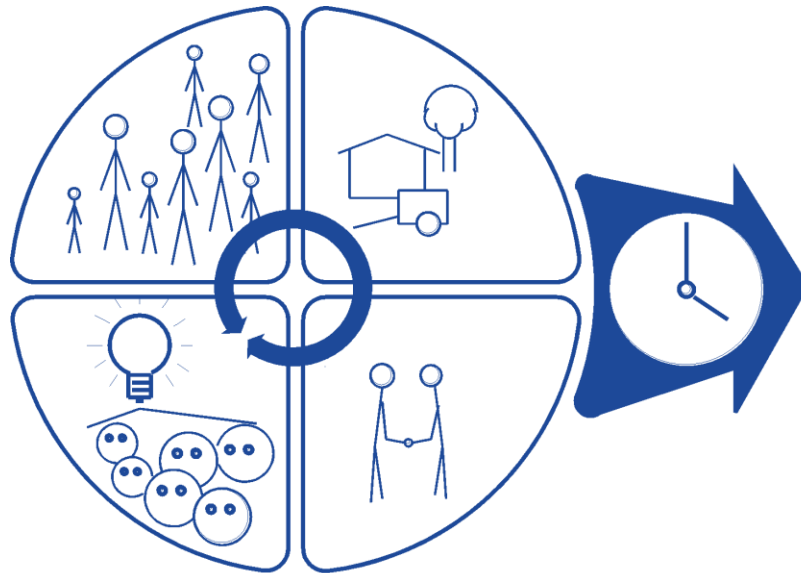# *Investigating American History*

A Systems Approach

Formerly *American History Handbook for Teachers and Mentors*

Marion Brady and Howard Brady

Third Edition (v. 3.3)
December 2016

Marion Brady & Howard Brady
4285 North Indian River Drive
Cocoa, Florida 32927
Phone: 321/636-3448
Email: mbrady2222@gmail.com

Web:
http://www.marionbrady.com

A fundamental problem with discipline-based curricula:

John Goodlad: "The division into subjects and periods encourages a segmented rather than an integrated view of knowledge. Consequently, what students are asked to relate to in schooling becomes increasingly artificial, cut off from the human experiences subject matter is supposed to reflect." (*A Place Called School*, McGraw-Hill, 1984, p.266)

Peter M. Senge: "From a very early age, we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price. We can no longer see the consequences of our actions; we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole." *(The Fifth Discipline*, Currency Doubleday 1990, p.3)

Why this book?

The conventional wisdom has it that, in some near-mystical way, "covering the material" in American history teaches important lessons, builds character, promotes citizenship, or provides other benefits too subtle to be apparent but nevertheless important.

That's wishful thinking. Students regularly say American history was the most boring class they were required to take, a sure sign that what they "learned" was seen as irrelevant, stored in short-term memory, and quickly forgotten. Most adults remember little of content once "covered," and what can be recalled is rarely of practical use.

This is unacceptable. Civilized life requires knowledge of the past, the insights into human nature which that knowledge provides, awareness of "the trends of the era," and a basic grasp of the dynamics of change. Pushing historical study aside, or treating it as of less importance than math, science, or some other subject, is a recipe for societal disaster.

This book assumes that low societal regard for the value of history, and the failure to appreciate its critical role in societal survival, stems primarily from the way it's usually taught. This is the problem *Investigating American History* addresses.

All student materials from this book are available as a separate book in PDF format at: http://marionbrady.com/AHH.asp .

Three assumptions shaped *Investigating American History*:

One:

Learning—permanently useful learning—requires learners to be active problem-solvers rather than mere passive receptors of information. This happens when they confront situations, problems, and puzzles requiring them not merely to remember, but to hypothesize, generalize, synthesize, make value judgments, and so on.

Two:

The real world is "all of a piece"—connected, seamless, and systemically integrated. People, environments, and ways of thinking and acting are woven together in complex ways. It isn't knowledge of facts about these four, but of the relationships *between* them, that provide the most insight.

Three:

In the real world, what happens is too complicated to be captured simply by linking events chronologically. Making sense of complexity requires a comprehensive, logical system for selecting, organizing, relating and generating information, and for accessing it in memory.

We're so convinced of the importance of these three assumptions, they're the "macro" organizers of this book.

Contents

How to Use *Investigating American History*

This book contains materials for learners, along with information for teachers or mentors. Each of its main parts focuses on an important idea central to understanding American history.

The student materials within each part are "Investigations." They provide historical primary sources and an intellectually-challenging "puzzle" based on these sources. **The student materials are also published in a separate booklet for use by learners, *Investigating American History* (Learner's Edition)*. See:* http://www.marionbrady.com/AHH.asp

Each part begins and ends with a discussion of how the main idea applies to the study of American history, and how this idea can be applied to the entire course of study.

Student materials are designed for adolescents, but will work with older students as well. The open-ended nature of the Investigations allows students with differing skill levels to participate, and the activities enhance information-processing skills and historical understanding.

The activities may be used to supplement a conventional American history course or as the basis for a stand-alone course of study. The sources used are roughly in chronological sequence to facilitate merging the Investigations with more traditional approaches. Suggestions are included for creating additional Investigations, as are references to selected Internet sites for additional primary sources.

Note that the authors have generated many additional units that "dovetail" with the learning sequence given in this book, each with primary sources and investigations for learners. These are available free of charge to teachers and mentors for use with their own students, at: http://www.marionbrady.com/MoreInvestigationsinAmericanHistory.asp

Materials listed there include suggested preliminary activities and investigations to begin the American history course. We suggest you check "Additional Notes for Teachers and Mentors" at that webpage before proceeding.

******

Within the student materials, primary sources are enclosed in boxes, and instructions for students appear in bold-faced italics.

We strongly suggest that students work in small groups. It greatly increases opportunities for dialogue and for "thinking out loud."

We also recommend that each student keep a journal or portfolio to document Investigations. This journal will be a primary source of feedback to the teacher or mentor to document student performance for evaluation. These journals/portfolios may be kept on computers, in loose-leaf notebooks, or some combination of the two.

1: Active Learning

In 1914, Charles Pajeau, a stonemason from Evanston, Illinois, watching kids play with pencils, sticks, and empty wooden thread spools, invented "Tinkertoys."

It would be impossible to prove a connection between the popularity of Tinkertoys and America's long-time lead in the number of patents granted or Nobel prizes awarded, but neither is it unreasonable to wonder if there might be a connection. Those who grew up playing with Tinkertoys and Erector Sets, whittling toys from wood scraps, building vehicles from old roller skates, playing cowboys and Indians with homemade guns shooting bands cut from old tire inner tubes, or assembling model airplanes from balsa wood and tissue rather than merely snapping together plastic parts, were engaged in mind-stretching activities. They were active problem solvers, builders, creators, constructors, doers.

That all this activity was voluntary—that it took no adult scheduling or encouragement—surely says something important about human nature. Unfortunately, other than in some extra-curricular activities, traditional schooling pretty much ignores the need to solve problems and puzzles, resolve anomalies, imagine and construct, make the mistakes essential to experimentation and creativity. It rewards passive absorption of existing information rather than active discovery of new information.

Consider this typical passage from a textbook:

> Hundreds of towns and cities all over Latin America and the southwestern United States were laid out based on rules issued by Spanish King Phillip II in 1573. The most important space was the central plaza, an open area used for fiestas to celebrate religious holidays and other special events.
>
> The largest, most impressive building facing the plaza was always the Catholic Church. If the town was important enough to be assigned a bishop, the church was designated a "cathedral." Other buildings around the plaza were used for government offices and stores, fronted and connected by shaded arcades. Most towns and cities founded by the Spanish still reflect this design.
>
> The importance of authority and hierarchy is apparent. In religion, the chain of authority began with the village priest and extended through bishops, archbishops, and cardinals to the Pope in

Confronting such a passage, kids take it for granted that they're supposed to read, figure out what the author and the teacher think is important, underline or hi-lite it, then store it in memory, at least long enough to pass a test. Period. "In MY class, you're going to have to THINK," says the teacher with a hint of threat, then piles on more words to be remembered.

Kids WANT to think—WANT to infer, hypothesize, generalize, synthesize, value, and so on, and traditional instruction often fails them. Learning, to be effective, must actively involve the learner. We'll illustrate this fundamental principle in the student materials that follow (Investigation: Planning a Spanish Town).

Investigation: Planning a Spanish Town

In 1573, King Philip II of Spain issued "Ordinances for the Government of the Indies" which applied to the parts of the Western Hemisphere controlled by Spain. In these ordinances, the King and his officials gave rules for designing the new towns that were being built. In this activity, you'll design your own Spanish town, following the rules.

Note: If possible, work with two to four other people on this investigation. This will give you a chance to "think out loud."

1. *Enlarge the map on the next page to a convenient size. (Freehand sketching is OK.) Or download: www.marionbrady.com/americanhistory/SpTownSite.pdf*

2. *Read through all the Ordinances to get a general idea of the problem before beginning your design.*

3. *Start with Ordinances 110 through 114, and decide on a size and location for the plaza. Note the scale of the map and the Ordinances' size specifications. Sketch lightly in pencil to allow for later changes.*

4. *Then:*

    - *Lay out streets* (Ordinances 115-118).

    - *Mark locations of main buildings* (119-122).

    - *Follow the remaining Ordinances to locate other buildings and features.*

    Do all of this thoughtfully and thoroughly. Allow enough time to do a good job.

TRADE WINDS

N

OCEAN

1000

500

0

FEET

SAND DUNES

FOREST

BAY

SAND DUNES

SWAMP

GRASSLAND

RIVER

TREES

FOREST

HILL
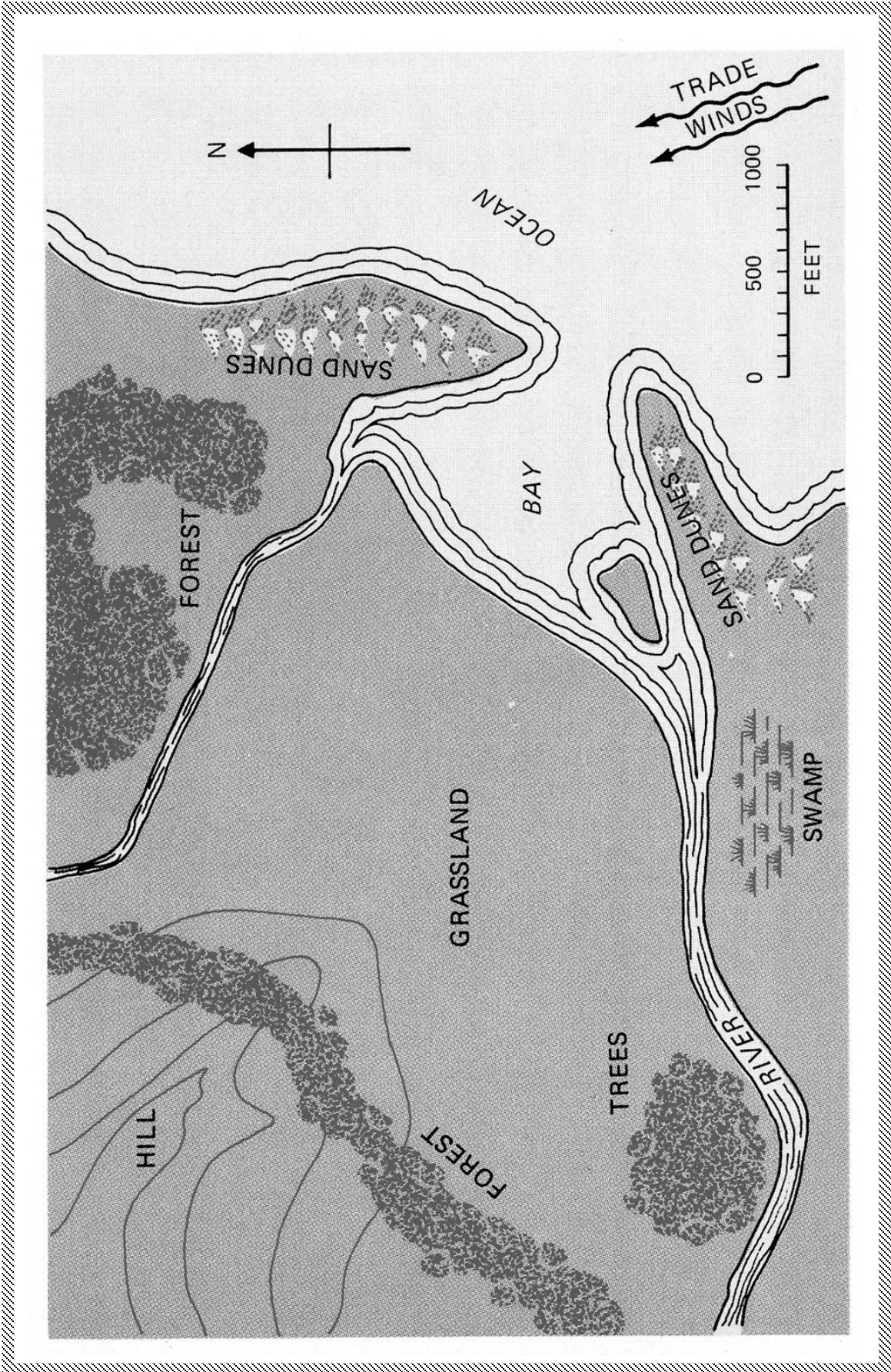
Enlarge this to a convenient size. Freehand sketching is OK. Or download:
www.marionbrady.com/americanhistory/SpTownSite.pdf

On July 3, 1573 in San Lorenzo, Spain, King Philip II issued "Royal Ordinances for New Towns," which were to apply to all of "New Spain" in the western hemisphere:[1]

Royal Ordinance 110: When the settlers arrive at the place where the town will be built, they must make a plan for the new town. The plazas, streets, and building lots must be laid out exactly, beginning with the main plaza. . .

