding (effect) and the destruction of crops (effect). However, often this link is not quite so obvious. Generally, there are many causes (reasons) that lead to an event or action. There can also be many effects (outcomes). Sometimes the effects are simple to identify, while in other cases they are more difficult to predict and may not even become obvious until long after the event.

Historians often consider a combination of historical concepts in their inquiries: an understanding of continuity and change can provide a deeper understanding of cause and effect.

APPLY HT.1

- 1 In a group, conduct research about the debates, protests and propaganda about conscription during World War 1, World War II and the Vietnam War. Select and explain one aspect that helps you demonstrate the concept of continuity and change.

- 1 Read the two sections referred to in Chapter 11 'Australia in the Vietnam War era' and conduct your own research. Use graphic organisers to show key causes or reasons why Australia was involved in the war, as well as longer-term effects for individuals and for Australia society.

Examples of cause and effect

A study to identify the reasons that caused Australian governments to commit troops to the Vietnam War is a complex task. It requires an investigation of the Australia government's approach to international relations during the Cold War period, in particular, its response to the threat of communism in Asia. As a history student, you can draw on secondary sources, such as this book, to help you to understand the range of reasons why Australians fought in Vietnam. The key factors are explored in 'Why was Australia involved in the Vietnam War?' in Chapter 11, 'Australia in the Vietnam War era.' The key longer-term effects of Australia's involvement are explored in 'What was the impact of the Vietnam War?'

Perspectives

People bring their own personal perspective to any event, shaped by their personal experiences, values and beliefs. Historical sources will usually reflect each participant's or commentator's perspectives, so it is critical that you learn to identify not only different perspectives, but why they are held. This will often depend upon historical context – the times in which an event takes place.

Just like anyone else, historians have perspectives that can influence their interpretation of the past and the way in which they write about it. Regardless of their own perspectives (and what they may think about something personally), historians must try to understand the different values and beliefs that shaped and affected the lives of people who lived in the past.

Examples of perspectives

The fall of Saigon marked the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. The government of South Vietnam (supported by the USA, Australia and other anti-communist countries) was defeated by forces in North Vietnam (supported by China and other communist countries). The end of the war led to the reunification of North and South Vietnam under a communist government. Vietnamese people in the south who had supported US and Australian troops were regarded as traitors by the new government. In the years after the war, millions were captured and sent to 're-education camps' where they were tortured or abused. It is estimated that around 165 000 people died in these camps.

From 1975 onwards, well over 1 million refugees fled Vietnam. Many escaped on foot to neighbouring countries where they were housed in camps. Others chose to escape by boat, attempting a dangerous sea crossing to reach safety. The first refugees from Vietnam to arrive by boat (known as 'boat people') in Australia landed in Darwin in April 1976.

The concept of perspectives is very useful when interpreting the complex issues such as the mass migration of Vietnamese boat people after the war. From the perspective of the boat people themselves, there was no other option but to leave. The risks of travelling by boat to other countries presented better odds of survival than staying in Vietnam. From the perspective of those refugees waiting in camps, boat people were often seen as queue jumpers who refused to apply for asylum through the proper legal channels. From the perspective of the Australian government at the time, Vietnamese refugees were seen as a responsibility. Because of the role Australia had played in the conflict, the government (supported by large sections of the Australian public) felt obligated to help those who had helped us.



Source HT.4 Boat people fleeing Vietnam after the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War

APPLY HT.3

- 1 In your own words, define the concept of perspectives. Why is it a useful tool for historians?
- 2 Discuss why different people had different perspectives on the arrival of Vietnamese boat people in the 1970s.

Empathetic understanding

Empathetic understanding requires you to understand the actions, values, attitudes and motives of people who lived in an earlier time within the context of that time. In other words, it becomes important to understand that the reasons why people in the past made decisions or acted in a certain way cannot be judged in accordance with today's attitudes and values. An easy way to understand this is to accept that what happened in the past is not better or worse, but simply different. It can be very difficult to apply empathetic understanding to slavery, for example, but that is the challenge a historian must meet.

Examples of empathetic understanding

Empathising brings history to life. It connects us as human beings regardless of how much time has passed. Consider the experiences of many mixed-race and Aboriginal children who were forcibly removed from their families by government agencies from the late 1800s to the 1970s and placed under the care of state-run institutions or white families. These children are now referred to as the Stolen Generations. It isn't difficult to empathise with the victims of these policies. Just imagine how terrifying and upsetting it would be to be suddenly taken from your home, and never see your family again.

