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STUDENTS' HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION AND THE COLD WAR

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ABSTRACT: *This exploratory study presents an example of how a historical contextualization framework can be used to develop and implement a lesson unit on Cold War events. The effects of the lesson unit on students' ability to perform historical contextualization are explored in a quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test design with an experimental (n = 96) and a control (n = 73) condition. The students' answers on a historical contextualization test were analysed. The results indicate that students in the experimental condition increased their ability to perform historical contextualization and displayed less present-oriented perspectives in their answers compared to students in the control condition.*

Keywords: *history education, experimental design, historical reasoning and thinking, contextualization, curriculum*

'I think it is just stupid when you lose your job when you married. And females should do all the household labour too, shouldn't they? Men are also grown-ups, right? Let them do the cooking and cleaning'. This was said by Lisa, a 14-year-old secondary school student, when we asked her to explain why, until the late 1950s, Dutch female governmental officials lost their jobs when they married. Lisa reacted with disbelief and was unable to understand or explain this historical phenomenon.

Lisa and many other students tend to view and judge the past from a present-oriented perspective instead of using historical context knowledge to explain and understand historical phenomena (Foster *et al.*, 2008; Huijgen *et al*., 2014). To help students view and judge the past on its own terms, it is necessary to increase their ability to perform historical contextualization (Wineburg, 2001). Historical contextualization is the ability to situate phenomena and actions in the context of long-term developments, their specific time, and the historical location to be able to give meaning to these phenomena and actions (Van Boxtel and Van Drie, 2012).

Previous research has indicated, however, that history teachers might demonstrate historical contextualization in their lessons but do not explicitly engage students in historical contextualization processes (Huijgen *et al*., 2018a).

For example, the teachers included in the sample often reconstructed a historical context themselves instead of creating opportunities for students to use historical sources to create a historical context on their own. Students might therefore miss opportunities to practice their historical contextualization skills and continue to view the past based on their own values and beliefs (Reisman and Wineburg, 2008). Moreover, most studies that have focused on the development and testing of contextualization pedagogies followed the definition of Wineburg (1991, 1998)) and investigated contextualization as a heuristic to examine historical texts along with, for example, sourcing, collaboration, and close reading. For example, De La Paz *et al*. (2014) and Reisman (2012) examined the use of these heuristics in a disciplinary reading and writing curriculum intervention and in primary source instruction, respectively. In our study, we focus on the question of how students can contextualize historical phenomena to overcome presentist thinking.

Building upon previous work in which design principles of historical contextualization were operationalized (Huijgen *et al*., 2018b), this study presents an example of how these design principles can be used as a three-stage framework to develop a lesson unit focusing on Cold War events. The effects of these lessons on students' ability to contextualize historical events are explored using a quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test design with an experimental and a control condition.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Historical thinking and reasoning in classrooms

In history classrooms, students not only need to learn to memorize historical facts but also should be engaged in historical thinking and reasoning, such as working with historical sources, asking historical questions, determining change and continuity, and performing historical contextualization (Lévesque, 2008; Seixas and Morton, 2013; Van Drie and Van Boxtel, 2008). Influenced by the work of Peter Seixas, in Canadian states such as Ontario, historical thinking competencies are explicitly mentioned in the curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). In Australia, the history curriculum directs students to use different historical skills, such as understanding the different social, cultural, and intellectual contexts that shaped people's lives and actions in the past (National Curriculum Board, 2009). With the development of The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013), more attention may also be given to implementing historical reasoning competencies in state curricula in the United States.

Similar to other Western European countries (e.g., Erdmann and Hasberg, 2011), historical reasoning competencies are explicitly implemented in the formal Dutch history curriculum. Dutch students must, for example, explain human behaviour (thinking and doing) in the past based on the accepted knowledge and

values at that specific time. Moreover, they must recognize different value and belief frameworks when they are asked to provide a moral judgement about historical events and agents' actions (Board of Test and Examinations, 2017).

Despite the importance of historical reasoning in history curricula, most teachers seem not to engage students in historical reasoning. More than a decade ago, VanSledright and Limón (2006) described an average history classroom where lecturing and story-telling by the teacher dominate. In such history classrooms, historical reasoning might not be encouraged because it requires active participation and input from the students (Van Boxtel and Van Drie, 2016). Recent research indicates that little has changed. For example, Reisman (2015), when analysing videotaped history lessons, concluded that disciplinary discussions were surprisingly rare and that discussion that encouraged historical understanding was even rarer. Saye and SSIRC (2013) found that only 21% of the students in their sample attended classes that met the standards for moderately challenging teaching, such as engaging students in disciplined inquiry. A recent observation study (Huijgen *et al.*, 2018a) showed that the eight history teachers included in the sample rarely engaged students in historical contextualization processes. Therefore, this study aims to help teachers engage students in historical contextualization processes by examining the use of a historical contextualization framework.

Historical contextualization and presentism

Following Wineburg (1991, 1998), several scholars consider historical contextualization to be a heuristic that is used when reading historical texts, in addition to sourcing and corroboration. For example, De La Paz *et al.* (2014) viewed contextualization as the extent to which students identified and situated arguments and primary sources in the appropriate time, place, and setting. In this study, we use a broader definition of historical contextualization as the ability to situate phenomena and people's actions in the context of long-term developments, their specific times, and historical locations to be able to give meaning to these phenomena and acts (Van Boxtel and Van Drie, 2012).

Historical contextualization requires an understanding of the social, political, and cultural norms of the time period under investigation as well as knowledge of the events leading up to the historical situation and other relevant events that happened concurrently (Endacott and Brooks, 2013). However, historical contextualization should not lead to relativism among students, such as the justification of controversial actions of people in the past. Rather, students should use historical content knowledge to reconstruct a specific historical context to make reasoned ethical judgements and to understand and explain historical phenomena and people's actions (Seixas and Morton, 2013).

Many scholars argue that asking students to engage in the process of contextualization may prevent them from expressing present-oriented perspectives

(e.g., Barton and Levstik, 2004; VanSledright, 2001). The term 'presentism' is often used when students examine the past with their own knowledge, values, and beliefs, which often results in misunderstandings of historical phenomena and agents' actions (e.g., Hartmann and Hasselhorn, 2008; Seixas and Peck, 2004). Wineburg (2001) argues that many students naturally view the past from their own present-oriented perspectives and that historical thinking is therefore an 'unnatural act' that needs to be learned in history classrooms. Teaching historical contextualization to students could prevent them from viewing the past from a present-oriented perspective because an important component of historical contextualization is considering the specific circumstances of a historical period when examining the past (Endacott and Brooks, 2013; Reisman and Wineburg, 2008).