Royal Ordinance 111: The town must be located on ground that is not low or swampy. There must be land for farming and pasture, fuel and wood for buildings, fresh water, and a native people nearby. The town gates should open to the north wind. If the site is on the coast, the town should be a port, but do not have the sea to the south or to the west. Lagoons or swamps in where are found poisonous animals or diseased air and water should not be nearby.

Royal Ordinance 112: If the town is on the seacoast, the main plaza should be at the ship landing place. If the town lies inland, the plaza should be in the middle of the town. The plaza must be a rectangle, with the long side equal to one and one-half times the width. This is the best shape for fiestas, especially those in which horses are used.

Royal Ordinance 113: The plaza should be small or large depending on the number of settlers, but do not forget that in new towns the population should grow. The plaza must be no less than 200 feet wide and 300 feet long. A good size is 600 feet long and 400 feet wide.

Royal Ordinance 114: Four main streets must run from the plaza, one starting from the middle of each side. At each corner of the plaza, two streets should begin, and should line up with the sides of the plaza.

Royal Ordinance 115: The four sides of the plaza and the four streets running from the four sides must have arcades for the use of the merchants and their customers. The streets running from the plaza at the four corners should not have arcades.

Royal Ordinance 116: In cold places the streets should be wide; in hot places they should be narrow. However, if horses will be used to help defend the town, the streets should be wide.

Royal Ordinance 117: The streets must go out from the main plaza in ways that will not cause problems or crowding when the town grows.

Royal Ordinance 118: If the town will be large, smaller plazas must be laid out here and there for new churches and monasteries.

(Continued)

---

[1] "Ordinances Concerning the Laying Out of New Towns," Zelia Nuttall, trans. and ed., *Hispanic-American Historical Review*, v. 4, No. 4, November 1921 (Durham, N. C.; Duke University Press.) Adapted selections are in Brady, Marion and Howard Brady, *Idea and Action in American History*, p. 19 (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice-Hall, 1977). Adaptation copyright © Marion Brady and Howard Brady. All rights reserved.

[Note: In seaport towns, because the main plaza will be at the landing, there can only be three main streets.]

Royal Ordinance 119: If the town is on the coast, the first cathedral must be built facing the plaza, so it can be seen when arriving by sea. This building should also serve as a means of defense for the port.

Royal Ordinance 120: The building lots for the cathedral and other nearby church buildings must be assigned first. Buildings not related to the church must be kept some distance away.

Royal Ordinance 121: The next building lots to be chosen must be for a house for the royal council, a customs house, and an arsenal. These must be near the cathedral and port so that in times of battle they will help defend each other.

The hospital for the poor and those sick with non-contagious diseases must be built near the church buildings. The hospital for those sick with contagious diseases must be built so the wind will not blow from it toward the rest of the town.

Royal Ordinance 122: The building lots for slaughterhouses, fisheries, tanneries, and other things which cause pollution must be placed so waste is not a problem.

[Ordinances 123-125 omitted.]

Royal Ordinance 126: Building lots around the plaza must not be used for family houses. The buildings facing the plaza will be the cathedral, other buildings the church may need, buildings used for the King's business, and shops.

The first buildings to be built facing the plaza will be the shops. All the settlers must help build these shops. Anyone who buys from the merchants must pay a fair tax, to help pay for the shop buildings.

Royal Ordinance 127: The other building lots near the plaza will be given to the settlers by a lottery. The lots farther away from the plaza will be kept for later settlers, and for other buildings the town might need. The town must always keep a plan showing where new buildings and streets will be built.

Royal Ordinance 128: After the town plans are finished and each settler has a building lot, each settler must set up his tent on his lot. Those who do not have tents must build huts so they may have shelter.

As soon as possible all settlers must make a wall or ditch around the town so they may protect themselves from the Indians.

(Continued)

Royal Ordinance 129: An open pasture field must be prepared near the town. The pasture must be large so there will always be plenty of room for the people to go for recreation and room for the cattle to be pastured without danger.

****

Royal Ordinance 134: The settlers must try as much as possible to have the buildings all of one form so the town will be more beautiful.

Royal Ordinance 135: The governor assigned to the new town will pick people to lay out the town. They must follow these ordinances.

Note: Philip's Ordinances mirrored traditional Spanish culture, but they also reflected some advanced ideas designed to prevent problems. They helped shape thousands of towns in North and South America, including some in Florida and many in the American Southwest.
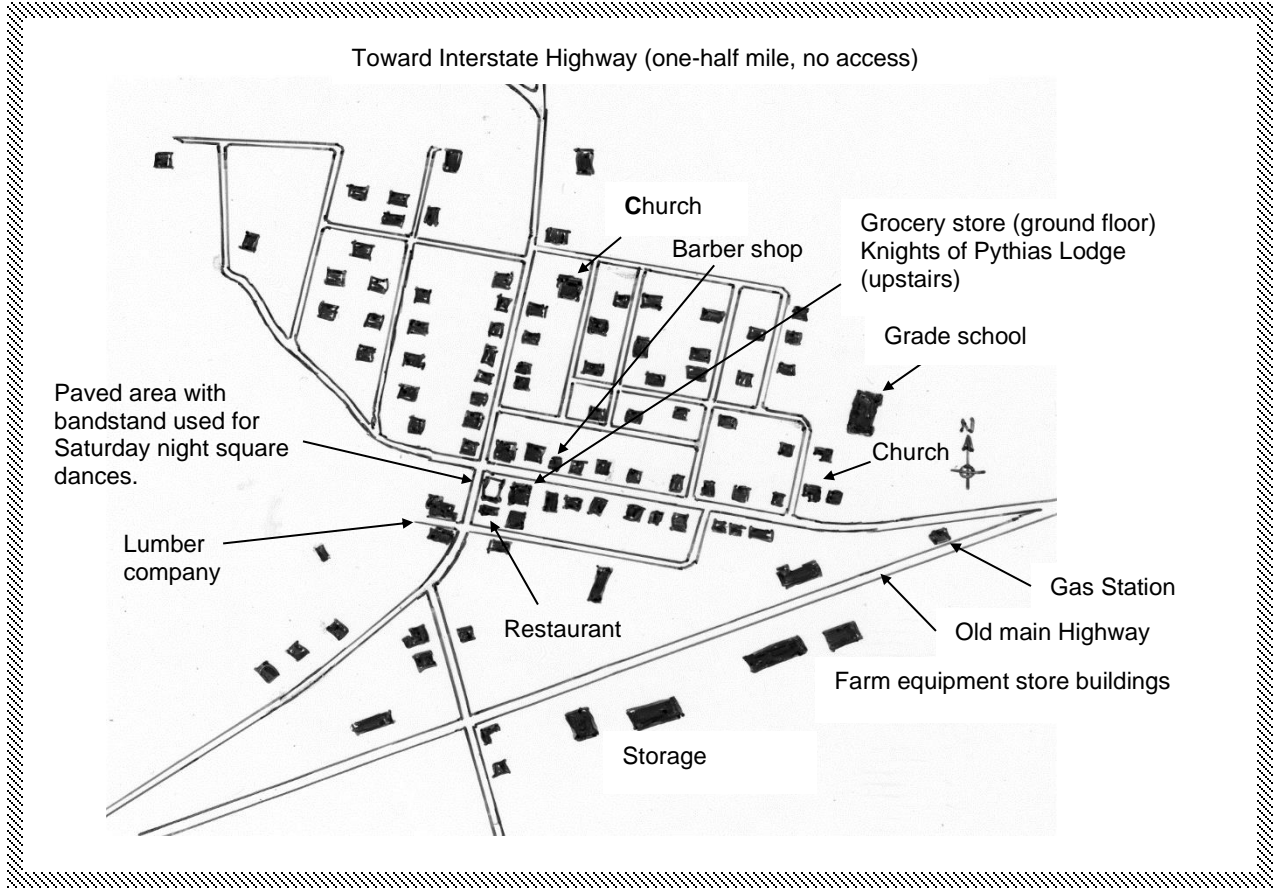
Record answers in your journal:

1. What do the Ordinances suggest about Spain's main reason(s) for building towns?

2. King Philip II's Ordinances created towns but they also created ways of life. The most important things to be built are almost certainly described first in the Ordinances. List these parts of the town in the order that they are mentioned.

3. For each item on your list, identify the kinds of actions that take place there.

4. Obviously, these actions are considered important. Why? What Spanish shared ideas (beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions) are suggested by the actions? How are these ideas and actions likely to affect "native people nearby" (Ordinance 111)?

Follow-Up: Looking More Closely

On the next page is a sketch of a present-day village in the Midwestern part of the United States. *Obtain or prepare a similar map of your own neighborhood, town or section of your city to compare town designs. Find and record answers:*

How does the design of Spanish towns differ from the layout of the American village? How does the Spanish town differ from your own neighborhood, town or city?

Which parts (buildings, facilities, spaces, etc.) of American towns and cities are most important? What buildings are biggest and most expensive? What does this suggest about the differing values of Spanish colonists and present-day Americans?

Toward Interstate Highway (one-half mile, no access)

Church

Barber shop

Grocery store (ground floor)
Knights of Pythias Lodge
(upstairs)

Grade school

Paved area with
bandstand used for
Saturday night square
dances.

Church

N

Lumber
company

Gas Station

Restaurant

Old main Highway

Farm equipment store buildings

Storage

For Teacher/Mentor:
Merits of Active Learning

This "Planning a Spanish Town" activity was originally developed by the authors as part of *Idea and Action in Action in American History*, published by Prentice-Hall in 1976. It has been used thousands of times in classrooms over the years, with uniformly outstanding success. Investigative activities like this one are essential to real learning:

1. **The intellectual demands of analyzing and interpreting data like that in these exercises aren't trivial**. Engaging students in multifaceted activity shows a respect for them which yields dividends.

    In this particular activity, students:

    - Exercised language skills, since in-depth understanding of the Ordinances was required to proceed with the activity

    - Translated abstractions—words—into concrete, graphic form—the town design on the map

    - Visualized spatial relationships, an essential element of the process of graphic design

    - Generated hypotheses (sizes required for various buildings, space requirements for pasture, etc.)

    - Integrated concepts, correlating the ideas expressed in separate ordinances into an integrated whole

    - Drew inferences, to determine, for example, the relative importance of the motivating ideas characteristic of Spanish colonists

    - Solved mathematical problems involving scale.

    That's a considerable payoff.

2. **When active-learning puzzles are based on primary sources, basic principles about human nature and experience can emerge.** For example, this Investigation demonstrates that societies shape their environments in ways consistent with their beliefs and values. These human-made environments, in turn, affect and reinforce in subtle but profound ways these beliefs and values. The principle holds in every society. (There's more about primary sources in the next chapter.)

3. **When students are solving puzzles rather than dealing with conventional narrative, intellectual surprises result.** What has traditionally had the highest payoff at grade time are language skills and a good memory. When students are presented with work that demands the use of a full range of thought processes, class rankings and perceptions of ability often change.

4. **Activities like the above are extremely open-ended, suggesting** myriad additional investigations both in the past and present:

    - Studies of towns and cities originally shaped by the Ordinances,

    - Plans of other early American towns shaped by other immigrant groups,

- Local building codes,

- Recent trends in town design,

- The vast body of work exploring relationships between the design of physical spaces and human action, interaction, sense of community, and so on.

5. **What's being learned is immediately applicable to "here and now," further enhancing learning.** Traditional history instruction usually fails on an emotional level because it doesn't convince students that what they're being asked to do is useful and therefore important. For this reason, we've suggested that students compare town designs of the Spanish with the student's own environment. Thinking about how environments shape human interaction and reflect societal differences will help them realize the relevance of what they're learning.

   One perceptive teacher of poorly-motivated learners has indicated that he had much-improved learner engagement when the "here and now" activities were done *prior* to the historical investigation. Another possibility—perhaps the optimum approach with some learners—is to do historical and Follow-Up activities concurrently.

6. **Students led "inside" an unfamiliar culture—a culture with markedly different ideas about status, class, authority, property, the supernatural, ownership, the future, and so on—are forced to think more clearly about their own culture and their place in it.**

7. **Active investigations motivate learners, and augment their performance far more effectively than passive read-and-remember classes.**[1]

Note:

Because learners are digging more deeply, active learning using primary sources will likely proceed more slowly than traditional "read the chapter, and answer the questions at the end" history classes. See note on "Pacing" in Appendix A.

---

[1] Active learning, at various times in the past, was called "discovery" or "inquiry" learning. The technical term in use at present is "constructivism." It has much in common with project-based learning, and is, of course, the most natural kind of learning that occurs in pre-school years.
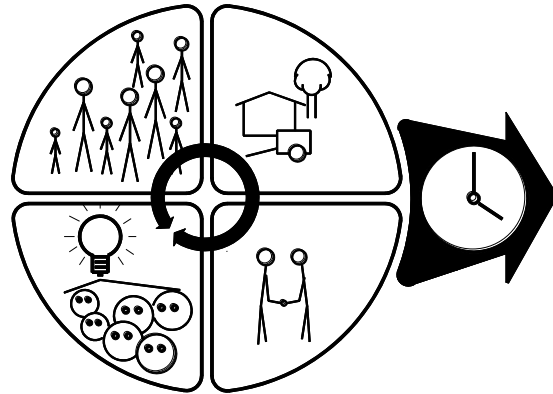
2: Primary Sources and Complex Thought

In the previous Investigation, we underlined what just about everybody already knows, that active learning increases understanding and motivates. Follow young children around for a while, watch them poke and prod, put things in their mouths, stare at an ant, open a closed box, climb on a chair to see or reach, try to take something apart, and it's obvious they're thinking and learning—inferring, hypothesizing, generalizing, relating, synthesizing, making value judgments, and so on. The young do, of course, learn by asking questions and remembering answers, but that's not how they learn most of what they know.

We all learn from firsthand experience—facing situations, problems, conditions, dilemmas, mysteries, difficulties in daily life, and figuring out what to do. The process is so routine we're rarely even conscious of it.

Unfortunately, traditional schooling generally ignores the main way the young learn, and instead places the greatest emphasis on secondhand information. The widely shared view is that, "We learn to read, then read to learn." That's true, of course, but traditional education's emphasis on narrative textbooks has been a major obstacle to other ways of learning, emphasizing recall to the neglect of other thought processes.