The concept of historical empathy, however, encourages us to view events from all sides and not to judge past events by today's standards. It requires us to look objectively at the attitudes and social norms that were common during the period being studied in order to understand the motives and actions of the different people involved. It may not come naturally, but historical empathy requires you to put yourself in the position of the politicians and government officials who enforced these policies.

There were many reasons given at the time to justify the actions of the government and the

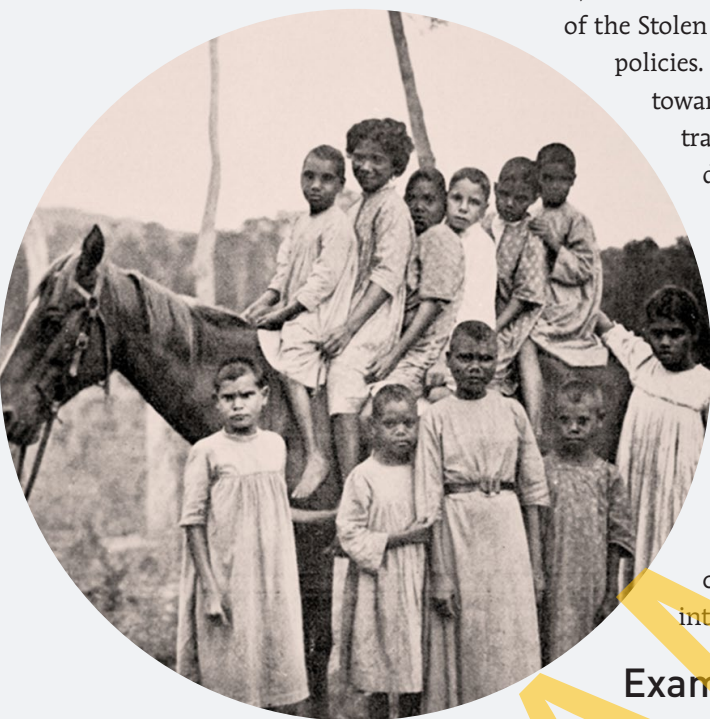
APPLY HT.4

- 1 Explain how the historical concept of empathy is useful when conducting a historical inquiry into the Stolen Generations.

public. It is essential to understand that white Australian customs, language and laws at this time were believed to be far superior to Aboriginal customs. Many Australians discriminated against Indigenous Australians on the basis of race and did not recognise them as citizens. By removing Indigenous children from their families, teaching them English, exposing them to Christianity and making them attend school, many government officials thought they were giving these children a better chance at a successful life in Australia. For this reason, many white Australians believed it would be better for children of mixed race to grow up in white families.

Empathising does not excuse the actions of people from the past, but it does help us to gain a more complete understanding and appreciation of the factors that motivated them.

In 2008, then-Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered an official apology to members of the Stolen Generations who suffered as a result of official government policies. The apology came about because of a broad change in attitude towards Indigenous Australians and a growing respect for their traditional cultures and customs, but much work remains to be done in the areas of Indigenous rights and freedoms.



Source HT.5 Aboriginal children at Momamona Mission, 1914

Significance

The concept of significance relates to the importance that historians assign to aspects of the past, such as events, developments and movements, individuals or groups, discoveries and historical sites. Historians continually make judgements regarding the significance of these aspects of the past.

It is important to understand that significance is a concept that is not static – it constantly changes. It relies on interpretations that often change several times over the years.