Engaging students in historical contextualization

To help teachers develop teaching and learning activities that engage students in historical contextualization processes, we developed four design principles of historical contextualization in previous research (Huijgen *et al.*, 2018b): (1) raising awareness of present-oriented perspectives, (2) reconstructing a historical context, (3) creating opportunities to practice historical contextualization to explain historical phenomena or agents' actions, and (4) enhancing historical empathy.

We used the first three design principles to develop a three-stage framework in which the teacher (1) presents a historical case that triggers possible present-oriented perspectives, (2) instructs students to reconstruct a historical context for the historical case, and (3) instructs students to use historical context knowledge to interpret the historical case again. We chose not to use the design principle of historical empathy. This principle can be incorporated in the second stage in which students reconstruct a historical context. To reconstruct this context, students can be asked to imagine the thoughts and feelings of individual historical actors using their own 'similar' life experiences. However, in this study, the emphasis was more on the contextualization of the actions of local and national authorities during the Cold War (e.g., the government of the United States and the court) rather than the behaviour of individuals. Because students might not easily empathize with governmental institutions, we preferred to exclude the explicit use of historical empathy in the lesson unit of this study.

The three-stage historical contextualization framework is visualized in Figure 1. First, awareness is raised concerning possible present-oriented perspectives by presenting a historical case that students find difficult to explain. Next, the historical context of the particular case is reconstructed. Finally, students and teachers interpret the historical case again with their acquired historical context knowledge.

Raising awareness of present-oriented perspectives. The first component of the framework is making students aware of their possible present-oriented
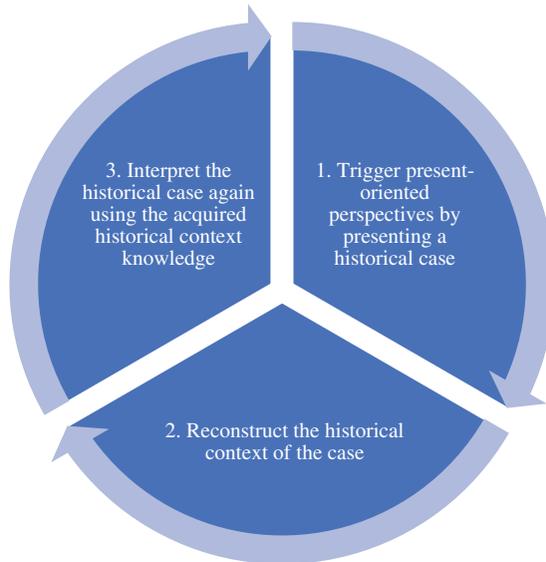
Figure 1. The three-stage historical contextualization framework

perspectives. Building upon work in the field of cognitive conflicts (e.g., Johnson and Johnson, 2009), scholars argue that 'historical tension' might contribute to students' ability to perform historical contextualization (Havekes *et al.*, 2012; Huijgen and Holthuis, 2015). Historical tension is created when students are unable to explain a historical event or a historical agent's action because of their present-oriented perspectives. For example, teachers might present a case of a 20-year-old man living in 1930 in Germany and ask students if they can explain why this man might have voted for the Nazi party (Hartmann and Hasselhorn, 2008). Students are often inclined to view and judge this type of historical event based on their own values, knowledge, and beliefs (Wineburg, 2001). For example, students possess the knowledge of the Nazi Party's subsequent actions, but this information was not available to German people living in 1930. For the lesson unit of this study, we therefore designed historical cases that encouraged historical tension to provide opportunities for teachers to discuss the consequences and limitations of viewing the past from present-oriented perspectives.

  Reconstructing the historical context. The second component of the pedagogical framework is teaching students how to successfully reconstruct a historical context. Students therefore need explicit guidelines (Havekes *et al.*, 2012; Reisman and Wineburg, 2008). For the lesson unit of this study, we used chronological, spatial, political, economic, and cultural frames of reference as guidelines for students to reconstruct a historical context for a phenomenon or source (De Keyser and Vandepitte, 1998). These guidelines also function as a

checklist because they provide students with the opportunity to review what they do and do not know about a historical event. For example, when students are asked to reconstruct the historical context of the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, they might forget the geographical context, which is essential to understanding and explaining this crisis. Considering all frames of reference reduces the chances of students missing important and relevant historical context knowledge. The guiding questions can be found in Appendix A.

Performing historical contextualization to interpret the past. The third and final component of the framework is based on the idea that students in history classrooms often have to explain, compare, and interpret historical phenomena and sources (Haydn *et al*., 2015; Lévesque, 2008; Seixas and Morton, 2013). Simply becoming aware of a possible present-oriented perspective and knowing how to reconstruct a historical context are not enough to do this successfully. Students must also learn to use their abilities to perform historical contextualization to examine and interpret historical phenomena and sources. Therefore, the third component aims to create opportunities in the lessons for students to perform historical contextualization to explain, compare, and interpret historical phenomena and sources. In the lesson unit, we created opportunities for students to use their acquired historical context knowledge to interpret the historical case again.

Research question

The central research question of this study is 'What are the effects of a lesson unit, based on a three-stage historical contextualization framework, on 14–16-year-old students' ability to perform historical contextualization?' Because the intervention aimed to promote historical contextualization, we expect that the intervention will help to increase the use of historical contextualization and to decrease the use of presentism.

2. METHOD

Research design

Based on the three-stage historical contextualization framework, a lesson unit (four lessons) focusing on Cold War events was developed. To explore the effects of the lesson unit on changes in students' ability to perform historical contextualization, we used a non-equivalent control group pre-test–post-test design (Shadish *et al*., 2002). A historical contextualization test of six open-ended questions was constructed to explore the students' gains in historical contextualization. This test was administered as a pre- and post-test. The students' answers on the pre- and post-tests were qualitatively analysed using a coding scheme to explore possible gains in the students' ability to perform historical contextualization (Krippendorff, 2013).

Participants

We asked seven teachers from our professional network to participate in the study. In consultation with the teachers, we decided that four teachers would teach the lesson unit in one of their history classes (experimental condition) and that three teachers would teach the control condition in one of their history classes. Because we were dependent on the teachers' willingness to teach a control or experimental condition, we could not randomly assign teachers to a specific condition. Table 1 presents the teachers' characteristics. All teachers participated voluntarily, held a Master's degree in history education, and were Dutch nationals.

The participating teachers in the experimental condition received a two-hour training session given by one of the authors to teach the lesson activities in the lesson unit and to conduct the pre- and post-tests. The teachers participating in the control condition received instructions from one of the authors on how to apply the different lesson activities in the control condition and how to conduct the pre- and post-tests. We chose to instruct the control condition teachers to teach the same lesson activities to ensure that the lessons taught in the control condition differed in the same way from the experimental condition lessons.