What's handed to the young in the typical textbook is a collection of conclusions. When there's an inference to be drawn, the author draws it. If there's a significant relationship to be noted, the author points it out. If a generalization seems appropriate, the author generalizes. There are no loose ends, no problems, situations, dilemmas, difficulties, or incomplete analyses. The textbook is as refined as the author is capable of making it—but the *author*, not the student, does the thinking.

It's a great deal like handing a kid a crossword puzzle with all the squares filled in.

This isn't a difficult problem to solve. Lacking a time machine, it isn't possible to put kids into a Puritan village or on a slave ship so they can learn through firsthand experience, but that's not the only option. What happened "back then" is out of reach, but it often left a "residue"—primary data—and primary data must be analyzed, dissected, interpreted. The fictional detective Sherlock Holmes modeled the process, as did the characters on the television series "Crime Scene Investigation."

Give kids something real, something tangible left over from what happened—a personal letter, political poster, tombstone epitaph, bill of sale, child's toy, tool, coin, sermon—and it puts them in an intellectual maze and challenges them to think their way out.

The student materials that follow provide primary data related to life in a Puritan village, accompanied by some analytical questions. (Investigation: Life in a Puritan Village)

Investigation: Life in a Puritan Village

Below is a sketch map of the central part of a typical Puritan village in Massachusetts in the middle 1600s. On the next pages are documents from two similar Puritan towns (Springfield and Sudbury).

Study the map and documents carefully, and write (in your journal) descriptions of what you can infer about the life of the people living in Puritan towns. Identify (1) occupations, (2) ways land was distributed and used, (3) problems they were facing, and (4) ways of solving problems.

Woods

Training Field

Wood Lot

General Field

Meeting House

Pound for stray cattle

Fields for major crops

Cow Common

Mill

General Field

Mill Pond

Fields for major crops

Fields for major crops (hay, wheat, etc.)
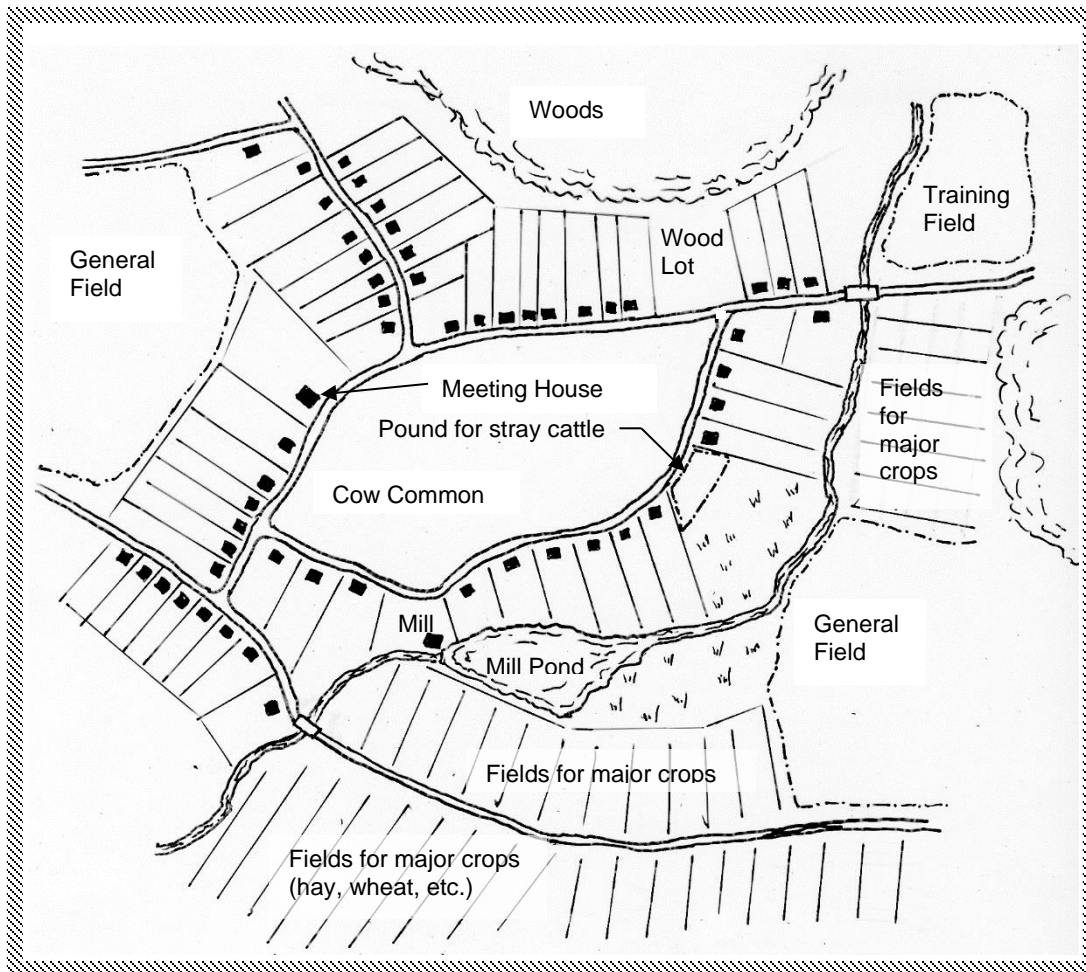
Additional helpful search terms for library or Internet use: Pasture, meadow, hay, fallow.

Charter signed by the founders of Springfield, Massachusetts:[1]

> May the 14th, 1636
>
> We whose names are written below, being by God's help working together to make a plantation at Agawam on the Connecticut River, do mutually agree to certain articles and orders to be observed and kept by us and our successors.
>
> We intend by God's grace, as soon as we can with all convenient speed, to obtain some godly and faithful minister. We wish to join in church covenant with this minister to walk in all the ways of Christ.
>
> We intend that our town shall be composed of 40 families, or at most 50, rich and poor.
>
> Every inhabitant shall have a convenient piece of land for a house lot, suitable for each person's position and wealth.
>
> Everyone that has a house lot shall have a part of the cow pasture to the north of End Brook, lying northward from the town. Everyone shall also have a share of the Hasseky Marsh, near to his own lot if possible, and a fair share of all the woodland.
>
> Everyone will have a share of the meadow or planting ground.
>
> All town expenses that shall arise shall be paid by taxes on lands. Everyone will be taxed according to their share of land, acre for acre of house lots, and acre for acre of meadow.

Excerpts from Sudbury town meeting minutes:[2]

> **December 4, 1649**
>
> Mr. Noyes, Edmund Rice, Walter Hayme, William Ward, John Moore, John Parminter senior, and Edmund Goodenow are chosen selectmen for the coming year.
>
> The town hath returned to William Kerley the 7 shillings 6 pence he paid for the meadows he rented from the town. He shall also have the use of the same meadows for one more year to repay him in full for all damages to his property caused by damming up the water in the swamp.
>
> (Continued)

---

[1] Henry Morris, *Early History of Springfield*, 1876
[2] Provided courtesy Sudbury Archives, Goodnow Library, Sudbury, Massachusetts.

December 9, 1649

Edmund Goodenow and William Ward are chosen to find and mark the boundary line between Concord and Sudbury. Hugh Griffyn, John Groute and Edmund Goodenow are chosen to search the Record book to find out where Watertown's boundaries are supposed to be. They are also to see if they can find any way to prevent Watertown from claiming land that should belong to Sudbury. The town will pay them for their labors.

John Blandford has the permission of the town to claim six acres of meadow wherever he can find it. This will repay him for the meadow he gave up because it fell within the cow common.

Edmund Goodenow is requested by the town to arrange for Sargeant Wheeler to teach John Goodenow to beat the drum. Sargeant Wheeler will also feed him. The town will pay the charges.

February 7, 1650

To provide the town with a barrel of powder, a hundred and fifty pounds of musket balls & twenty five musket matches, the selectmen order that a twelve pounds ten shillings tax be levied. The tax is to be paid in wheat or money at the house of Edmund Goodenow between now and the last day of next month. For this purpose a tax list shall be made up immediately.

February 13, 1650

A public town meeting appoints Mr. Noyes, John Parminter senior, Robert Darnill & John Moore to speak with Mrs. Hunt (a widow) about her person, house & property. They are to decide how the town will help her. Whatever wise decisions they make will be supported by the town.

Hugh Griffyn & John Moore are to make up a tax list for the powder, balls & matches, for the minister's salary, & for the town taxes.

March 5, 1650

It is ordered by the town that Hugh Griffyn shall compute and collect taxes and announce town meetings. He is to have the same wages he was paid before.

It is also ordered that the town tax of 8 pounds, 6 shillings be collected. The town debt shall be paid in corn [grain].

It is also ordered by the town, that certain men be appointed to try and stop Watertown from coming too near our boundaries. They are also to get us more land towards Watertown if they can. Whatever this costs, the town promises to pay. The men appointed are Edmund Goodenow, John Ruddocke, John Groute, Thomas Noyes & Hugh Griffyn.

May 17, 1650

This town appointed William Warde and John Maynard to come to some agreement with Mr. Robert Proctor of Concord about his trespassing on our land and burning up our pine to make tar. In case they cannot agree, they are, on behalf of the town, to sue him in the Middlesex county court.

John Parminter senior & Robert Darnill are appointed to inspect the common fence around the fields they share with other townsmen.

September 16, l650

It is agreed by the town that the minister shall have 25 pounds for his last half year's salary. He shall be paid the same way he was paid before.

Robert Darnill & John Ruddocke are appointed to make up the tax list for the minister's salary & the town taxes.

It is also ordered that Walter Hayme, John Moore, Thomas Kinge & John Groute be authorized to repair the bridge. Some townsmen still owe the town several days roadwork. They are to use as much of this labor as they can, and if it is not enough to fix the bridge, they have permission to hire carpenters to do it. They also have permission to levy a tax to pay all the expenses.

Follow-Up: Comparing Towns

Record in your journal:

Identify similarities and differences between Puritan, Spanish and present-day American town designs.

Compare decision making in Puritan towns with the probable ways decisions were made in colonial Spanish towns.

Based on the evidence you've studied, identify other significant differences between Spanish colonials and Puritans.

Compare life in a Spanish town and a Puritan village with your life and the lives of those around you, and identify any important differences.

For Teacher/Mentor:
Primary Sources are Essential

If active learning about the past is to occur, primary sources are the richest possible resource. This isn't a new idea:

> "Bare facts and dates may perhaps be obtained and even the memory developed under the old textbook system, but it is impossible to get into the spirit of the period studied, or to develop the reason, judgment, imagination, by any such process. Some more stimulating influence is needed**."**

> Emma M. Ridley, in Preface to A. B. Hart, *Source-Book of American History*. New York: Macmillan, **1899**, p. xxix. [A book of primary sources]

Obviously, use of primary sources in historical study isn't new. Thoughtful teachers have long made use of them. But too frequently they're used merely to legitimize the narrative, or reinforce the story the textbook is telling.

We're advocating something more advanced and intellectually demanding—analyzing primary sources to focus on important principles of history and historical change that are applicable in many contexts, past, present, and future. Having students search for such things as the motivations of the people involved in an event, or tracing the historical effects of population movement, for example, moves them to real learning. Our goal is to make sense of experience, and primary sources are essential to the process.

In the Investigations that follow, we'll provide ways to generate important questions to apply to primary sources; questions that will elicit active learning.

"Making the past come alive" is an old goal of history teaching. Learning turns out to be even more effective when we help *students* come alive—when we move them from passive recall-oriented education into active modes of learning using a wide range of thinking skills. An activity that requires deep thought can be an educational experience students will remember for the rest of their lives. There's no better way to motivate.

NOTE: Adopting active learning through the use of primary sources will have important effects on student and teacher roles, and on evaluation. See Appendix A.

Historical background note:

Most Puritans arriving in Massachusetts came from East Anglia, the countryside northeast of London, bordered by the North Sea. They brought with them the village configuration and "open-field" farming system they had used in England. In this system, much of the village land was shared cooperatively. At or near the center of the village, a "cow common" provided fenced pasture for the dairy animals owned by villagers. Woodland (for fuel, building material, and habitat for pigs) and other areas were owned in common. Fields for major crops were mostly privately owned, but the property of any individual family consisted of various lots located here and there around the arable land. This pattern of land use was very different from that of the Spanish, and even more unlike today's agricultural ownership patterns in America.

3: Organizing Knowledge

The brain doesn't do a very good job of handling vast amounts of disorganized information. This is the reason for grocery lists, appointment calendars, numbers programmed into cell phones, CliffsNotes™, cockpit checklists, and jingles such as, "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue."

Textbook-style history does, in fact, have organizers. Dates, presidencies, economic trends and cycles, wars, regions, eras, and so on work for some people. Others organize history like beads on a string, with event "A" linking to event "B," then "B" linking to "C," and so on.

The problem with these and similar organizers is that they all rely primarily on memory rather than on logic and familiar experience. If what's learned is to be accessible and useful years or decades later, learners need a single, simple, logical, easily remembered way to organize and make sense of large amounts of information.

Here's a classroom experiment we've used many times: Choosing a student, we say, "Name as many games as you can, as fast as you can." As the student reels off names, we make tally marks on the board. When the student begins to falter, we point out to the class that the student actually knows the names of far more games. We then begin again, but this time, instead of the general term "games," we ask for "children's games," "computer games," "party games," "card games," "sidewalk games," "television games," "board games," etc. And, of course, the number of tally marks using this approach far exceeds the first total.

This illustrates the mental power of "idea-organizing trees;" and explains the activities that come next.

It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of hierarchical ways of arranging information into categories, subcategories, and sub-subcategories. A study of doctors in Canada some years ago revealed that their success in diagnosing medical conditions depended, more than anything else, on the comprehensiveness and sophistication of their hierarchical mental models for organizing diagnostic information.

Building information trees is an essential step in learning. Understanding grows as trees are expanded and elaborated, organizing complexity. And nothing is more complex than history's reality.