Example of significance

In order to determine if a person, event, development, discovery, movement or site is historically significant, historians may ask the following questions:

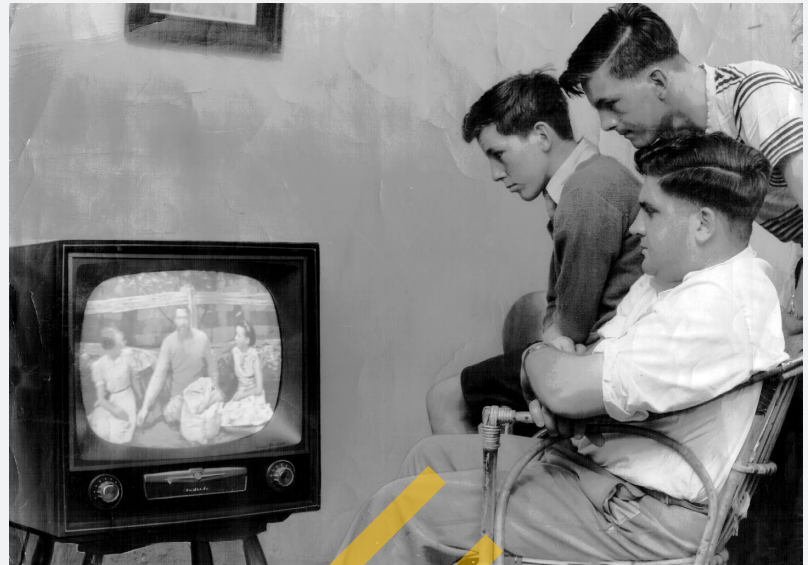
- How important was this to people who lived at that time?
- How many people were affected?
- To what degree were people's lives affected?
- How widespread and long-lasting were the effects?
- Can the effects still be felt today?

When thinking about events that are historically significant, it can be tempting to choose global incidents – such as world wars – that involved many countries and resulted in wide-scale death and destruction. There is no denying that these types of events are of major significance – in only a few short years they can change the course of history forever.

However, a range of other events can be just as significant, even though they may take place over a much longer period of time and not be as obvious. Take the arrival of television in Australia. The first mainstream television broadcast in Australia took place on 16 September 1956 in Sydney. At this time, less than 10 per cent of the population had a television in their home. By 1978, 64 per cent of homes in Melbourne and 70 per cent of homes in Sydney had television. By 2000, 99 per cent of all Australian homes had a television – with most having more than one. Although this change took place slowly over a longer period of time, it is very significant.

Increasing rates of television viewing since 1956 have had many wide-ranging impacts on Australian society. For example, the spread of television led to a massive increase in the cultural influence of the United States in Australia in the second-half of the 20th century. For the first time, people across Australia were exposed to (and influenced by) American views and attitudes on a nightly basis. In the early 1960s, at least 80 per cent of all Australian television content was sourced from the United States. These American programs consistently topped the ratings. Regulations were later brought in to ensure a certain level of Australian content on television.

Today Australian law requires 55 per cent of free-to-air shows to be produced in Australia. The majority of the remaining 45 per cent continues to be produced in the USA. In fact, popular American shows are now fast tracked from the United States so that Australians can watch them only hours after they have screened in the United States. Today, these programs have a significant impact on Australian popular culture and identity, influencing everything from language and music to politics and law.



Source HT.6 From the time of its introduction to Australia in 1956, television has had a significant impact on Australian society and culture.



Source HT.7 Popular television shows from the United States that are watched in Australia have a significant influence on our views and attitudes

APPLY HT.5

Look again at the types of questions historians ask to decide if events, discoveries, people or sites are historically significant. For example:

- How important **was** it to people who lived at that time?
- How many people were affected by it?
- To what degree were **people's** lives affected by it?
- How widespread and long-lasting were its effects?
- Can its effects still be felt today?

- 1 Use each of these questions to determine the historical significance of the following:
 - a the fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese army in April 1975, marking the end of the Vietnam War
 - b the appearance of Kylie Minogue on the *The Voice* in 2014
 - c the introduction of television to Australia in 1956.
 - d the release of the *Bringing Them Home* report in 1997, on the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families
- 2 Place the events in order from most to least significant, providing a justification for each.
- 3 Compare your responses with other members of your class. Did you all draw the same conclusions?

- 1 Identify an example that has helped you to understand the concept of contestability, from any depth topic studied in ancient, medieval or modern world history. Outline the differing interpretations of the historical event or development, and sources of evidence used. Share your example in a class discussion.

Contestability

When you listen to a song, watch a film or play a game, you respond to it in your own way, and develop your own interpretation. Someone else may do the same thing and respond differently. Neither view would be right or wrong – each is simply contested. This is exactly the same in the study of history. Two historians may examine the same sources and come to completely different conclusions. Alternatively, they may study different sources in isolation from each other and reach conclusions that could be changed as more sources are examined. Contestability explains why history is not about absolute truth; rather, it is about conclusions that can be supported by evidence. As the evidence changes, so too do the interpretations, creating more and more contestability.