In total, 169 secondary school students from the two highest Dutch educational tracks (general higher secondary education and pre-university education) participated in the study. The students ranged in age from 14 to 16 years old. The mean age of students in the experimental condition was 14.8 (SD = 0.56) years compared to a mean age of 14.7 (SD = 0.53) years for the control condition. The female and male distributions in the experimental conditions were 48% and 52%, respectively. In the control condition, these distributions were 45% and 55%, respectively. Two students in the sample held non-Dutch nationalities, while the other students held Dutch nationality.

TABLE 1. *Teachers' characteristics*

Teacher	Gender	Age	Years' work experience	Condition	Educational track	Class size
T1	Female	32	6	Experimental	General higher secondary education	26
T2	Male	50	5	Experimental	General higher secondary education	26
T3	Male	34	9	Experimental	Pre-university education	20
T4	Female	30	6	Experimental	Pre-university education	24
Total						*96*
T5	Female	23	1	Control	Pre-university education	23
T6	Male	51	25	Control	General higher secondary education	22
T7	Male	56	25	Control	Pre-university education	28
Total						*73*

The structure of the lesson unit

The three components of the historical contextualization framework were used to develop a four-lesson unit focusing on Cold War events for secondary students aged 14–16 years old. This topic was chosen because it best fitted the history teachers' curricula at the time of the intervention. The lesson topics (the start of the Cold War and the fear of the atomic bomb, the American fear of communism, and the Hungarian Revolt) are topics implemented in the formal history curricula for the two highest educational tracks in the Netherlands (Board of Tests and Examinations, 2017).

In previous research on historical contextualization, we used a repetitive lesson structure for eight lessons (Huijgen *et al.*, 2018b). However, the students and teachers became demotivated because they had to perform the same work for each lesson. In this study, we therefore used only four lessons and used Merrill's (2002) review study on instructional design theory to create a new and more motivating structure in the lesson unit. Merrill (2002) elaborated five principles: (1) problem-centred learning, (2) activation of existing knowledge, (3) demonstration of new knowledge, (4) application of new knowledge, and (5) integration of new knowledge.

The lesson structure contained the first two principles because all lessons started with a problem (a historical case aimed to trigger a cognitive conflict), and prior knowledge was activated by asking students to examine this historical case in a classroom discussion by using their prior topic knowledge. Moreover, the first two lessons focused on demonstrating how to perform historical contextualization successfully (show me), and the final two lessons focused on the application (let me) and the integration (watch me) of the historical contextualization processes.

The lessons

The historical topic of the first lesson was the start of the Cold War and the development and fear of the atomic bomb. First, students watched the short movie *Duck and Cover* (Federal Civil Defence Administration, 1951) to create historical tension and to trigger possible present-oriented perspectives among students. The film showed what to do in case of a nuclear explosion. The students discussed in dyads and in a classroom discussion whether they could imagine receiving similar atomic warfare training. Next, a hand-out presenting guiding questions for reconstructing a historical context was provided to the students (see Appendix A). These indicative questions were formulated to guide the students' thinking. The teacher explained the different steps and the importance of reconstructing a historical context to explain historical events. Next, the teacher used the different frames of reference to reconstruct the context of the start of the Cold War. This context comprised a chronological (timeline) and spatial context (geographical map) and an explanation of the following

historical events: the Russian Revolution of 1917, the collaboration between the Soviet Union and the United States to defeat Nazi Germany, the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, the differences between the Soviet Union and the United States, and the development and fear of the atomic bomb. The lesson ended with the teacher asking the students to use their newly acquired historical context knowledge to review their answer to the question presented in the first lesson activity. The teacher discussed with the students possible shifts in the students' answers.

The second lesson focused on the American fear of communism during the Cold War. At the start of the lesson, the students were provided with a historical source about the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953 to create historical tension. The historical source focused on the marginal evidence of the involvement of Ethel Rosenberg in espionage. In dyads and in a classroom discussion, the students were directed to discuss whether they could explain the execution of the Rosenbergs. Next, the teacher used the different frames of reference to reconstruct the context of the start of the Cold War. This context comprised a chronological context (timeline), a spatial context (geographical map), and the following historical events and developments: the enmity between the Soviet Union and the United States, the American fear of communism, and Senator McCarthy. At the end of the lesson, the teacher asked the students to use their acquired historical context knowledge to review their answer to the question presented in the first lesson activity. Similar to the first lesson, the teachers discussed possible shifts in the students' answers.

The first two lessons focused on showing students how to perform historical contextualization successfully. Merrill (2002) argues that when information is presented via specific situations or cases, students will remember and practise this information better. We therefore expected that using a specific historical case would result in a better application of historical contextualization processes. Furthermore, Merrill (2002) noted that learning is encouraged when procedures are demonstrated and behaviour is modelled. This was the goal of the guiding questions of Appendix A. Moreover, procedures and processes must be visible (Merill, 2002). Therefore, the final lesson activity (in which the students had to use their newly acquired historical context knowledge to review the historical case again) provided the opportunity for teachers to review and discuss successful and unsuccessful demonstrations of historical contextualization processes.

The third and fourth lessons focused on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. At the beginning of the third lesson, the teacher organized students into dyads with two historical pictures (displaying a street name change) and asked them to discuss whether they could explain why a street in Amsterdam, *Stalin Lane*, was changed to *4 November Lane* in 1956. Next, the students were divided into groups of four and were provided with five written historical sources about the Hungarian Revolution. One historical source provided general information

about the Hungarian Revolution. The second historical source addressed the demands of Hungarian students and the working class to the Hungarian government. The third historical source addressed the Soviet invasion from the perspective of a Hungarian journalist. The fourth source presented the perspective of a British journalist on the Hungarian Revolution, and the fifth source presented the perspective of a Russian tourist in Budapest on the Hungarian Revolution. The central task of the third and fourth lessons was to use the historical sources to reconstruct a historical context to explain why the Amsterdam street name change occurred. To reconstruct the historical context of the Hungarian Revolution, the students had to use the guidelines from Appendix A. At the end of the fourth lesson, the students presented their answer to the other students and received feedback from the teachers. When presenting their answers, the students also had to explain whether the task helped them to explain and understand the street name change and whether they changed their initial answer from the beginning of the third lesson.

Compared to the first two lessons, in which the focus was on demonstrating historical contextualization (show me), the third and fourth lessons focused on the application of new knowledge (let me) and the integration of this knowledge (watch me). In a review by Merrill (2002), it is clear that learning is encouraged when students are required to use their new skills to solve problems. These problems should involve real-world tasks instead of, for example, multiple-choice questions. We therefore developed an assignment for the third and fourth lessons to examine the Amsterdam street name change in which students had to apply their skills in historical contextualization to complete this assignment successfully. Moreover, in contrast to the first two lessons (in which students received more support), the final two lessons involved less student guidance because the students (independently) had to reconstruct the historical context of the Hungarian Revolt. This scaffolding is considered an effective way to apply new forms of knowledge (Merrill, 2002). Moreover, in effective instruction, there must be an opportunity for students to demonstrate their newly acquired skill of historical contextualization. Therefore, at the end of the fourth lesson, the students had the opportunity to demonstrate, reflect on, defend, and share what they had learned over the past four lessons (Merrill, 2002).