In the Investigation that follows, students analyze a primary source and classify the information within it.
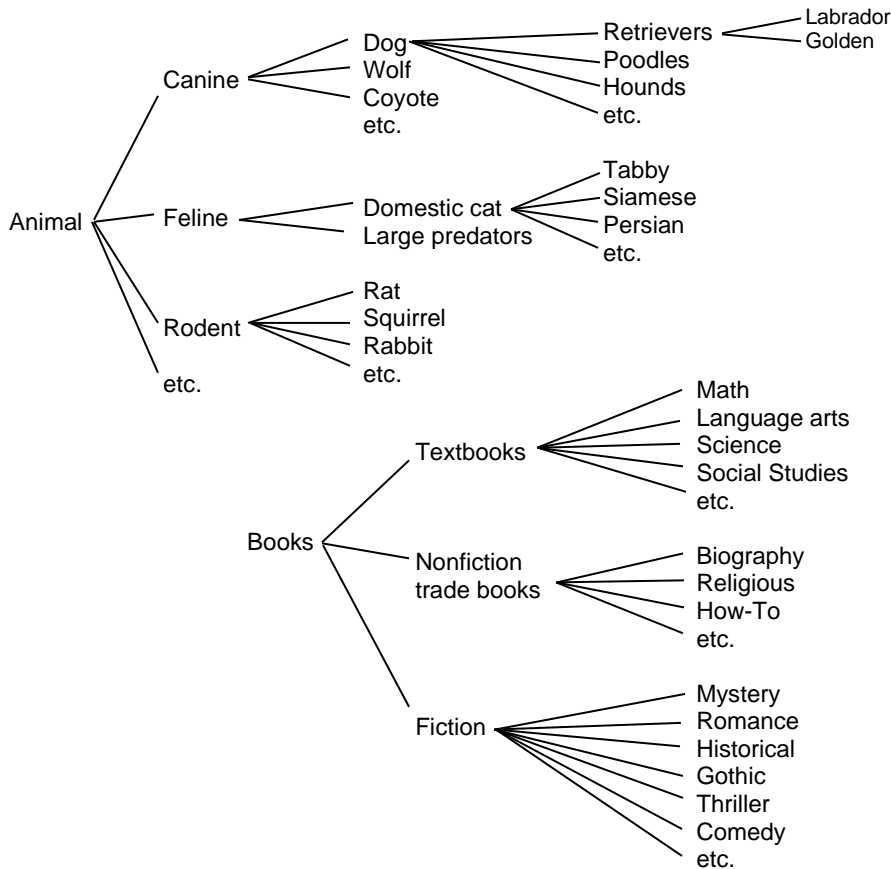
Note: The "things made by humans" category in the investigation that follows may cause a bit of confusion. If humans are significantly involved in production of an item (e.g. "Indian corn"), then it may be included. Some items not described may be inferred by learners (e.g. knives, digging sticks, garden plots) and added to their lists. As with other investigations, we suggest learners work in small groups.

(Investigation: New England Native Americans)

Investigation: New England Native Americans

Organizing Knowledge

When you understand a particular subject, you have a mental "tree" for organizing information about that subject. As your understanding grows, you add "branches, limbs and twigs" to the tree. Below are examples of two simple (but incomplete) trees. Each word in each tree is a category that organizes information.

Animal
- Canine
  - Dog
    - Retrievers
      - Labrador
      - Golden
    - Poodles
    - Hounds
    - etc.
  - Wolf
  - Coyote
  - etc.
- Feline
  - Domestic cat
    - Tabby
    - Siamese
    - Persian
    - etc.
  - Large predators
- Rodent
  - Rat
  - Squirrel
  - Rabbit
  - etc.
- etc.

Books
- Textbooks
  - Math
  - Language arts
  - Science
  - Social Studies
  - etc.
- Nonfiction trade books
  - Biography
  - Religious
  - How-To
  - etc.
- Fiction
  - Mystery
  - Romance
  - Historical
  - Gothic
  - Thriller
  - Comedy
  - etc.

Knowledge-organizing trees like these help you remember and make sense of vast quantities of complicated information.

Historical Data:

Read the following account, then develop an organizing tree for "things made by humans" described in the account. Note that things made by the natives are generally made or modified from something natural (e.g. deerskin; dried fish). We suggest you list the items first, then group them into categories and sub-categories to build your tree. Record your tree in your journal.

John Josselyn was an English traveler who made two trips to America's New England, the first in 1638, then again in 1663, staying this time until 1671. On his return to England, he published an account of his travels, including a description of the Native Americans he encountered:[1]

Their houses, which they call wigwams, are built with poles set into the ground, usually in a circle, though sometimes square. They bend down and bind together the tops of their poles, leaving a hole for smoke to go out. The rest is covered with the bark of trees. The inside of the wigwam is lined with mats made of rushes painted with several colors. One good post they set up in the middle that reaches to the hole in the top, with a staff across at the top. At a convenient height, they drive in a peg on which they hang their kettle. Beneath that they set up a broad stone for a back to keep the post from burning.

Round by the walls they spread their mats and skins where the men sleep while the women prepare their food. They usually have two doors, one opening to the south, the other to the north. Depending on the wind direction, they close up one door with bark, and hang a deer skin or similar cover over the other.

They have no towns, since they frequently move from one place to another to obtain food, sometimes where one sort of fish is most plentiful, other times where another is available. I have seen half a hundred of their wigwams together on a piece of ground, a pretty sight. A day, two days or a week later they are all gone.

They live for the most part by the seaside, especially in the spring and summer; in winter they go up into the country to hunt deer and beaver…

Their clothing, before the English came and began trading cloth to them, was the skins of wild beasts with the hair on, coverings of deerskin or moose dressed and drawn with cords into several works, the cords being colored with yellow, blue or red. Shoes too they have, made of tough skins without soles. In the winter when the snow will support them, they fasten to their feet snowshoes which are made like a large racket we play at tennis with, lacing them with deer gut and the like. Under their belly they wear a square piece of leather and another like it upon their posteriors, both fastened to a string tied around them to hide their privates; on their head they wear nothing…

(Continued)

---

[1] John Josselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages to New England, Made during the year 1638, 1663.* (adapted) https://archive.org/details/accountoftwovoya00joss

They are very proud, as appears by their setting themselves out with white and blue beads of their own making, and painting their faces with the above mentioned colors. Sometimes they weave unusual coats with turkey feathers for their children.

Their diet is fish and fowl, bear, wildcat, raccoon, and deer, dried oysters, lobsters roasted or dried in smoke, lampreys and dried moose tongues, which they consider a dish suitable for a chief. Also eggs, hard boiled, made into small pieces and dried, used to thicken their broth. Salt they do not use, nor bread. Their Indian corn and kidney beans they boil, and sometimes eat their corn parched or roasted on the ear next to the fire. They feed likewise on earth nuts or groundnuts, roots of water lilies, chestnuts and various kinds of berries. They beat their corn to powder and put it up into bags which they use when bad weather will not allow them to go out for their food. Good pumpkins and watermelons too they have there. [pp. 98-101]

***

When the snow will support them, the young and strong Indians (leaving their papooses and old people at home) go to hunt moose, deer, bear and beaver, thirty or forty miles up into the country. Whey they find a moose, they run him down, which sometimes takes half a day, sometimes a whole day. They don't stop until they have tired him. The snow is often deep, and because the beast is very heavy; he sinks in every step. As he runs sometimes he breaks down limbs of trees as big as a man's thigh, using his horns. Other times, if any of the Indians' dogs (which are small) are close, he will kick like a horse, and if a small tree is in the way, he will break it down with one stroke.

At last the hunters will get up to him on each side and pierce him with their lances. These are just a staff a yard and a half long, formerly pointed with a fish bone made sharp at the end. Now they point the lances with pieces of sword blade they buy from the French. They have a strap of leather attached to the butt end of the lance, which reaches halfway down, which they use to propel the lance into the beast. The poor creature groans, walks on heavily a space, then sinks and falls down like a ruined building, shaking the ground.

Now the victors cut the throat of the beast, and take off the skin. The women who have been following, carrying heavy bags and kettles on their backs, then set down their burdens, and begin work on the carcass. They take out the heart, leg sinews, tongue, and as much of the venison as needed to feed the hungry group.

Meanwhile the men find a suitable spot near a spring. Using their snowshoes, they shovel the snow away to bare ground in a circle, making a wall of snow around. Then they build a fire next to a large tree; upon its snags they hang their kettles filled with the venison. While that boils, the men, after refreshing themselves with a pipe of tobacco, lie down to sleep. The women tend to cooking; some scrape the slime and fat from the skin, some clean and stretch the sinews. When the venison is cooked the men wake up. Opening their bags they take out as much Indian meal as needed. They eat their broth with spoons, divide the meat into chunks, and eat it with as much meal as they can hold in their fingers.

(Continued)

…When the Indians have stuffed their bellies, if the weather is good and it is mid-day, they venture forth again, but if the weather is bad or it is late, they go to their field bed as soon as the first star appears. If the sun comes up with good weather, they gather up their belongings and leave to find another moose. They continue this way for six weeks or two months, making their women work like mules to carry their luggage.

Their fishing follows in the spring, summer and fall, first for lobsters, clams, fluke, lumpfish, and alewives. Later they get bass, cod, rockfish, bluefish, salmon, lampreys, etc. The lobsters they take in large bays when it is low tide, with no wind, going out in birch-bark canoes with a staff two or three yards long, shaved down and sharpened at one end, notched to form barbs. When they see the lobster crawling on the sand in about six feet of water, they stick him near the head and bring him up. I've known one Indian to get thirty lobsters in an hour and a half. They use the same method to get fluke and lumpfish.

Clams they dig out of the clam-banks upon the flats and in creeks at low tide where they are bedded, sometimes a yard deep one on another, the beds a quarter of a mile in length or less. The alewives they take with nets on round hoops with a handle, in fresh ponds where they come to spawn.

The bass and bluefish they catch in harbors, and at the mouth of rivers with sandbars, from their canoes, striking them with a barbed gig on the end of a pole. The gig head remains stuck in the fish, and the pole comes loose. A cord tied to the gig head is attached to the canoe. They put another gig head on the pole, and continue fishing until half a dozen or more fish are caught.

Sturgeon are speared in a similar manner, but at night, using the light from burning birch bark to attract the fish. Salmon and lampreys are caught up rivers at the first waterfalls, when these fish migrate.

…Their merchandise are their beads, which are their money. Of these there are two sorts—blue beads and white beads. The first are their gold, the last their silver. These beads are made from certain shells in such a clever way that they cannot be counterfeited. They drill them and string them, and make many curious works with them to adorn chiefs, important men and young women, as belts, girdles, borders for women's hair, bracelets, necklaces and links to hang in their ears…The English merchants give them ten shillings for a fathom [six feet] of the white beads, and twice that (or a little less) for the blue beads.

They make delicate sweet dishes out of birch bark, sowed with threads drawn from the roots of spruce or white cedar, and decorated on the outside, around the rims with shining porcupine quills, some dyed black, others red, and some undyed white, their natural color. They make these in all sizes from a small cup to a dish that holds a pottle [half-gallon]. Similarly, they make buckets to carry water or the like, and large boxes of the same materials.

(Continued)

Dishes, spoons and trays are constructed very smooth and neatly out of the knots of wood, baskets, bags and mats woven with fibers from tree bark and rushes of several kinds, dyed, some black, blue, red, yellow; bags of porcupine quills woven and dyed also,…tobacco pipes of stone with images on them, and kettles of birch bark which they used before they traded with the French for copper kettles. The women are the workers of most of these.

Their richest trade are furs of various sorts: black fox, beaver, otter, bear, sables,…fox, wildcat, raccoon, marten, muskrat, and moose hide.

Their canoes are made of birch. They shape them with flat ribs of white cedar, and cover them with large sheets of birch bark, sewing them through with strong threads from roots of spruce or white cedar; they waterproof them with a mixture of turpentine and the hard rosin that dries in the air on the outside of the bark of fir trees. These canoes will carry half a dozen men, or else three or four along with considerable freight. In these they go to sea and make voyages of twenty or even forty miles along the coast, going out from the shore a couple of miles… [pp.106-112]

After completing your "things made by humans" organizing tree for these New England Native Americans, go back through the account, and identify "actions of humans" (e.g. skinning moose, spearing lobster) described in the account, and build an organizing tree for this information, also recording it in your journal.

Follow-Up: Expanding Important Categories

Information-organizing trees for "things made by humans" are categories within a more general mental organizer that you'll be using for historical investigation.

Below are other information organizing categories. Choose at least one, and build an organizing tree (sub-categories, sub-sub-categories, etc.) for it. Include both historical and present-day sub-categories.

- Means of transportation
- Means of communication
- Occupations
- Food production and distribution
- Ways of teaching and learning
- Ways of controlling behavior considered wrong

Looking Ahead

History, of course, is all about events, situations, conditions and so on. And so is your everyday life. Improving your ability to make sense of history improves your ability to make sense of yourself and what's happening around you and to you.

Absolutely central to your attempts to make sense of the past, present and future in general and yourself in particular is the idea of "system"—collections of related things that interact in particular ways. Trees, cars, clouds, and human bodies are systems. They're also subsystems—parts of larger systems. You're surrounded by, and are a working part of, countless systems and subsystems—small, large, simple, complex, natural, and human made.

The systems that affect you most are those involving people, so those are the kinds we'll focus most attention on. To organize study, we'll use a "system model" to organize the vast amount of information in an event, situation, condition, and so on. For convenience, we'll just call it "the Model." It has four main, interacting parts. Everything you know, everything you'll ever know about anything, will fit within and can be organized by the categories, subcategories, sub-subcategories of these four parts. Interactions between the four parts (which are always happening) create change—change in history, change in your life.