Examples of contestability

In the study of history there is often no right answer, and historians are always seeking a more complete understanding of the past. For example, there is an ongoing public debate in Australia about how to interpret and represent Australian history since white settlement, particularly with reference to the impact of colonisation on Indigenous Australians.

The growth of the Aboriginal rights movement since the 1970s prompted a new wave of historians to argue that 'official' Australian history since British settlement had largely ignored the stories of hundreds of thousands of Indigenous Australians who had suffered as a result of European colonisation. Historians such as Manning Clark and Henry Reynolds wanted to correct the imbalance in the history books and acknowledge the murders, injustices and racial policies that had dominated the relationship between Europeans and Indigenous peoples since colonisation.

Other historians resisted this new approach to Australian history arguing that it was too negative and obscured the achievements of white Australia. Historians such as Geoffrey Blainey and Keith Windschuttle contest the extent of the harm inflicted on Indigenous Australians by white settlers on the frontier. On occasions they have accused other historians of falsifying evidence relating to the level of violence committed towards Aboriginal people, particularly in Tasmania. They also contest the extent of frontier violence against Aboriginals presented by Clark and Reynolds. The public debate over the interpretation of events in Australia's history since British settlement is ongoing. Today, it is referred to as the history wars.



Source HT.8 Indigenous Australians, covered in traditional body paint, take part in a street protest against the Australian Bicentennial (200th anniversary) celebrations, 1988

HT.2 HISTORICAL SKILLS

Historians work by conducting historical inquiries or investigations. To successfully complete these they apply a range of skills. You have already had some experience applying the skills shown in Source HT.9. The range of tasks in your Depth Studies will ask you to apply a single skill, or you may need to combine a range of skills to complete a more extensive investigation.



Source HT.9 Historical skills

Comprehension: Chronology, terms and concepts

When we comprehend something, this means we understand it. The comprehension of chronology, as well as historical terms and concepts, will certainly help you to understand historical material.

Chronology

Chronology is the skill of sequencing historical events in the order in which they occurred. Timelines are the most effective method of organising material in chronological order, and the method you would be most familiar with. You should now be able to understand the value of chronology in allowing you to understanding relationships such as cause and effect.

APPLY HT.7

Choose a significant issue or event that interests you that took place between 1945 and the present. Conduct some Internet research and create a timeline of events related to the issue or event you have chosen. Some events you might like to examine include:

- the struggle for civil rights in the United States or Australia
- the introduction of television in Australia.
- one of the waves of migration to Australia post-World War II
 - a Your timeline should include at least six entries related to the issue or event. Each entry must include the date and a brief description.
 - b Include images of video links for at least two of the entries on your timeline.
 - c Present your timeline electronically or as a poster.

Terms and concepts

Like all subjects, History has its own vocabulary. These are the terms and concepts that allow you to understand historical material. In Stage 4, you were introduced to:

- terms and concepts related to historical time, such as BC and AD
- terms and concepts related to sources, such as evidence and provenance
- the key historical concepts (see HT.2) that you will learn to apply with increasing complexity in Stage 5
- specific terms from your Depth Study topics that should form part of your vocabulary when you are creating responses to historical questions.

APPLY HT.8

- 1 Find the meaning of the terms listed above. When you come across one of these terms during your Depth Studies, check to see if your understanding of its meaning has changed when used in a specific historical context.

Your Stage 5 Depth Studies will require you to add to your historical vocabulary of specific terms with terms such as:

assimilation	immigration	the Holocaust
communism	human rights	the White Australia policy
referendum	self-determination	
globalisation	the Cold War	

Analysis and use of sources

The key points to remember when working with sources is to make sure that you:

- identify the type, origin, content, context and purpose of the source
- process the information from the source to use as evidence in a historical argument
- evaluate the reliability and usefulness of the source for a specific historical inquiry.

Identifying the type of source

Sources can be written, visual, oral or archaeological. As you have previously learned, when you are analysing sources keep in mind whether the sources are primary or secondary sources:

- **primary sources** – objects created or written at the time being investigated; for example, during an event or very soon after
- **secondary sources** – accounts about the past that were created after the time being investigated and that often use or refer to primary sources and present a particular interpretation.