The control condition

Table 2 provides an overview of the lesson activities in the experimental and control conditions. The lessons in the control condition comprised the same historical topics, but the students did not receive explicit instruction in historical contextualization. In each of the control lessons, the students' prior knowledge was activated, the teacher explained historical phenomena, and the students completed assignments that were discussed in a classroom discussion. Each lesson ended with a review of the most important historical phenomena of that

TABLE 2. Overview of the lesson activities in the experimental and control condition

Lesson	Historical topic*	Experimental condition	Control condition
1	Pre-tests	Pre-test historical contextualization	Pre-test historical contextualization
2	Start of the Cold War	Case to enhance awareness of present-oriented perspectives: The teacher provides dyads with a hand-out with questions and shows the *Duck and Cover* movie. Central task for the dyads is to reason if they could imagine that they received such atomic warfare training. In a classroom discussion, the dyad's answers are discussed. In this discussion, the teacher uses the students' present-oriented answers to explain the consequences of viewing the past from a present-oriented perspective (i.e., not able to explain the case). Explanation of historical contextualization: Teacher provides the hand-out with the guiding questions (Appendix A) and explains the importance of historical contextualization. Reconstructing the historical context: The teacher explains the following historical phenomena: Russian Revolution, Collaboration between the USA and the Soviet-Union, Jalta and Potsdam conferences, differences between capitalism and communism, and the development and fear of the atomic bomb. Evaluating the case: The teacher asks the dyads to explain the case again but now to explicitly use the gained historical context knowledge. In this classroom discussion, the teacher explains the importance of historical contextualization by stressing the differences between the students' present-oriented answers (from the first lesson activity) and the contextualized answers.	Pre-test historical contextualization Prior knowledge activation: The teacher activates the students' prior knowledge by asking questions in a classroom discussion. Teacher lecturing: The teacher explains the following historical phenomena: Russian Revolution, Collaboration between the USA and the Soviet-Union, Jalta and Potsdam conferences, differences between capitalism and communism, and the development and the fear of the atomic bomb. Individual assignments: The teacher provided the students with 13 assignments. They work individually to complete questions 1 to 3. Whole-class discussion: Students' answers to the assignments are discussed. Recap: Teacher repeats the most important historical events explained in this lesson.

TABLE 2. (Continued)

Lesson	Historical topic*	Experimental condition	Control condition
3	The Rosenbergs	Case to enhance awareness of present-oriented perspectives: The teacher provides dyads with a hand-out with questions on the execution of the Rosenbergs. Central task for the dyads is to explain why Ethel Rosenberg was executed despite the marginal evidence of espionage. In a classroom discussion, the dyad's answers are discussed. In this discussion, the teacher uses the students' present-oriented answers to explain the consequences of viewing the past from a present-oriented perspective (i.e., not able to explain the case). Reconstructing the historical context: The teacher explains the following historical phenomena: entities between the USA and the Soviet-Union, The rise and fall of McCarthy, and the American fear of communism. Evaluating the case: The teacher asks the dyads to explain the case again but now to explicitly use the gained historical context knowledge. In this classroom discussion, the teacher explains the importance of historical contextualization by stressing the differences between the students' present-oriented answers (from the first lesson activity) and the contextualized answers.	Prior knowledge activation: The teacher activates the students' prior knowledge of the previous lesson. Teacher lecturing: The teacher explains the following historical phenomena: entities between the USA and the Soviet-Union, The rise and fall of McCarthy, and the American fear of communism. Individual assignments: Students work individually to complete questions 4 to 7. Whole-class discussion: Students' answers to the assignments are discussed. Recap: Teacher repeats the most important historical events explained in this lesson.

4	Hungarian Revolt	Case to enhance awareness of present-oriented perspectives: Students in groups of four are provided with two historical sources displaying a street name change in Amsterdam. The groups had to answer if they could explain why this street name change happened. Their answer had to be written down on a hand-out. Reconstructing the historical context: In groups of four, the students are provided with five historical sources describing different perspectives on the Hungarian Revolt of 1956. Students were instructed to create a historical context based on the provided historical sources and to answer the central question (explaining the street name change in Amsterdam). Students could use the hand-out from the second lesson (guiding questions).	Prior knowledge activation: The teacher activates the students' prior knowledge of the previous lesson. Teacher lecturing: The teacher explains the following historical phenomena: origin of the Warsaw Pact, causes of the Hungarian revolt, and the beginning of the Hungarian Revolt. Individual assignments: Students work individually to complete questions 8 to 10. Whole-class discussion: Students' answers to the assignments are discussed. Recap: Teacher repeats the most important historical events explained in this lesson.
5	Hungarian Revolt	Reconstructing the historical context: In groups of four, the students work further on the reconstructing of the historical context of the Hungarian Revolt of 1956. Evaluating the case: The student groups have to present their answers of the assignment for the other students at the end of the fifth lesson. What did they find? Furthermore, they have to discuss if their answer from the lesson start of fourth lesson has changed	Prior knowledge activation: The teacher activates the students' prior knowledge of the previous lesson. Teacher lecturing: The teacher explains the following historical phenomena: The end and consequences of the Hungarian Revolt. Individual assignments: Students work individually to complete questions 11 to 13. Whole-class discussion: Students' answers to the assignments are discussed. Recap: Teacher repeats the most important historical events explained in this lesson.
6	Post-tests	Post-test historical contextualization	Post-test historical contextualization

*The experimental and control lessons focus on the same historical topic.

particular lesson. In previous research, we observed these lesson activities and structure during 16 history lessons (Huijgen *et al.*, 2018a). Therefore, we assumed that these activities and lesson structure might reflect teachers' common practices.

The students' assignments (which students had to complete during the control lessons) were developed by the authors to prevent deviations between the different control classrooms. The assignments always related to the lesson topic. For example, the lesson topic of the second lesson was the start of the Cold War (see Table 2), and the first assignment asked students to compare (in table form) the economic, political and social-cultural differences between the Soviet Union and the United States. The second question comprised an economic description of a country. The students had to use this description to explain whether the country was communist or capitalist. The third question asked students to describe how the United States and the Soviet Union became involved in the Second World War. All assignments were examples of regular Dutch history textbook exercises.

The historical contextualization test

To test the effects of the pedagogy on the students' ability to perform historical contextualization, we developed a historical contextualization test based on the History Assessments of Historical Thinking (HATs) developed by the Stanford History Education Group (e.g., Breakstone *et al.*, 2013) and instruments used in previous research on contextualization (Huijgen *et al.*, 2014). These instruments offer more positive indicators of face and content validity compared to the construction of completely new instruments. Recently, we used a multiple-choice historical test (Huijgen *et al.*, 2018b), but this test did not provide the opportunity to examine the students' answers because it provided only quantitative results.