Here, in graphic form, is a version of the Model. Sections of *Investigating American History* that follow will help you understand how to use it.
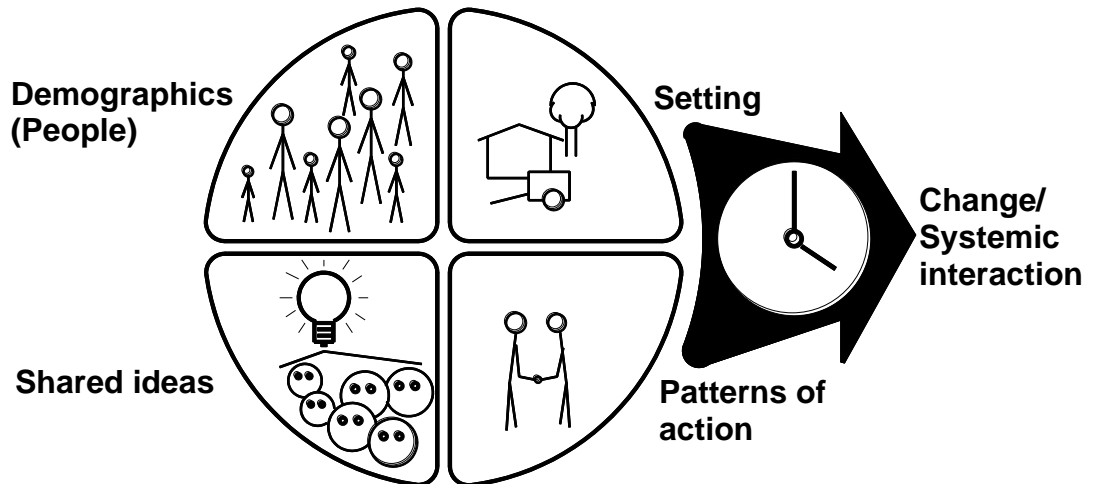
For Teacher/Mentor:
A Model

Every human, every waking moment, is subconsciously thinking, "What's going on here, and what should I do next?" Lifting these questions into consciousness and approaching them systematically will provide learners with a powerful tool that will be useful for the rest of their lives. Historical study, more than any other subject, lends itself to this consciousness-raising process. The Model that is elaborated in the parts that follow provides answers to those questions with substance, depth, and vast explanatory power. Four super-concepts are complex enough to have within them a complete network of interrelated sub-concepts. Identifying the relationships between them directly addresses the central purpose of historical study—tracing the dynamics of change.

The first four components of the Model are the standard, traditional categories used to analyze stories or drama, (setting, actors, action, plot). Elaborated, the four are extremely efficient "super-concepts:"

- **"Setting,"** As within any drama, the setting includes both natural and human-made elements, everything physical that relates systemically to what happens.
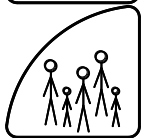
- **"Actors,"** focuses on the people involved, particularly their demographic characteristics. **Demographics** is a second super-concept.

- **"Action"** is not only the specific, idiosyncratic actions of each person, but (much more importantly) the **action patterns** shared by actors, learned as a part of the society in which they've been reared.

- **"Plot,"** encompasses the important ideas and values shared by the participants that color their perceptions and shape their way of life. **Shared ideas** is the fourth, and most important, super-concept.

These four categories of the Model, adequately elaborated and expanded, can be used to analyze any historical situation. They direct attention to important but often ignored factors shaping events, conditions, situations and historical trends. Each category contains logical, usually familiar sub-categories:

Setting: Constructions, tools, climate, resources, outside groups, transportation systems, communications networks, etc.
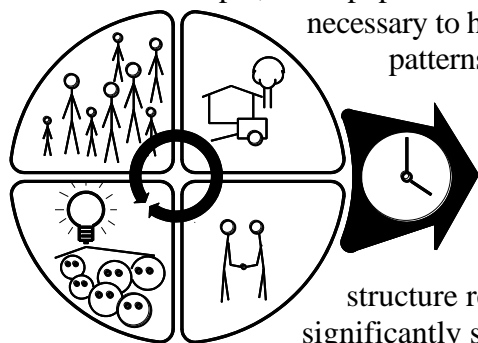
Demographics: Number, population density, population movement, age profile, sex ratios, subgroups, etc.

Patterns of Action: (for) work, economic transactions, decision-making, child-raising, movement of goods and people, communicating, controlling deviance, etc.

Shared Ideas: (about) causation, human nature, status, outsiders, the future, the supernatural, etc.

These four categories and their sub-categories provide an effective way to begin analysis of any historical situation, event or change. *However, there's more:*

Each of these four is systemically related to all others. A change within any of the four categories will tend to cause changes elsewhere. Although it plays little or no role in conventional historical study, "system" is the most powerful of all super concepts. For example, when population density increases significantly, changes in the setting will be necessary to house more people. These changes, in turn, will affect work patterns and much else. Eventually, ideas about levels of personal freedom (and many other important ideas) are likely to change. Systemic relationships create change over time.

Some important characteristics of any society or group will, of course, relate to more than one of the four main categories. For example, social stratification and class structure related to occupations, wealth, family or clan will significantly shape all four of the main categories.

As the famous Irish legal philosopher (Murphy) said, "You can't change just one thing." The Spanish brought horses to the new world. Native Americans living on the central plains adopted horses as tools (part of "setting") totally changing their way of life. Their skills as nomadic hunters increased, and they became some of the best cavalry fighters ever seen, conquered only after the invention of the repeating rifle. A single new technology—the horse—transformed the ways of life of Apache, Comanche, Sioux, and other similar Plains nations.

Another technological change, Eli Whitney's cotton gin (once again, an element of "setting"), made large-scale cotton production profitable, increasing the importance of slavery and helping bring on the Civil War. His second invention—interchangeable parts—helped lead to a Union victory.

A change in demographics—population movement to the suburbs following World War II—transformed American society. Future changes in setting, such as climate change or depletion of resources, will have enormous consequences (many of them unexpected).

History is, after all, a study of change. Without the key idea "system," the causes and consequences of change can't be understood. Learning isn't simply a matter of absorbing facts; it's a process of developing and enhancing the ability to discern and explore systemic relationships between aspects of reality not previously thought to be related. In American history, students can confront reality in all its complexity, and investigate the most important relationships of all, those which change the whole society. No other commonly-accepted course of study deals with all of reality; no other integrates all other academic disciplines, even going beyond their boundaries.

Using the five-part knowledge organizer (the Model), with its main categories—setting, demographics, patterns of action, shared ideas, and their systemic relationships across time—learners will become far more sophisticated students not just of history, but of life.

For further information, we suggest reading the free book, *What's Worth Learning?*, available (PDF file) at http://www.marionbrady.com/Books.asp.

Investigation: New England Native Americans — This investigation actually introduces two of the Model categories: *Setting* and *Patterns of Action*, although these category names are not used within the investigation. After the Model is introduced, the natural question is "Where in the Model do these organizing categories ('things made by humans' and 'actions of humans') fit?" We consider "things made by humans" to generally fit better under "Setting," the physical dimensions of culture, but this may not be readily agreed to by learners. This is considered in more depth in Part 4. There is, of course, considerable overlap between categories. "Dried fish" is a part of the setting, the overall cultural environment, but "drying fish" is an action pattern.

The most likely organizing subcategories for Action Patterns are those defined by gender, which is likely to raise some interesting discussion, beginning with the question, "Is it fair for the women to carry the heavy loads during the hunt?"

This brings up for discussion what is probably the most significant element of the Model—shared ideas. Besides ideas about gender (suggested by gender role differences between the natives and British colonists), obvious differences between these groups in ideas about land "ownership" are also worth raising, for example.
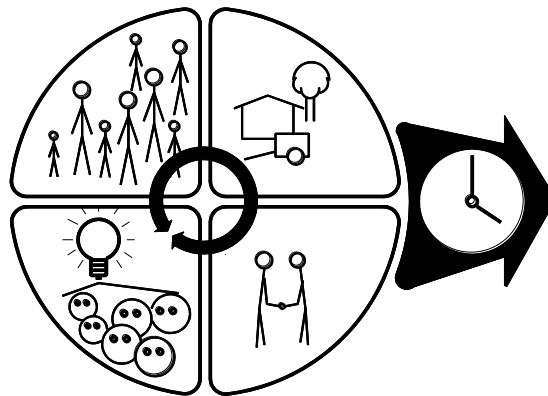
4: Model Category: Setting
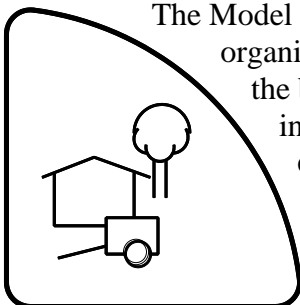
The Model previewed in the previous section provides a simple, logical way of organizing information. One of its four main elements is *Setting*, defined in the broadest sense of the word—the entire milieu of an event or situation, including all the environmental phenomena with which the physical and earth sciences ordinarily deal, plus the products of human effort, such as technology, infrastructure, architecture, and so forth.

After World War II, in many cities across America, city authorities tore down slums and built housing for the poor. New high-rise apartments placed well back from the streets in landscaped parks replaced old, run-down three- to five-story buildings jammed up against sidewalks. Instead of an unsightly mix of stores, bars, businesses and low-rise apartments, the new housing complexes provided modern, quiet, private apartments for the residents.

A result? Unexpectedly, crime rates soared in the new complexes. Where the old "slums" remained, the crime rates were much lower. In the old slums, businesses and bars kept the streets and sidewalks busy day and night. Windows, low and close to the street, gave residents a sense of ownership and responsibility. Under many watchful eyes, crime was much less likely.

It's been decades since the late Jane Jacobs pointed out the relationship between city environments and the behavior of residents.[1] But this has always been true—people shape places, then the places shape the people.

Some of this is, or should be, obvious. Resources are a part of setting, and play an important role in our lives. For example, the fuel used for cooking and heating in ancient Rome was wood. Forests within reasonable distance of the city were cut down, and fuel eventually became so scarce and expensive that some historians consider this an important factor in the decline of the city at the end of the classical era.

American history books usually trace the impact of canals, railroads, steamboats, the cotton gin, McCormick's reaper, and similar "engines of change" on 19th century America. What often is neglected are gradual changes of equal or greater importance—changes in climate, the build-up of toxins in the air or water, loss of topsoil, the appearance of non-native plants, animals or insects, the deterioration of infrastructure, the gradual lowering of water tables, and so on.
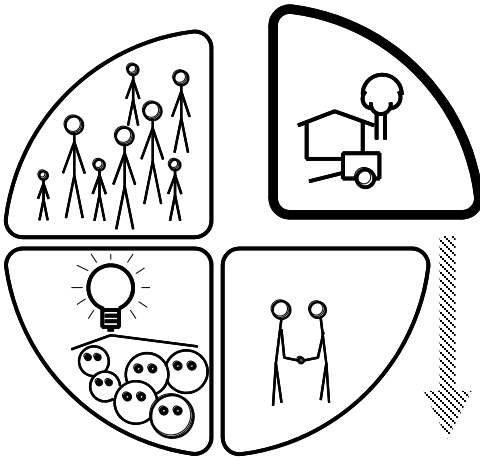
The study of history is incomplete without considering the significance of setting.

(Investigation: Colonial Virginia's Setting)

---

[1] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* New York, 1961, Random House

Investigation: Colonial Virginia's Setting

Model Category: Setting

To understand stories about people, it helps to know the "setting." This includes not only the natural environment, but also the human-made environment: tools used, clothes worn, food eaten, sounds heard—everything tangible. **Note that the categories "natural" and "human-made" setting overlap—human-made facilities and tools require natural materials and resources, and many parts of setting are combinations of the two.**

The natural setting (environment) includes:

- Climate: This affects the kind of crops that can be grown, the kind of buildings built, and much more.

- Resources: Oil, coal, metal ore, water, soil, and all other useful things that come from the earth and the sea

- Land: Space for cities, towns, farms, and forests

- Oceans, rivers, plants and animals, microbes, etc.

The secondary (human-made) setting includes:

- Towns, cities, and buildings

- Food production facilities: farms, ranches, aquaculture, commercial fishing, food processing

- Transportation facilities such as streets, highways, railroads, etc.

- Communication networks, both two-way (like the telephone) and one-way (like TV and newspapers)

- Tools used for working, moving about, communicating, entertaining, and solving problems

- Provision for waste disposal

- Sources of energy, and ways of getting it where it's needed.

- Significant people outside the group being investigated

- Everything else human made: symbols, art, etc.

Historical Data for Colonial Virginia:

Each of the following primary sources provides information about the setting (both natural and human-made) of colonial Virginia. Use the categories on the previous page to analyze the documents, then write a summary of the important parts of the colonial Virginia setting.

The following selection is part of a letter by a Virginia "gentleman," William Fitzhugh, written to a friend in England.[1]

August 15, 1690

    I will give you the best method for establishing a farm for your son. Place in some merchant's hand in London 150 or 200 pounds—money to buy a good convenient section of Virginia land. Then give about the same amount to someone in the Royal African Company. For that price the company will deliver Negroes here in Virginia for 16 or 18, or at most, 20 pounds per head. Horses, cattle, hogs, and so forth are easily purchased here to begin with.

    Sir, a settlement made as I suggest will give your son a handsome, gentle, and sure living. If you were to give, instead, three times the above amounts, it is certain his land will yield him much tobacco, with less risk than with a smaller plantation.

---

[1] R. B. Davis, ed., *William Fitzhugh and his Chesapeake World; 1676-1701: The Fitzhugh Letters and Other Documents* (Chapel Hill, N. C. University of North Carolina Press, 1963) pp. 79-80.

In a letter written in 1686, William Fitzhugh described his own plantation (farm), similar to many in the region. Note that most of the southern colonies (Maryland, the Carolinas, Georgia) developed in much the same way as did colonial Virginia.[1]

The plantation where I now live contains 1,000 acres, at least 700 of it being rich underbrush. The rest is good hearty plantable land, without any waste either by marshes or great swamps. You already know how large, convenient, and pleasant it is. It is well furnished with all necessary houses, grounds, and fencing, together with a choice crew of 29 Negroes, most of them born in this country. Upon the same land is my own house. This house is furnished with all that is needed for a comfortable and gentle living. It is a very good house with rooms in it, four of the best of them hung with tapestry, and nine of them fully furnished with all things necessary and convenient. All of the houses have brick chimneys. There are four good cellars, a dairy, dovecote, stable, barn, henhouse, kitchen, and all other conveniences. There is a large orchard of 2,500 apple trees. There is a garden a hundred foot square and a yard in which are most of the houses I described.