Identifying the type of source makes it easier to interpret and draw evidence from the sources. It is also important to recognise that different societies created different types of sources. Indigenous Australians, for example, relied on a largely oral (not written) tradition. Despite what early British colonists may have thought about this at the time, oral traditions are in no way inferior to information passed on in written form by Europeans. Historians need to make sure they do not make value judgements based on the type of sources they are using, and their own personal cultural or religious backgrounds.

Identifying origin, content, context and purpose in sources

Making sure you know where a source originated is an important first step in source analysis. In your earlier studies in History you would have become aware of the different perspectives you might gain from, for example, the written account of an educated person, or an oral tradition passed down by illiterate (unable to read or write) peasants. If two countries are in conflict, the origin of a source is essential information you need to check for possible bias (pre-judgement about something, usually without considering facts).

Identifying the content of a source requires you to check what the source is saying and verify the information using another source.

Identifying the context of a source means looking at when and under what circumstances a source has been produced. Is a source more or less reliable if the author was paid or if it was testimony produced under torture, for example?

Purpose is also critical in source analysis. Is the source trying to persuade or simply relate information? Was it the result of personal involvement or gain? These are all important questions to consider about any source you are planning to use.

Examples

Propaganda is information that attempts to influence behaviour or opinions. Propaganda posters use different techniques to prey on people's prejudices or instil feelings such as fear, anger, guilt or pride in order to convey their message. Historians can gain insight into the period being studied by analysing sources such as the poster shown in Source HT.10. They would ask questions, like those below, to analyse this example of an anti-conscription propaganda poster during the Vietnam War.

- Are the messages in the poster visual or textual, or both?
- What are the main colours used and what is their effect?
- What image or symbols are used?
- Are images or symbols clear and memorable?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What is the historical context of the poster?
- What is the poster's intended message?
- What is the purpose of the poster?
- Is this an effective poster?

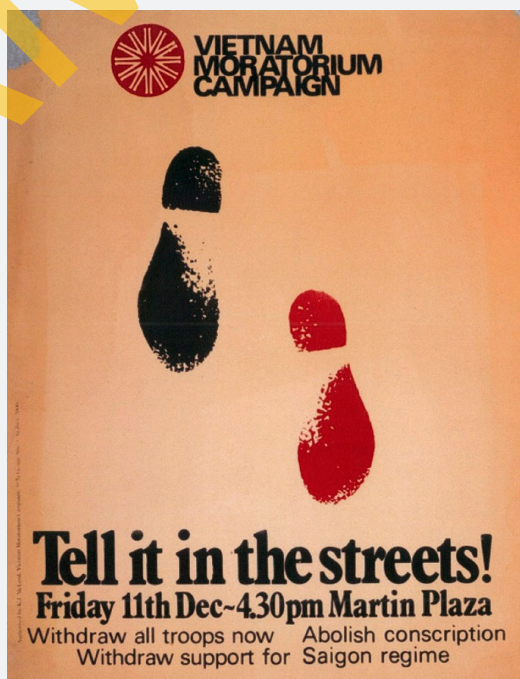
Processing information from a range of sources as evidence in a historical argument

If you are looking for evidence to support a historical argument, it is vital that you never rely on a single source. It is also important that you include a source even if it does not support your argument. You have to allow your argument to fit the evidence, not just look for evidence to support your argument or point of view. It may require taking notes from your source, or asking questions of it to make sure you are able to extract the evidence you require.

Evaluating a source for reliability and usefulness

A source is reliable if you can check its provenance. Put simply, this means knowing where a source has come from. You should be able to trace a source from its origin to the form that you are accessing it in. In the digital age, manipulation of visual sources represents real challenges for establishing the reliability and provenance of sources.

A source's usefulness depends on the purpose you are using the source for. A soldier's account of the events during a night patrol would be extremely useful for a historical inquiry into the nature of Australian operations in Vietnam, but not as useful for an inquiry into the decision patrol in that location, which would have been made at a much higher level.



Source HT.10 A poster advocating the end of conscription during the Vietnam War (AWM ARTV 09198)

APPLY HT.9

- 1 Examine Source HT.10.
 - a Analyse the origin, content, context and purpose of this source.
 - b Refer to Sources 11.63 to 11.65 in Chapter 11 'Australia in the Vietnam War era'. Which of these three posters, along with Source HT.10, do you consider the most effective? Explain your reasoning.