The test used in this study comprised six open-ended questions on different historical topics (see Appendix B) and was used as a pre- and post-test. Based on the work of Hartmann and Hasselhorn (2008) and Huijgen *et al.* (2014), the first question included a scenario of a young man living in Germany in 1930 who must decide which political party to vote for. The students had to explain whether this young man was likely to have voted for the Nazi Party. The second question asked students to note what else they should know to answer this question successfully. This question aimed to provide insights into the students' consideration of what they do not know but should know to be able to answer the question. The third question used a HAT format and displayed two statements about the German 1930s scenario. One statement displayed a present-oriented perspective, and the other statement presented a contextualized perspective. The students had to choose and explain why they chose a particular statement. The fourth question was based on an instrument tested in a previous work (Huijgen *et al.*, 2014) and focused on nineteenth-century slavery. The HAT format was again used to trigger

a verdict about two statements. The fifth question concerned a young woman (Sophie) who reads in her history textbook that until the 1960s, women in the Netherlands lost their jobs when they married. Sophie reacts: 'People were stupid in the past'. Based on the HAT format, the task for students was to explain whether they did or did not agree with Sophie. The sixth and final question used the same layout and HAT format as the fifth question but focused on sixteenth-century witch hunts.

Data analysis

To check the implementation fidelity of the intervention, all teachers were asked to review each lesson during the intervention and to provide information on whether all lesson activities were successfully completed and whether any irregularities occurred. No anomalies were noticed by the participating teachers. To examine the gains of the students in historical contextualization, a coding scheme was constructed that provided the opportunity to review the students' answers to the test questions. The coding scheme was based on literature on historical contextualization (e.g., Endacott and Brooks, 2013; Hartmann and Hasselhorn, 2008; Huijgen *et al.*, 2017; Lee and Ashby, 2001). Because our research question focused on the display of presentism and historical contextualization before and after an intervention, we chose to work with these two coding categories (see Table 3). It is possible that an answer received a *presentism* and *contextualized* code when the student, for example, answered that slavery was a phenomenon in the nineteenth century (using chronological context knowledge) but that it was stupid to not bring people who committed atrocities to trial (present-oriented perspective).

The coding was first performed independently by one of the authors, who holds a Master's degree in history education and taught history in a secondary school for nine years. Next, the coding was reviewed by one of the other authors, who also holds a Master's degree in history education and taught history in a secondary school for more than 40 years. Subsequently, all non-corresponding codes (approximately 15%) were discussed until a consensus was reached, resulting in the final coding. First, a frequency analysis (e.g., Krippendorff, 2013) was used to examine the possible gains in historical contextualization in both conditions. Next, a qualitative analysis of the students' answers was performed to explore how the students might have improved their historical contextualization skills. The unit of analysis was the student's entire answer.

3. RESULTS

Presentism and contextualization in students' answers

Based on the coding of the students' answers, Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics (mean scores) of the presence of presentism and contextualization in

TABLE 3. *Coding scheme with the categories, category descriptions, and examples of students' answers*

Category	Category Description	Examples of students' answers
Displaying a present-oriented perspective when answering the question	Students display a present-oriented perspective in their answer. They view and judge the past based on their own beliefs, values, and/or knowledge. No consideration of the contextual circumstances at the time of the historical event takes place.	1. People living back then were just stupid. 2. Hannes should not vote for the Nazi Party considering what they have done to the world.
Using historical context knowledge to answer the question	Students use chronological, spatial, social-political, socio-economic, and/or social-cultural context knowledge in their answer. They consider the contextual circumstances at the time of the historical event.	1. In the 1950s, it was the law that women in governmental roles would lose their jobs when they married. 2. This source material is set before the beginning of the Second World War; thus, Hannes could not have known the outcome. 3. People in the 16th century thought that witches existed and were afraid of them.

TABLE 4. Descriptive statistics of the presence of presentism and contextualization in the students' answers (maximum score = 6.00)

Condition	n	Presentism Pre-test (SD)	Presentism Post-test (SD)	Cohen's d	Sig. (p)	Contextualization Pre-test (SD)	Contextualization Post-test (SD)	Cohen's d	Sig. (p)
Experimental	96	1.26 (1.04)	0.82 (0.87)	.37	.001	3.96 (1.42)	4.35 (1.31)	26	.013
Control	73	1.52 (0.85)	1.41 (0.78)	14	230	3.92 (1.24)	3.67 (1.29)	12	066

the students' answers on the pre- and post-test in both conditions. The maximum score for each category was 6.00 when students used historical context knowledge or displayed presentism in all six questions. The effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) are for the dependent sample t-tests. The effect sizes indicate the standardized difference between the two means and display this difference in standard deviation units. In both conditions, the students displayed less presentism when the intervention ended, but the students in the experimental condition used less presentism in the post-test compared to the students in the control condition. The students in the experimental condition also used more contextualization in the post-test than in the pre-test, while students in the control condition showed slightly less use of contextualization in the post-test compared to the pre-test.

A repeated measurement ANOVA was performed to test whether the students in the experimental condition displayed a significantly greater decline in the use of presentism than students in the control condition after the intervention ended. This repeated measurement analysis indicated that the decline of the use of presentism was significantly higher in the experimental condition than in the control condition (F(1, 167) = 4.17, *p* = .04, η_p^2 = .02, which is considered a small effect; Cohen, 1988). This result indicates that the intervention contributed significantly to the decline in presentism in the post-test answers.

Another repeated measurement ANOVA was conducted to examine whether the intervention contributed significantly to the increased difference between the experimental and control conditions in the use of contextualization. This analysis indicates that the gain scores of the students in the experimental condition differed significantly from those of the students in the control group (F(1,167) = 9.09, *p* = .003, η_p^2 = .05, which is considered a small effect; Cohen, 1988). Students in the experimental group showed improvement in the use of contextualization, whereas students in the control group showed a slight decrease in the use of contextualization. The difference between both groups in the post-test was significant (t = 3.37, *p* = .001, η_p^2 = .06, which is considered a medium effect; Cohen, 1988).

Students' improvement in historical contextualization

The frequency analysis indicated that students in the experimental condition improved more in historical contextualization than students in the control condition did. To further explore how they might have improved during the intervention, the students' answers were qualitatively analysed.

The use of presentism. Overall, the students in the experimental condition displayed less presentism in the post-test questions compared to their answers in the pre-test questions. The framework used in the experimental condition seemed to teach students to set aside their present-oriented perspectives and to explicitly consider the differences in values, beliefs, and knowledge between the past and the present when answering the test questions.