Up the river in this country, I own three more sections of land. One of them contains 21,996 acres, another 500 acres, and one other, 1,000 acres, all good land which in a few years will give a good-sized yearly income.

Below—Slaves drying and processing tobacco. Unknown artist, 1670.

---

[1] "Letters of William Fitzhugh," Virginia Magazine of History & Biography, 1893-4, p. 395

Like Fitzhugh, many Virginia planters owned thousands of acres of property, and many slaves to do field and household work. William Byrd II was a leading planter. In a letter to an English nobleman in 1726, he describes his life.[1] The painting below is of a large plantation (unknown artist, about 1700).

> Besides the advantage of pure air, we who have plantations have a great supply of all kinds of materials without spending money. I have a large family of my own, and my doors are open to everybody, yet I have no bills to pay. A half-a-crown coin will stay in my pocket for many moons without being spent.
>
> I have my flocks and herds, my slaves, and every sort of skilled trade available from my servants. Because of this I live in a kind of independence from everyone except God.
>
> Although this life is without expense, it is still a lot of trouble. The plantation is like a machine. I must set the springs in motion, and make sure everyone does his share of the work to make the plantation operate. But then, this work is an amusement in this silent country.

---
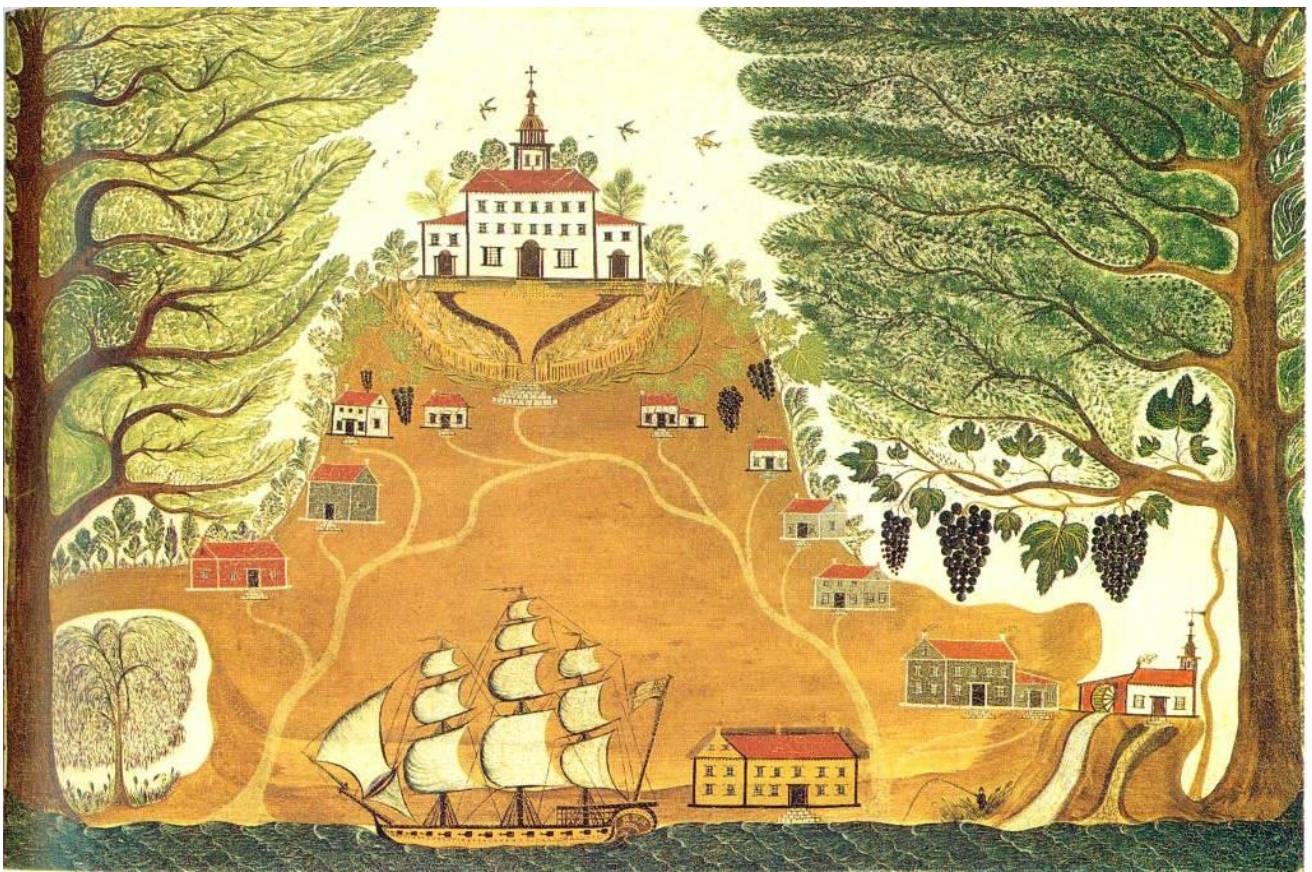
[1] Kenneth Silverman, ed. *Literature in America: The Founding of a Nation* (New York: Free Press, 1971) p. 242.

Williamsburg, the capital of colonial Virginia, is described in the 1750s by an English traveler to Virginia, Andrew Burnaby.[1]

Williamsburg is the capital of Virginia. It consists of about 200 houses, and does not contain more than 1,000 people, whites and Negroes. It is far from being a place of any real importance.

Upon the whole, it is a pleasant place to live. There are ten or twelve gentlemen's families constantly living in it, besides merchants and tradesmen. At the time of the assemblies and general courts, it is crowded with the upper class of the country, the planters. On those occasions there are balls and other amusements. But as soon as the business of the court and assembly is finished, the people return to their plantations and the town is nearly deserted.

The trade of this colony is large and extensive. Tobacco is the main thing traded. Of this they export each year between 50 and 60 thousand hogsheads, each weighing 800 or 1,000 pounds.

From what has been said of this colony [Virginia], it will not be difficult to get an idea of what the people are like. The climate and nature of this country make them lazy, easy-going, and good-natured. They are extremely fond of each other's company, and of eating and drinking together. They seldom show any ambition or become tired from hard work.

Their authority over their slaves makes them vain and domineering. They hardly consider Indians and Negroes to be human. If one of these unhappy creatures is hurt or even killed by a planter, it is almost impossible to bring the wrongdoer to justice.
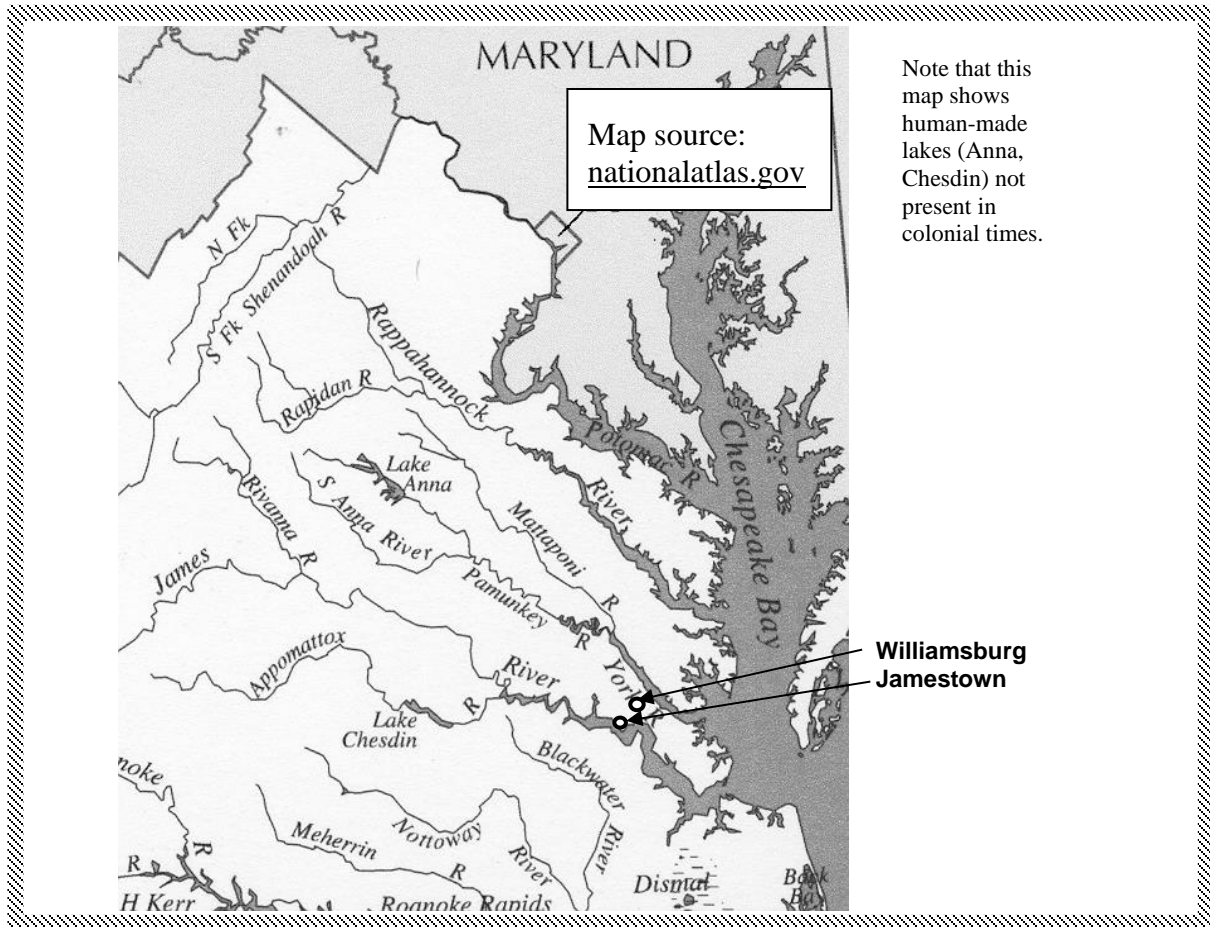
In previous investigations, you looked at the settings of Spanish towns and Puritan villages. Identify and list important differences between those settings and the settings described here for Virginia.

(NOTE: You'll investigate the social and historical impact of slavery in later units.)

---

[1] Andrew Burnaby, *Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North America*, 1775

Chesapeake Bay and Eastern Virginia:

MARYLAND

Map source: nationalatlas.gov

Note that this map shows human-made lakes (Anna, Chesdin) not present in colonial times.

N Fk

S Fk Shenandoah R

Rappahannock

Rapidan R

Rivanna R

S Anna River

Lake Anna

Mattaponi R

Potomac River

Chesapeake Bay

James

Pamunkey R

Appomattox

York River

Williamsburg
Jamestown

Lake Chesdin

Blackwater River

noke

Meherrin R

Nottoway River

Dismal

Back Bay

H Kerr

Roanoke Rapids

Questions that may help your investigation:

- *What part might rivers and bays play in the way of life of Virginians?*

- *Most of the white people in colonial Virginia came from southern England. What might be important differences in setting between England and Virginia? If possible, find evidence about these differences.*

- *How would the setting in colonial Virginia affect establishment of schools, churches and towns?*

Follow-Up: Your Setting

Draw a map of your neighborhood (or update your map if you drew one previously) showing the most important parts of the setting.

Describe how your neighborhood might be affected if, in the future, fuel and energy costs were so high that most families couldn't afford to own a powered vehicle. Identify problems and possible solutions.

Redesign the neighborhood to make it more effective for a energy-limited future.

For Teacher/Mentor:

Relationships between settings—both natural and man-made—and the behavior of the humans that occupy them, give us some of the most fascinating aspects of history. In the colonial era, abundant water power in the Northeast led to early development of manufacturing. In tidewater Virginia, water power was not as readily available, but the Chesapeake Bay and navigable sections of the James, York, Rappahannock, and Potomac rivers made for easy transport of freight. This was an essential element in the development of planter society in Virginia. Most early plantations were built along the tidewater sections of rivers, or along the Bay.

Planter society grew out of four main elements: Ready availability of a great deal of land with appropriate climate and soil (another part of setting), a large and ever-growing demand for tobacco in England, cheap labor from African slaves, and English immigrants with enough wealth to take advantage of the situation.

In Virginia, social class differences were extreme. Wealthy planters were at the top, white craftspeople, merchants and overseers were in the middle, and slaves were at the bottom.

Plantations (the most significant human-made part of setting) were largely self-sufficient, discouraging the formation of towns, schools and churches. These were present, of course, following English practice, but they tended to be widely scattered and of less importance than those in northern colonies.

Note: Many aspects of setting combine elements that are both "natural" and "human made." Some are mentioned in the sources—orchards, gardens, and animal herds, for example. Of course, virtually everything that is "human made" requires resources that come from nature. The focus here is not on differences between these two categories, but on (1) the fact that humans modify setting to their own ends in important ways, and (2) the systemic effects of all aspects of setting on the society and culture of the people living within it.

Follow-Up: Your Setting: This analysis can be an extremely effective reinforcement of the importance of the "setting" concept, building on learners' earlier neighbor-hood/community investigations. (However, if learners live in central urban areas with good public transportation and close-by neighborhood stores, the activity may not work in its original form.)

Questions to help elicit ideas if learners are having difficulty: "What products or services do people in your neighborhood need that require use of personal vehicles? How might they get these products or services if they don't own cars?"

The two main solutions are to either bring the people to the products/services using public transportation, or to bring the products/services to the people, either permanently (new businesses in the neighborhood) or temporarily, using such things as mobile dentist offices or shipping/delivery agencies (Fed-Ex, UPS, USPS).

5: Model Category: Demographics

As we've noted, traditional history books often focus so intently on "telling the story," they fail to point out the subtle but nevertheless history-shaping role played by the first component of our four-part Model—the "setting" where the action occurs.
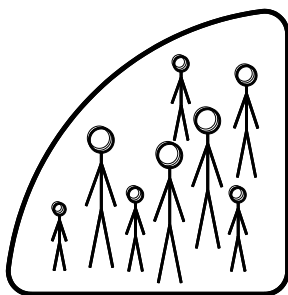
Much the same can be said about this second component of the Model—demographics. It has to do with the "actors" within the setting—how many there are, where they're located, how rapidly their numbers are increasing or decreasing, their average life expectancy, and so on. These all have important consequences.