APPLY HT.10

- 1 Discuss why it is important to know the origin and purpose of every source used in a historical inquiry.

Perspectives and interpretations

It is an essential part of historical research to understand that different people have different perspectives on a wide range of events. These may include personal, social, political, economic or religious points of view. Historians can also interpret the same evidence very differently because of the perspectives they bring to their work.

Empathetic understanding

As has been shown earlier, empathetic understanding requires that you interpret history through the actions, values, attitudes and motives of people from the past. In other words, you should not base your interpretations and historical understanding on what you personally think is right or wrong; you should instead consider all historical actions within the context of their particular time and place.

Research

Research is a critical process for historians and students of history, allowing them to draw conclusions if carried out properly.

Getting started

Research usually starts with a broad field of inquiry that is made more specific by posing specific questions linked to the field of study. Asking questions and evaluating their usefulness allows historians to develop a clear focus to frame their research. For example, if you were told to conduct research about Australia at war, it would be necessary to ask a range of questions to develop a clear focus. These questions might include:

- *What is meant by 'Australia'?*
Does it include involvement of colonies before Federation? This is a useful question because it helps you establish limits on the time period you have to research.
- *Can I focus on only one war?*
This is a very useful question in a classroom situation. A historian would know where they wanted to concentrate, but a school student may have to ask the person setting the research for clarification.
- *Can I make the focus a personal one?*
This is a useful question if you have access to family history or sources.
- *Does the research have to include primary sources?*
This question will help you clarify your approach to the research, and the sources that will help you come to a conclusion.

Planning

Planning is an important part of the research process. It is vital that you have a plan that suits the purposes of your investigation, and is realistic in terms of what you can achieve. For example, if you plan to focus on primary sources you should first make sure you have direct access to them. The digital storage of information has made many sources easier to access, but realistic planning about available time and accessibility remain a crucial part of successful research.

Identifying, locating, selecting and organising information

The hard work in research comes in the process of gathering information. Professional historians can spend years to conduct research and write a book. You will have significantly less time to complete your research tasks, but will go through a similar process. Identifying and locating information in the digital age often means starting with a search engine. That can be a useful first step; but, as with all research, it is important that you ask the right questions. A search engine cannot think for you, and will only search using the information you give it. It is therefore vital that you be as specific as possible when setting the limits of your search, and then only select the most appropriate information once you have located it. Refer to Source HT.11 as a guide to some of the most common websites and their reliability as sources for research.

Source HT.11 Guidelines for determining the reliability of websites

Domain name	Description
.edu	The site is linked to an educational institution such as a university or school. These sites are generally very reliable.
.gov	The site is linked to a government institution. These sites are generally very reliable.
.net	This site is linked to a commercial organisation or network provider. Anyone is able to purchase this domain name and generally there is no one to regulate the information posted on the site. As a result, these sites may be unreliable.
.org	This site is linked to an organisation. Generally, these organisations are not for profit (e.g. Greenpeace, World Vision International, British Museum). If the organisation is reputable and can be contacted, this generally means that the information provided has been checked and verified by that organisation. You need to be aware of any special interests that the organisation may represent (e.g. particular religious, commercial or political interests), as this may influence what they have to say on a particular issue. If you are unsure about the reliability of information found on a website with this domain name, check with your teacher or librarian.
.com	This site is linked to a commercially based operation and is likely to be promoting certain products or services. These domain names can be purchased by anyone, so the content should be carefully checked and verified using another, more reliable source.

If you are selecting digital information, make sure you ask these questions of your source:

- What is the domain name?
- Is an author identified?
- Are there links or other bibliographic information to help with confirmation?
- Is it fact or opinion?
- Does it access other verifiable sources?

If you feel that is still a useful source, make sure you record the URL (web address), the date you accessed it and brief comments about why it was useful and reliable. These will be required when you compile an annotated bibliography (comments on each source).

Also remember that librarians are trained professionals in information storage and retrieval, and can provide valuable assistance to you.

One golden rule of effective research is to never rely on one source. Always check information against another source, making sure you consider how useful and reliable it is. Another rule is to make sure that you put information in your own words, and acknowledge any direct quotes from sources.