For example, David answered in the pre-test on the fifth question about the position of women in the 1950s, 'I agree with Sophie. People were stupid back then. Women have the same rights as men. Some women could even be better than some men'. In the post-test, David no longer viewed the past from a present-oriented perspective and provided a historical explanation in his answer: 'I do not agree with Sophie. At that specific time [1950s], a woman was viewed as less than a man. When women married, they had to do all of the house-keeping, and the man was the breadwinner'. Another example is Emma's answer on the fourth question of the pre-test about slavery: 'I chose statement I because Simpson and his family were heavily abused, and this was not acceptable'. In the post-test, she included more specific historical circum-stances: 'I chose statement II because at that time [eighteenth century], it was more normal to keep and trade slaves. Nobody did anything because it was more common in society'.

Another interesting finding is that although students such as David and Emma might have possessed historical context knowledge, this knowledge was 'blocked' by a dominant present-oriented perspective. David and Emma might already have had some knowledge of the historical context because they answered the questions successfully in the post-test but did not receive topic knowledge of the test questions during the intervention. However, the collision between the students' current values and beliefs and the values and beliefs in the past might result in a dominant present-oriented perspective when answering the pre-test question.

This framework may teach students to not respond immediately but to consider and use historical context knowledge explicitly when answering his-torical questions and making ethical or moral judgements. For example, Nina answered the fifth question (about the firing of women) in the pre-test as follows:

> I agree with Sophie. Women were less than men. Why on earth would rape by the husband be not as bad as rape by somebody you do not know? And why are women allowed to work before they married and not when they married?

In the post-test, Nina explicitly noted that we cannot judge people's actions in the past without considering the historical context: 'At that time [1950s], every-thing was different compared to our daily lives. Laws, opinions, thoughts – almost everything was different. We cannot judge people in the past right away without knowing the specific circumstances'.

In the control condition, the decrease in the use of presentism was less recognizable in the post-test answers. For example, Thalia answered question five in the pre-test as follows: 'I agree with Sophie because I can understand that women want to work less, but losing your job is really absurd. Rape was also allowed. This cannot be true and should not be possible'. In the post-test, Thalia still viewed the past from a present-oriented perspective when answering

the same question: 'I agree with Sophie because it is outrageous how people treated woman'. The answers to the question about nineteenth-century slavery (question four) also illustrated that many students in the control condition continued to view the past from a present-oriented perspective. For example, Anna answered in the pre-test,

> I chose statement I because the plantation owner was involved in human traffick-ing, neglect, abuse, and murder of people, and he should therefore be brought to trial. I did not choose statement II because you are not allowed to view a human being as a non-living creature.

In the post-test, she answered, 'I chose statement I because he [the plantation owner] killed somebody. I did not choose statement II because one should live in freedom and slavery is illegal'. The students in the control group, such as Thalia and Anna, had difficulty setting aside their personal emotions, values, and beliefs. Whereas students in the experimental condition (such as David and Emma) shifted from a present-oriented perspective towards a historical contex-tualized perspective, the students in the control condition (such as Thalia and Anna) continued to view the past with their current values, beliefs, and knowl-edge. This indicates that presentism might remain the dominant perspective when students are not taught to explicitly perform historical contextualization (e.g., by providing guiding questions and creating opportunities to practice historical contextualization).

   The use of historical context knowledge. A distinction can be made between chronological, spatial, social-political, social-economic, and social-cultural context knowledge. The framework used in the experimental condition aimed to encourage the use of these frames of reference to reconstruct a historical context by providing guiding questions (see Appendix A). Spatial context knowledge was rarely used in the answers of the pre- and post-test questions (in total, 12 explicit references to spatial context knowledge). Moreover, we did not notice a large progression in the use of social-political, social-economic, and social-cultural knowledge in the experimental condition.

   The most progression was found in the use of chronological knowledge. The students in the experimental condition used far more chronological knowledge to answer the test questions in the post-test compared to the pre-test. This knowledge mostly occurred in the form of sequencing historical events and mentioning a specific year or time period, often resulting in a shift from a present-oriented perspective towards a more historical and contextualized one. For example, Robert provided a present-oriented perspective when answering the fourth question in the pre-test: 'I chose statement I because what the plantation owner did is not allowed, and therefore, he should be punished [. . .]'. In the post-test, Robert considered the chronological context of the nine-teenth century more and proceeded to answer as follows:

> I chose statement II because at that specific time it was more normal to treat your slaves that way. I did not choose statement I because the law did not view slavery as something bad, so he [the plantation owner] cannot be arrested for this.

The use of chronological knowledge was also used more implicitly after the intervention ended. For example, Kathy displayed a present-oriented perspective (i.e., knowledge that was not yet available for people living in 1930) when she answered the third pre-test question about Hannes, who was inclined to not vote for the Nazi Party: 'I chose statement I because nobody can justify what the Nazi Party has done to the world. I did not choose statement II because I do not think that Hannes would view Hitler as a strong leader'. However, Kathy considered in her post-test answer that Hannes was living in 1930 and did not yet know the outcome of the Nazi Party's rise to power:

> I chose statement II because Hannes wants to keep his job and does not want the company to go bankrupt. I did not choose statement I because Hannes did not know then what the Nazi Party would do to the world. He was focused on helping his father's business.

In the control condition, no such increase was noticeable in the use of chronological knowledge. For example, whereas students in the experimental condition explicitly used chronological knowledge to answer question five (e.g., recognizing that in the 1950s, different laws, values, and beliefs were present), the students in the control condition used chronological indicators less often in their answers. The guiding questions focusing on reconstructing the chronological context (see Appendix A) might therefore teach students that historical events occurred in a different chronological context (compared to their contemporary context) and should therefore be examined in that particular context.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine the effects of a lesson unit based on a three-stage historical contextualization framework on 14–16-year-old students' ability to perform historical contextualization. Repeated measures analyses of variance showed that students in the experimental condition displayed significantly less presentism and used more historical context knowledge in their answers compared to students in the control condition after the intervention ended. Further analysis of the students' answers indicated how students might have improved their historical contextualization skills during the intervention.

The framework seemed to teach students in the experimental condition to set aside their present-oriented perspectives and to explicitly consider the differences in values, beliefs, and knowledge between the past and the present when answering the test questions. Wineburg (2001) noted that historical thinking is an unnatural act and that it should be taught to students in history classrooms. Our findings seem to illustrate this. In line with research on other historical

reasoning competencies (e.g., Nokes *et al*., 2007; Reisman, 2012; Stoel *et al*., 2017), students need to be taught explicitly how to construct a reasoned historical argument. If students are not taught historical contextualization explicitly, they may continue to view the past from a present-oriented perspective, which often results in the misunderstanding of historical events and agents' actions (e.g., Barton and Levstik, 2004; Lévesque, 2008).