American history would have been very different if early explorers had been met on the shore by thousands or millions of natives, as they were in Asia, rather than by dozens or hundreds. Imagine how different America would have been if there had been no "wild west"—a vast territory with very small population.

To make sense of something that once happened, is happening now, or might happen in the future, much people-related information is essential. How large is the population where the event or situation occurred? How densely distributed is it? What are infant mortality rates? Average life expectancies? The number of people in various age groups? The rates of population growth or decline? Male/female ratios?

In the second half of the 20th century, the age distribution in many small towns in the central United States shifted toward the elderly, as the young left to seek a living elsewhere. America has also been changed by the influx of people from Mexico and elsewhere. The growth of suburbs after World War II also transformed American society in important ways.

Any thorough study of an event or situation must take demographic factors into account.

(Investigation: Colonial Population Changes)

Investigation: Colonial Population Changes

Model Category: Demographics

Understanding a particular event, whether in the past or present, requires some knowledge of the people involved—how many, how they're distributed, the number of young and old, how these numbers are changing, and so on. Study of this kind of information is called "Demographics."
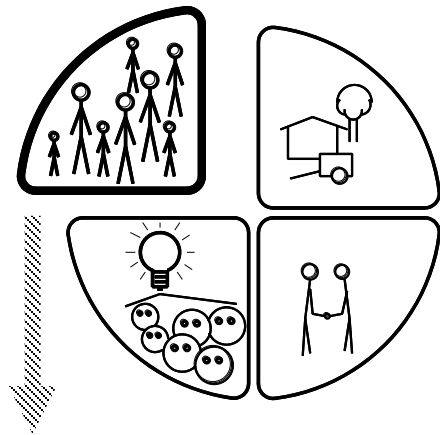
For example, in an area where neighbors live miles apart, it probably doesn't matter much if they throw their garbage or other waste in a stream. But if there are several thousand people living close together along that stream and doing the same thing, it matters a great deal.

Change the number of people, or how they're distributed, and history's story almost certainly will change, sometimes in surprising ways.

Of special importance in understanding an event or situation:

- The total number of people involved

- Population density

- Population distribution

- Age distribution

- Ratio of males to females

- Changes in any of the above. Changes in population occur because of births, deaths, and migration into or away from a place.

- Sub-groups: ethnic, religious, occupational, social class, etc.; their size and distribution

- Other significant demographic information, such as health conditions, birth and death rates, and so on.

These are sub-categories of demographics.

Historical Data: Colonial Demographics

1. *Review the sub-categories of demographics on the previous page. On a graph, plot the population changes of Virginia and Pennsylvania, based on the table below.*

2. *Describe, in words, the demographic differences between these two colonies. Include information from the data on the next two pages, and from your previous investigation of colonial Virginia.*

3. *List the reasons suggested by travelers for population changes in Pennsylvania. Which one do you think is most important? Why?*

4. *Check each of the 13 colonies and identify times and places when population changed most rapidly. Describe possible problems which could have grown out of rapid population growth.*

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)

Colony	Estimated Population (thousands) for Year Indicated								
	1630	1650	1670	1690	1700	1720	1740	1750	1770
New Hampshire	0.5	1.3	1.8	4.2	5.0	9.4	23.3	27.5	82.4
Massachusetts	0.9	15.6	35.3	56.9	55.9	91.0	151.6	188.0	235.3
Rhode Island	…	0.8	2.2	4.2	5.9	11.7	25.3	33.2	58.2
Connecticut	…	4.1	12.6	21.6	26.0	58.5	89.6	111.3	183.9
New York	0.4	4.1	5.8	13.9	19.1	38.9	63.7	76.7	162.9
New Jersey	…	…	1.0	8.0	14.0	29.8	51.4	71.4	117.4
Pennsylvania	…	…	…	11.4	18.0	31.0	85.6	119.7	240.1
Delaware	…	0.2	0.7	1.5	2.5	5.4	19.9	28.7	35.5
Maryland	…	4.5	13.2	24.0	29.6	66.1	116.1	141.1	202.6
Virginia	2.5	18.7	35.3	53.0	58.6	87.8	180.4	231.0	447.0
North Carolina	…	…	3.8	7.6	10.7	21.3	51.8	73.0	197.2
South Carolina	…	…	0.2	3.9	5.7	17.0	45.0	64.0	124.2
Georgia	…	…	…	…	…	…	2.0	5.2	23.4
Total *	4.6	50.4	111.9	210.4	250.9	466.2	905.6	1170.8	2148.1

*Total exceeds sum of population of colonies due to colonists outside colony boundaries.

From *Travels into North America*, written by Pehr Kalm, a visitor from Sweden in 1748.[1]

The town [Philadelphia] is now filled with inhabitants, who are very different from each other in their country [of origin], religion and trade. You meet with excellent masters in all trades, and many things are made here just as well as they are made in England. Yet no manufacturing is established, especially for making fine cloth. Perhaps the reason is, that it can be obtained from England with little difficulty. The breed of sheep that is brought over to the colony degenerates over time, and supplies only a coarse wool.

Here is plenty of provisions, and their prices are very reasonable. There are no examples of unusual shortages.

Everyone who acknowledges God to be the creator, preserver and ruler of all things, and does not teach or do anything against the government or against the common peace, is at liberty to settle, stay, and carry on his trade here, no matter what his religion may be. And he is so well protected by the laws and enjoys such liberties, that a citizen of Philadelphia may be said to live in his house like a king.

It is easy to see how this city should rise so suddenly from nothing into grandness and perfection. It has not been necessary to force people to come and settle here. On the contrary, foreigners of different languages have left their country, houses, property and relations, and traveled over wide and stormy seas in order to come here.

City	City Population for Year Indicated (Estimated)							
	1630	1650	1680	1700	1720	1743	1760	1775
New York	300	1,000	3,200	5,000	7,000	11,000	18,000	25,000
Boston	…	2,000	4,500	6,700	12,000	16,382	15,631	16,000
Newport	…	300	2,500	2,600	3,800	6,200	7,500	11,000
Charleston	…	…	700	2,000	3,500	6,800	8,000	12,000
Philadelphia	…	…	…	5,000	10,000	13,000	23,750	40,000

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)

---

[1] Pehr Kalm, *Travels into North America*, (English version: London, 1770) Adapted.

German traveler Gottlieb Mittelberger traveled in the colonies in the early 1750s and wrote about what he saw.[1]

Coming to speak of Pennsylvania again, that colony possesses great liberties above all other English colonies, inasmuch as all religious sects are tolerated there. We find there Lutherans, Reformed, Catholics, Quakers, Mennonites or Anabaptists, Herrnhuters or Moravian Brethren, Pietists, Seventh Day Baptists, Dunkers, Presbyterians, Newborn, Freemasons, Separatists, Freethinkers, Jews, Mohammedans, Pagans, Negroes and Indians. The Evangelicals and Reformed, however, are in the majority. But there are many hundred unbaptized souls.

Liberty in Pennsylvania extends so far that every one is free from all molestation and taxation on his property, business, house and estates. On a hundred acres of land a tax of no more than an English shilling is paid annually, which is called ground-rent or quit-rent; . . .

The table below shows the origin and religion of immigrants to Pennsylvania.

Group	Main Origin of Immigrants	Group	Main Origin of Immigrants
Quakers	Northern England	Lutherans	Germany, Scandinavia
Reformed	Germany and Netherlands	Dunkers	Germany
Anglicans	England	Amish	Switzerland and Germany
Presbyterians	Northern Ireland (Ulster) and Scotland	Moravian Brethren	Bohemia & Moravia (now part of Czech Republic)
Mennonites	Switzerland and Germany	Separatists	England
Catholics	Germany and Ireland	Huguenots	France

Follow-Up: Local Demographics

U.S. demographic data is readily available from the Internet (http://www.census.gov/) and from sources such as the *World Almanac*.

Find demographic information for your county or city during the past 30 years or so up to the present. Plot this information on a graph to show changes.

Write what you think will happen because of local changes or trends you've plotted. Identify possible problems and possible advantages of the changes.

---

[1] *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the year 1750…*(Philadelphia, 1898).

For Teacher/Mentor:

In the mid-1700s, the three colonies with the largest populations—Massachusetts, Virginia and Pennsylvania—differed extensively. Students previously investigated Virginia and Massachusetts, the first two colonies settled.

Quaker William Penn's Pennsylvania colony was reasonably tolerant of religious differences. This fact, plus the colony's good farmland, attracted persecuted groups from Germany and other European countries, such as the Amish and Mennonites.

Major consequences of colonial population patterns included conflict with Native Americans and long-lasting regional differences.

Pennsylvania was settled late (only Georgia was later), but it grew at a remarkable rate. Four years after Philadelphia was founded, it was larger than New York City, and quickly became the largest city in the colonies. By 1770, Pennsylvania's population was greater than that of Massachusetts.

Benjamin Franklin's interesting but biased comments on demography in the colonies, particularly Pennsylvania (1751):

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=85

An important aspect of demographics is an analysis of the significant sub-groups that make up the population. For example, religious and social differences between various parts of a population generally lead to formation of enclaves settled by people with similar backgrounds, which tend to persist over time. Today in rural Wisconsin, for example, are towns and villages populated by people largely descended from a single immigrant group; Norwegians, Swedes, Germans, Swiss, Dutch, etc. People in each town proudly maintain and proclaim their ethnic folkways.

Within larger towns and cities, of course, ethnic and other enclaves are virtually inevitable. Identification of local sub-groups, their size and distribution is one possible expansion of demographic analysis.

6: Model Category: Patterns of Action
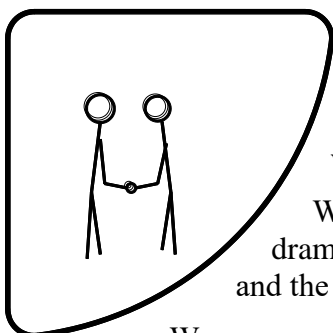
As we've said, coping with large amounts of information requires a system of mental organization. Narrative-based history books generally ignore this need. As a consequence, most adult Americans remember little and make practical use of even less of what they once "learned" in school.

We're simplifying this complex problem by using basic elements of drama as organizers. Thus far we've dealt with the "stage" or "setting" and the "actors"—the demographics of some of America's early settlers.

We now move on to "action"—to a society's usual or patterned ways of acting, and changes in those patterns over time.

Traditional historical accounts tend to describe the particular actions of particular people in particular settings ("At dusk on Christmas day, George Washington and his troops assembled on the Pennsylvania shore of the Delaware River.") This sometimes makes a good story, but it doesn't explain much that's likely to be useful. That requires an understanding of a group or society's "standard" ways of acting.

Societies standardize ways to create, distribute and exchange goods and services, and these patterns form its economic system. Societies develop ways to make, change, and enforce big decisions affecting the whole society, and these make up its political system. Other patterns—for using resources, for child-rearing and education, for dealing with crime, forming families, solving problems caused by nature or by outsiders, and the like—are of critical importance in understanding past, present, and probable and possible futures.

Patterned actions are so routine we're hardly conscious of them, but they add up to a "way of life," which is what we're trying to understand.

Patterns are more apparent when they contrast with those that are familiar. For this reason, looking at a society like that of the Native Americans in the data that follow simplifies the learners' task. In addition, the contrast helps them identify their own patterns.

(Investigation: Native American Patterns of Action)

Investigation: Native American Patterns of Action
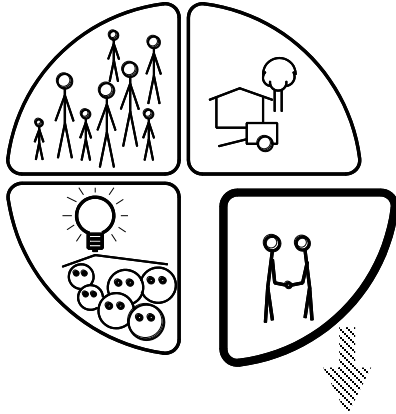
Model Category: Patterns of Action

Important ways of acting are learned from parents and other members of society. These differ from society to society, and tend to change very slowly.

Much of what you and those around you do every day follows "standard" patterns, simplifying life by helping you know how to act, and how others are likely to act.

Some important sub-categories—patterns of action for:

- Work (Who does what kind of work? With whom? When? Where? Etc.)

- Exchanging goods and services (trading, buying, selling, etc.)

- Teaching the young. This may include both formal education (such as school) and informal learning (such as learning from other children and from watching adults)

- Controlling behavior considered wrong.

- Making important group decisions.

- Religious practices

This list could be very long. Other patterns are associated with greeting, marriage, birth, death, dealing with nature, establishing how time is used, and so on.

Historical Data: Native American Patterns

1. *Study the previous page titled "Model Category: Patterns of Action."*

2. *Analyze the following information for the Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi native Americans, first identifying and listing important actions, then fitting them into the sub-categories listed on the page titled "Model Category: Patterns of Action." Note that some actions may not fit existing sub-categories, so you may have to add others.*

Data on Native Americans in this section are from the report of Captain Jonathan Carver, an officer in the British army who explored the Great Lakes, upper Mississippi valley, and parts of Canada in 1766, 1767 and 1768, immediately after the French and Indian War.[1] Carver was exploring territory that had been taken from the French in the war, and reporting his findings to officials.