APPLY HT.11

- 1 You have been asked to conduct research about the reasons why authorities in Australia introduced the practice of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. List the questions you would ask before you start researching. How would you start looking for information?

Organising information requires a clear understanding of how you are going to use it. There is no perfect method for organising information, but the most important thing is making sure that your notes can be understood by you, and can be retrieved when you need them. You may find that you work best by putting points under relevant headings. Another approach may be using graphic organisers to lay out your information. Yet another may involve highlighting key words, terms and concepts. There is no magic formula, and it is important that you develop an approach that works effectively for your individual learning style.

Explanation and communication

No matter how well you have researched your topic, effectively communicating your findings is vital for success. In historical communication you are required to show your understanding, and support that understanding with specific reference to your sources. This allows the reader to see that your opinion is based on evidence, as this is what makes it valid.

Developing historical texts

Source HT.12 can be used as a guide to writing a historical argument that will effectively communicate the evidence from your research that supports your inquiry.

Source HT.12 Guidelines for writing a historical argument

Structure of a historical argument	
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly states the topic of the investigation. Outlines the line of argument that will be followed and why that line is being taken. The aim of the introduction is to make it clear to the reader the line of argument you are adopting.
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information should be presented in paragraphs that link sequentially and logically. Each paragraph should introduce a key point of your argument and the evidence that supports it. All evidence and specific examples used are analysed explaining why they are an important part of the argument. Each paragraph is linked to the one that follows it in the body. The aim of the body is to provide the evidence and specific examples that convince the reader of the validity of your argument. It should contain a range of relevant sources that support your point of view.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a short and clear overview of the main ideas presented in the body. States a conclusion drawn from the evidence. The aim of the conclusion is to reinforce to the reader why your argument is valid.

Selecting and using a range of communication forms

Examinations and other written assessments still focus on traditional written responses. It is important that you recognise the key terms that are often used in exam and assessment questions. Some of the key terms are shown in Source HT.13. A full list and glossary of the terms is available from the New South Wales Board of Studies website.

Key terms used in examination and written assessment questions

Identify	Recognise and give a name to a historical artefact or event
Outline	Provide the main features of an event or occurrence
Explain	Show the relationship between events; provide information about how and why something happened; indicate cause and effect
Describe	Indicate the physical features and characteristics
Sequence	Show events in chronological order (the order in which they happened)
Investigate	Conduct research; make inquiries about something
Analyse	Indicate the relationship between events; identify the implications of an event or occurrence
Assess	Make judgements about an event or choice in terms of its value and results, as well as its size and impact
Account for	Provide reasons for an event or a choice that was made; recount a series of events, providing reasons for those events

Other communication formats may be used in other tasks or assessments. In the digital age, the range of formats available to communicate your historical understanding is extremely diverse. Some common approaches include:

Oral: You are required to produce an oral response, ensure that your information is organised into key points. You will need to consider what the main thrust of your argument is, and exactly which evidence is crucial to support your argument. Organising that information onto palm cards may help you remember these during your oral presentation.

Visual: You may be required to present information in the form of a poster, graphic organiser, cartoon or model. This also requires you to rearrange your research to ensure that there is a clear focus for your argument and the evidence required to support it.

Digital: It is important that you not allow all the possibilities available in digital formats to overshadow the argument. Visual and written material can be effectively combined in formats such as PowerPoint and Prezi, while formats such as Twitter require you to condense your argument into its most basic form. A website will allow you to create links to collections of primary and secondary sources that can add depth to the evidence supporting your argument. A variety of film-making software has increased opportunities to use visual material, but again, what your presentation looks like should not compromise or dominate the historical content.

Your teacher may specify the style of response required. If your teacher does not specify the communication format and asks you to choose, it is important that you think carefully about which is the most appropriate format for your argument and audience. Always revisit the criteria you are being assessed by before deciding on the most effective way of presenting your research.

APPLY HT.12

1 If you were asked to conduct research about conditions that Vietnamese boat people faced on their journey to Australia, how would you best present your research findings to an audience? Outline the strengths and weaknesses of each of the following formats for such a presentation:

- written
- oral
- visual
- digital.

Which one would you decide on if you were presenting to your classmates, and why?