The framework also might 'unblock' students' historical context knowledge. Some students may already possess this knowledge because they used this knowledge in the post-test answers. However, they did not use this knowledge in the pre-test answers because of a possible dominant present-oriented perspective. Further research is needed to examine the unblocking function of the framework and which types of context knowledge students use and do not use when performing historical contextualization. Thinking aloud protocols (e.g., Van Someren *et al*., 1994) can be used to examine students' reasoning in more detail when answering historical questions.

Moreover, the framework might have taught students to become aware of how they can approach a historical question or assignment. The students in the experimental condition not only displayed a less present-oriented perspective and used more historical contextualization in their post-test answers but also explicitly mentioned, for example, that a moral judgement cannot be made without considering the historical context. Seixas and Morton (2013) consider this a 'demonstration of powerful understanding' (p. 189), which contributes to thinking historically.

Students in the experimental condition also used more historical context knowledge after the intervention. In particular, they used more chronological knowledge, such as considering the specific time period or sequencing historical events to answer the post-test questions. This often resulted in a shift from a present-oriented perspective towards a historical contextualized perspective. Dawson (2009) argues that chronological knowledge may contribute to a 'sense of a period'. By explicitly considering knowledge of the characteristics of a particular historical period, students might become aware that there are differences in values, beliefs, and knowledge in different time periods. We did not notice extensive use of spatial, social-political, socio-economic, or social-cultural knowledge in the students' answers. When students used these types of knowledge, it was often less concrete (e.g., 'they did things differently back then'). A possible reason might be that the students did not receive topic knowledge on the test questions. Future research should therefore include test questions related to the historical topic of the lesson unit to provide more insight into the role of historical context knowledge in historical contextualization processes.

Beyond the scope of this article, but nonetheless important, is the role of the history teacher. How did the teachers experience teaching with the intervention? What did they learn? The teachers in our sample participated voluntarily, but how do other teachers react to using the framework in their history lessons?

Future research should therefore include the teachers' role, such as by conducting interviews about teachers' beliefs (e.g., Luft and Roehrig, 2007) before and after the intervention. Future research should also focus on the historical topics of the test questions. Do questions about recent topics (e.g., women's rights in the 1950s) trigger more present-oriented perspectives compared to more distant historical topics, such as the witch hunts in the sixteenth century? When this is the case, teachers should practice historical contextualization with both distant historical topics and more recent historical topics.

Our study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted with only seven history teachers and 169 students. Therefore, our conclusions can be viewed only as possible outcomes of the use of the framework. Follow-up studies using larger samples of teachers and students are needed to confirm whether the framework really decreases presentism among students, unblocks historical context knowledge, and teaches students how to approach historical questions. These studies should use random assignments of participants instead of non-probability sampling, which we used in this study (Cook and Payne, 2002).

Moreover, the history teachers included in our sample volunteered to participate, and they may have been more motivated to improve their teaching compared to other history teachers. There was also an imbalance in the working experience of the participating teachers in both conditions. The effects of teachers' working experience and their pedagogical content knowledge on the use of the framework require further examination because these factors might influence the promotion of students' ability to perform historical contextualization (Monte-Sano, 2011).

Intervention studies focusing on different historical topics are also needed to confirm our findings because we focused only on the effects of the framework when teaching about Cold War events. Furthermore, only six items were used as a historical contextualization test. Despite the fact that the test format was derived from previous work, more items and information on the validity and reliability of these items are needed. The development of a parallel test could help to overcome the carryover effect (Bose and Dey, 2009). The interesting *Historical Thinking Competencies in History* (HiTCH) project of Trautwein *et al*. (2017), which develops items that can measure historical reasoning competencies, might provide effective formats for the development of new test items.

Despite these limitations, this study shows promising indicators for the use of the three-stage framework to develop lesson activities that encourage historical contextualization. The study presents a concrete example for teachers who wish to teach historical contextualization to students in their lessons. The framework can easily be implemented in one history lesson or can be taught across multiple lessons. Moreover, teachers can use one or more items from the historical contextualization test to gain insight into students' progress in historical contextualization and to teach them how to improve their historical contextualization as a form of formative assessment (e.g., Heritage, 2010). The question format of choosing a statement can

easily be used to collect information about students' ability to perform historical contextualization among a large and heterogeneous group of students.

In previous quasi-experimental research, we attempted to promote historical contextualization by designing a lesson unit in which students had to perform the same activities in each lesson (Huijgen *et al.*, 2018b). Although this study showed positive indicators of the use of the design principles to promote historical contextualization, the students became demotivated after a few lessons due to the repetitive lesson structure. This study used a structure in which students moved from more basic domain-specific instructions (e.g., teachers demonstrating to students how to reconstruct a historical context) towards more complex domain-specific instructions (e.g., students creating a historical context to explain historical events). This study also showed positive indicators for promoting students' ability to perform historical contextualization. However, more experimental studies with different applications of the design principles (i.e., conditions) are needed to examine the effects of these applications on students' motivation, their ability to perform historical contextualization, and the relationship between these outcomes.

In several countries, a debate is ongoing about how history should be taught. Should history pedagogies be teacher dominated or student dominated? Should history education focus on direct teacher instruction or on learners' construction of knowledge? As Chapman (2015) correctly notes, these are false dichotomies. We see the different enquiry questions in the framework as a strategy to structure learning such that students simultaneously build historical conceptual knowledge and historical content knowledge. The framework teaches students how to perform the competency of historical contextualization and teaches them important historical content information about Cold War events. Moreover, within the framework, students have space to examine enquiry questions on their own, although these activities are carefully planned and structured by the teacher.

Lisa, the 14-year-old girl who displayed a present-oriented perspective on the firing of women when they married in the 1950s, might best illustrate the success of the intervention. She answered the same question in the post-test: 'I can explain why it happened. I do not agree with it, but I know that in the 1950s, there were different beliefs and values compared to our contemporary society'.

5. DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

6. FUNDING

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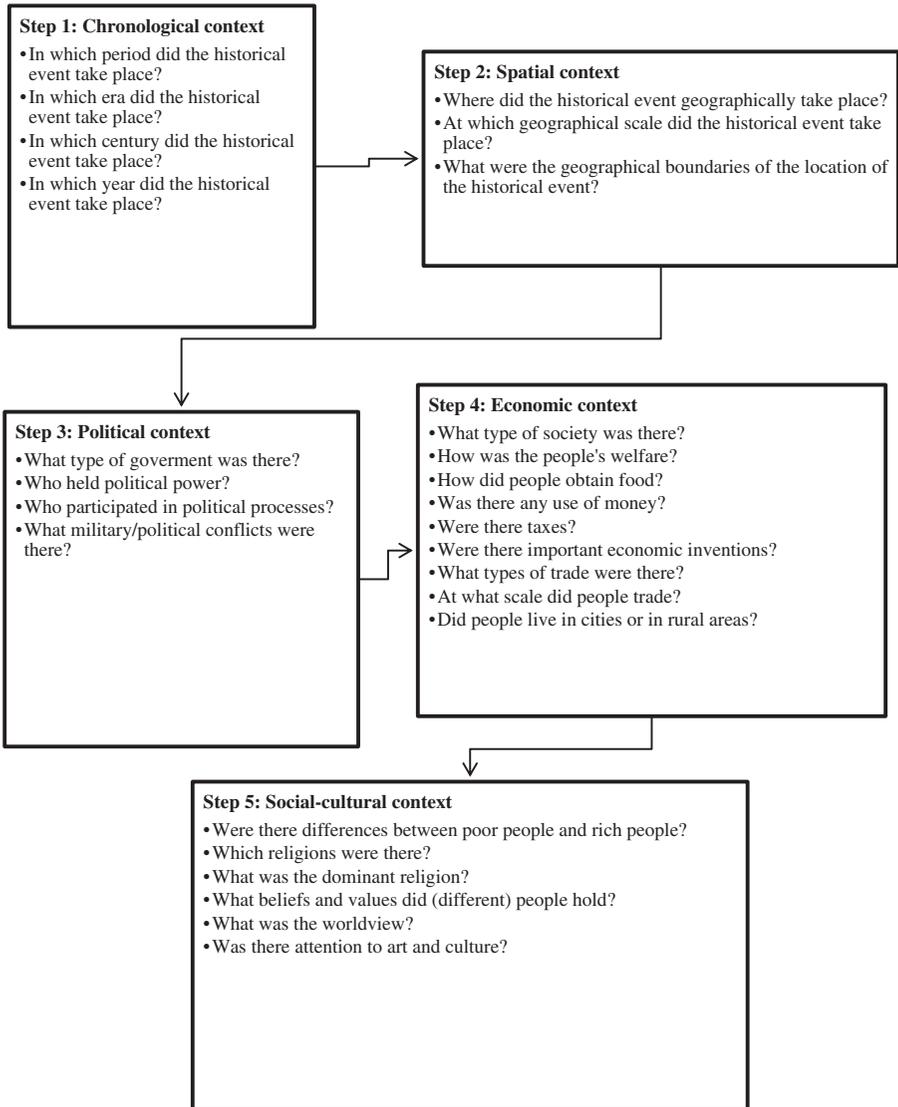Cor Suhre ⓘ http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5687-758X

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APPENDIX A: GUIDING QUESTIONS TO RECONSTRUCT A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Step 1: Chronological context
- In which period did the historical event take place?
- In which era did the historical event take place?
- In which century did the historical event take place?
- In which year did the historical event take place?

Step 2: Spatial context
- Where did the historical event geographically take place?
- At which geographical scale did the historical event take place?
- What were the geographical boundaries of the location of the historical event?

Step 3: Political context
- What type of goverment was there?
- Who held political power?
- Who participated in political processes?
- What military/political conflicts were there?

Step 4: Economic context
- What type of society was there?
- How was the people's welfare?
- How did people obtain food?
- Was there any use of money?
- Were there taxes?
- Were there important economic inventions?
- What types of trade were there?
- At what scale did people trade?
- Did people live in cities or in rural areas?

Step 5: Social-cultural context
- Were there differences between poor people and rich people?
- Which religions were there?
- What was the dominant religion?
- What beliefs and values did (different) people hold?
- What was the worldview?
- Was there attention to art and culture?

Item 1

Dusseldorf, Germany in 1930. Hannes (20 years old) is the son of a man who owns a small factory that makes handmade shoes. One day Hannes meets with his friend Gerd. They talk about the situation in Germany and the upcoming elections. Hannes says, 'My father's company might close down. Since the war ended, everything is getting worse and worse. After the economic crisis of 1923, we began to feel some hope again. But now, it is worse than ever. I don't know how this is going to end. Right now, I still have a job in my father's business. But when he closes down, I have no idea where to get a job. We have always been wealthy people – and look at us now!' Gerd replies, 'You are right. What has happened to our country? Look at what is going on today. No one has work'. Hannes replies, 'My father always says that we were better off during the time of the German Empire. What can we do if our country is suffering from a crisis and the winners of the war are hurting us wherever they can? Our politicians are not decisive and do us no good. It's time that Germany is ruled by someone who knows what he is doing and who really takes the lead'.

Based on the information in this text, explain how likely it is that Hannes will vote for Hitler's political party, the Nazi Party.

Item 2

Explain what else you should know to answer correctly as to how likely it is that Hannes will vote for the Nazi Party.

Item 3

Read the text about Hannes again. The Nazi Party is Hitler's political party.
Two statements are as follows:

  I. Hannes will not vote for the NSDAP. No one can approve of what this party has done to the world
  II. Hannes will vote for the NSDAP. In his eyes, Hitler is a strong leader

Try to take Hannes' perspective and choose the statement that suits his situation best.
I choose statement number: …… because …
I do not choose statement number: …… because …

Item 4

Harry Knox, a journalist working for the respected American newspaper Austin Press, interviewed the 70-year-old Ben Simpson in 1891. The enslaved Simpson worked for more than 20 years at an American plantation in Texas and told Knox the following story about his life:

'The plantation owner was in charge of a large plantation. When he pulled me and the others off the boat, he chained us around our necks. The chains were fixed to the horses. With the chains we – my mother, my sister Emma, I and the other slaves – had to walk all the way to his plantation in Texas. We had to sleep in the snow on the ground. The plantation owner had a long whip made of leather. If one of us fell behind, then he would hit him with it. When the night came, he fixed our chains to a tree. The ground was our

bed. At the border of Texas, my mother couldn't go any further. Her feet were broken and bleeding, and her legs were swollen. The master took his gun and shot her. He didn't bury her. He left her lying where he had shot her'.

Two statements accompanying the text are as follows:

I.   The plantation owner committed a crime. He should have been arrested by the police and brought to trial.

II. Slaveholders saw slaves as products. They thought that if a product breaks, you just buy a new product.

Which statement best suits the events described by Simpson?

I choose statement number: . . . because . . .

I do not choose statement number: . . . because . . .

Item 5

Sophie reads in her history textbook,

'Until the 1950s, women in the Netherlands automatically lost their jobs as soon as they married. For female officials, this was legally established. Also, rape was not punishable when this happened by the spouse'.

Sophie responds to this text by saying that the people then were ignorant.

Do you agree with Sophie's statement?

Circle your choice and explain your answer:

I *agree/disagree* with this statement made by Sophie because . . .

Item 6

David reads in his history textbook,

'In the 16th century, witch hunting took place in the northern Netherlands. The women who were suspected of witchcraft were immediately sentenced to death without trial, for example, by drowning or the pillar of fire'.

David responds to this text by saying that these witch hunts were not so strange.

Do you agree with David's statement?

Circle your choice and explain your answer:

I *agree/disagree* with this statement made by David because . . .

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