> [Northern Lake Michigan] On the largest and best of these islands stands a town of the Ottawa nation. There I found one of their most important chiefs, who received me with every honor he could possibly show to a stranger. But what was very strange was the reception I met with on landing. As our canoes approached the shore, and reached within about 1000 feet of it, the Indians began a celebration. They fired their guns loaded with balls, being careful to aim so the shots went over our heads. They also ran from one tree or stump to another, acting like they were in the heat of battle. At first I was greatly surprised, and I almost ordered my men to return fire, thinking their intentions were hostile. But some of the traders with me said this was their usual way of receiving chiefs of other nations, and I was pleased at the respect thus given me.
>
> I remained here one night. I gave the chief some gifts, including some liquor. With this the Indians made themselves merry, and joined in a dance that lasted most of the night. In the morning when I left, the chief went with me to the shore, and, as soon as I had embarked, prayed a very solemn prayer for me. He prayed, "...that the Great Spirit would favor me with a prosperous voyage, that he would give me an unclouded sky, and smooth waters, by day, and that I might lie down, by night, on a beaver blanket, enjoying uninterrupted sleep and pleasant dreams, and also that I might find continual protection under the great pipe of peace." He kept praying until I was so far away I could no longer hear him. *[23-25]*

---

[1] J. Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America* (Third Edition, 1781), adapted. For further study, text and electronic images of pages of the entire original book are provided by the Wisconsin Historical Society, www.americanjourney.org/aj-127.

On October 8ᵗʰ we put our canoes into the Wisconsin River, which here was more than 100 yards wide. The next day we arrived at the Great Town of the Saukie nation. This is the largest and best-built Indian town I ever saw. It contains about 90 houses, each large enough for several families. These are built of hewn planks neatly joined, and covered with bark tightly to keep out even the worst rain. In front of the doors are covered porches, where the inhabitants sit when the weather permits, and smoke their pipes.

The streets are regular and wide, so it appears more like a civilized town than the abode of savages. In their gardens, which are next to their houses, and which are neatly laid out, they raise great quantities of Indian corn, beans, melons, etc., so this place is considered the best market for traders to furnish themselves with provisions of any within eight hundred miles.

The Saukies have about 300 warriors, who are generally busy every summer making raids into the territories of the Illinois and Pawnee nations. They return with many slaves. But the warriors of those nations frequently retaliate, and, in return, destroy many of the Saukies. I think this is why their numbers increase no faster. *[46-47]*

[On the west bank of the Mississippi River, probably in what is now Minnesota] About ten o'clock I came out of my tent to check the weather. I saw by star light some movement of what looked like beasts coming down a slope some distance away. One of them suddenly stood up, and I could tell it was a man. About ten or twelve men came running in my direction.

I went back in the tent and woke my two men, telling them to bring their guns, because I was worried about my canoe. I ran to the water's edge, and found the group of Indians getting set to steal my canoe and supplies. Before I reached them, I told my men not to fire until I gave the order. I advanced close to the points of their spears (their only weapons), and showing my gun, asked sternly what they wanted. They saw they were about to receive a warm reception, and ran off into a nearby wood. For fear they would return, we took turns on watch for the rest of the night.

The next day my servants were afraid, and pleaded with me to return to safety. But I told them that if they didn't want to be called old women (a term of great shame among the Indians) they must follow me. I was determined to continue. An Englishman, once he begins an adventure, does not retreat.

I learned later that the bandits were driven out from various tribes because they had committed crimes. Several groups of these outcasts had joined forces and stole from travelers of all kinds, from every tribe. *[51-53]*

These [native] people built a town on the Bank of the Mississippi, near the mouth of the Wisconsin, at a place called by the French *Prairie Du Chien*, or Dog Plains. It is a large town, with about 300 families. The houses are well built in Indian style, and pleasantly situated on very rich soil, from which they raise every necessary of life. I saw here many horses of good size and shape.

This town is a great marketplace where all the adjacent tribes, and even those who inhabit the most remote branches of the Mississippi, assemble once a year, about the end of May, bringing furs to dispose of to the traders. But they do not always sell their furs here; a council of their chiefs decide whether it is better to sell here or in Louisiana territory, or at Mackinac. Based on this decision they either leave and go elsewhere, or return to their homes. *[50-51]*

Whenever Indians happen to meet at Prairie Du Chien, the great marketplace, even if the nations to which they belong are at war with each other, they are obliged to control their feelings, and avoid any hostile acts during their stay there. This same rule is observed at the Red Mountain, where they get the stone to make their peace pipes. These pipes are necessary to maintain good relations between neighboring tribes, so the rule against fighting in the area is useful to everyone. *[99]*

Follow-Up: Action Patterns Here and Now

In places where large numbers of people interact regularly, such as schools, houses of worship, recreation centers, and shopping malls, the actions of the people will tend to fall into patterns:

- For greeting (words used, face-to-face distances involved, etc.) ,

- For associating (when, where, what kinds of people do things together, and what they do),

- For use of time,

- For buying and selling, for getting information, etc.,

- For dress, speech, etc.

Patterns are likely to differ with the age of the people involved, their ethnic backgrounds, and pressures from others.

Choose a place to observe, collect pattern data, and write a report summarizing your observations.

For Teacher/Mentor:
Native American Action Patterns

The cultures of the native nations visited by Captain Carver were similar enough to suggest that the main patterns of living were common to all of them. The dominant language and the language of trade was Chippewa, although some native groups spoke other languages.

In this region, the natives generally lived in permanent settlements, growing crops, gathering wild roots, plants and fruit, hunting, and fishing, A low level of warfare between tribal nations was fairly common. Trading furs for European goods was significant throughout the area.

The data include evidence for the following patterns, at least in part:

- Greeting
- Exchange of goods
- Decision-making
- Religious practices
- Control of improper behavior
- Conflict and rivalry

Although Carver didn't mention it, some of the patterns for division of labor can be inferrred from the data. For example, the absence of many men who were away fighting during the summer, and the importance of crop growing, suggest that the care of the crops was probably women's work. It's likely that hunting and fishing were mainly done by men.

The French had established transoceanic trade in furs obtained from the natives. This traffic, begun a century before, had already changed the economic life of the natives. The furs—expecially the highly-valued beaver pelts—were obtained in return for firearms and "firewater"—French brandy.

Note that this activity may be considerably expanded, locating the points of interest (Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin River, Mackinac, etc.) on maps, locating tribal territories, acquiring additional information about environments, demographics and patterns of action.

Action patterns differing from our own are often seen not just as different, but as ridiculous or wrong. In Captain Carver's 1766 world, King George III still had some real political power. Carver thought it was his duty to obtain tribal chiefs' allegiance to the King.

To us, giving power to a king whose main qualification was being his father's son seems alien and archaic. Understanding Jonathan Carver's world requires an understanding of his society's patterns.

The same principle applies to the native nations in the region Carver explored. To understand them, it's necessary to identify their patterns for everyday living, for coping with problems, and for dealing with the accidents and incidents of fate.

Note: In the eleven Parts of this book, three deal with the culture of Native Americans. We've done this because the elements of culture described in the Model are easier to perceive in societies that differ in important ways from the learner's own.

7: **Model Category: Shared Ideas**

The ad says:

> "Guaranteed to make your skin look years younger!"

> "Transforms gray hair so gradually even your friends won't notice!"

> "Lose 10 pounds in 10 days or your money back!"

What makes these and thousands of other advertisements work is no mystery. They appeal to certain deep-seated ideas and values. In the case of the three familiar advertising pitches above, that idea is, "It's good to look young and beautiful."

Many Americans think it's human nature to want to look young and beautiful, but of course it isn't. The members of other societies may think, "It's good to look mature," or, "It's good to look old," or "How you look isn't important."

"It's good to move up," "Everybody ought to have the same rights," and, "It's good to be your own boss." are other ideas shared by many Americans.

Ideas or states of mind broadly shared by the members of societies or other organized human groups go by various names, such as, "core beliefs," "cultural assumptions," "dominant values," "societal premises," "cognitive system" and "worldview."

When we attempt to make sense of what humans think and do, nothing is more useful than insight into a group's shared states of mind. If schools were able to send graduates on their ways with a thorough understanding of just one thing, this would probably be that "one thing" because it explains so much—everyone's ordinary, daily behavior, the day's news, art, architecture, music, politics, economics, customs, jokes, laws, religions—just about everything.

What makes these ideas particularly powerful is the fact that they're so taken-for-granted most people aren't aware they have them. As a consequence, they don't get lifted into consciousness, and their appropriateness and usefulness are not carefully examined. The old saying, "A fish would be the last to discover water," captures the nature of the problem."

An understanding of Puritan or Spanish colonist's beliefs, values, and worldview explains how they dealt with the setting and the natives they encountered, and the ways they coped with internal problems. The same holds for any historical period and for all groups and sub-cultures, then and now—Puritans and Spanish colonists, the Iroquois, Comanche, Pueblo, German Anabaptists, Irish, Italians, the Vietnamese boat people, or any of the many other groups that have played or are playing a part in American life.

We've said that dealing with complexity requires information-organizing tools, tools largely missing from typical American history textbooks. Of the four primary elements of our Model, "shared ideas" provides the greatest insight into historical situations, events, conflicts and change. (Later chapters look at relationships between the four elements.)

(Investigation: Shared Ideas in Puritan Society)

Investigation: Shared Ideas in Puritan Society

Model Category: Shared Ideas

To understand any group, you need to know the really important ideas and values they share. Ideas are invisible, of course, so you have to infer (figure out) what they are from the group's words and actions. Important, often-repeated actions by group members are generally motivated by shared ideas.
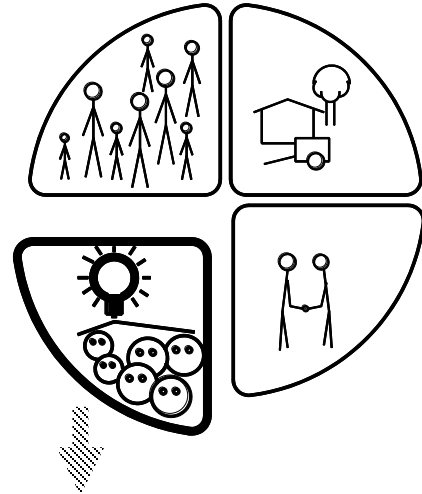
Important sub-categories of shared ideas include ideas about:

- The basic nature of humans: Are people considered "naturally" good, evil or neither? What's the relative value of people of various ages? Of males and females?

- "The good life:" What do people want their children to do and have when they become adults?

- Ownership: What are the rules for owning? What does "owning" mean? Are most things owned by individuals, or by groups? What kinds of things are owned? How is ownership transferred?

- Acceptable action: What's OK and not OK to do?

- Authority: Who should make important decisions affecting many people? How do officials get their power? How do they transfer it to others?

- Status: Who's considered important? Not important? Why? What can people "do" with high status or prestige?

- Causation: Why do things happen? What causes events, disasters, change?

- Outsiders: Who's considered "them" and "not one of us?" Why?"

- The future: Will life be better, worse, or about the same? How will it be different?

As you think through your investigations, you may choose to add other categories to this list.

Historical Data: Puritan Ideas
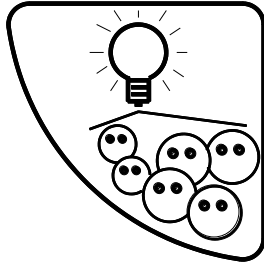
Ideas that people share about "right" and "wrong" action are important clues to who they are. In some societies, for example, it is considered wrong to disagree with those in authority. An idea such as this one will affect a society in important ways.

Study the data on the following pages. Identify and list actions and ideas Puritans seemed to think were right and wrong.

Josiah Cotton, a teacher in Plymouth, Massachusetts, wanted to teach the local Native Americans about the Puritan religion. In the early 1700s he prepared a *Vocabulary of the Massachusetts Indian Language*. In this document Cotton translated English sentences into the language of the Natick Indians. Some of these sentences are shown below.[1]

Natick	English
Tohwaj nonkompaog ne anoohquiitcheg pumomashaog, kah matteag usseog.	Why do boys of that age run about and do nothing?
An wunnegik kuttinninumiin kah pish nunnehtuhpeh wussukquohamunat kah ogketamunat.	You had better let me have him, and I will learn him to write and read.
Nanompanissuorik wutchappehk moocheke machuk.	Idleness is the root of much evil.
Noh matteag pish quenauehhikkoo asuh metsuonk wuttattamooonk oglooonk asuh sasamitahwhuttuonk.	He shall want for nothing, neither meat, drink, clothing, or beating.
Matchee anakaussuongash kah matchee nup pooonk ussooehteomoo en matchit ayeuwonkanit.	Evil works and an evil death will lead to a bad place.

---

[1] *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Series 3, Volume 2, 1830

In 1675 the Massachusetts General Court (the legislature) made the following statements:[1] ***What does this suggest about proper behavior? About causation?***

For several years now, the most wise and holy God has warned us of our evil actions, by giving us troubles and problems. In spite of this, we did not change our ways. Finally, God made the Indians rise up in war against us. These Indians have burned several settlements and killed the people who lived there. God did not help our army when we went to fight the Indians. He did not help us because He was punishing us and showing us our evil, and telling us to return to the Lord our God.

These laws are passed to correct our wrong actions:

1. The court sees that the churches are not keeping control of their members, nor are they giving children proper training. We recommend that the churches correct this wrong.

2. People are showing self-pride in various ways. Some men are wearing long hair like women, either their own hair or periwigs. Some women are curling their hair or wearing immodest hair styles. The Court declares this is offensive to sober Christians. The County Courts are given the power to take action against such wrongdoers by warnings, fines, or punishment, according to their good judgment.

3. In spite of laws already passed, people are showing evil pride in the clothes they wear. Poorer people are buying expensive clothes. Poor and rich are both wearing vain, new, strange fashions, with uncovered arms, or decorated with ribbons. The County Court is authorized to take action against such sinful people.

4. The people have permitted and encouraged open meetings of Quakers. These people believe and teach things which are untrue and evil. This had been dangerous to religion and to the souls of the Christians, and it has made God angry. Every person found at a Quaker's meeting will be arrested by the police. Local officials will issue approval, and the people will be placed in jail at hard work, with bread and water only, for three days, or else they will pay five pounds fine.

5. This Court orders that children and youths must sit together in church, in some place where they can be seen by all. Those who misbehave will be warned by officials for their first offense. For a second offense the parents must pay a fine or order the children to be whipped.

(Continued)

---

[1] Nathaniel B. Shurlett, ed. *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay*, Volume V, 1853-1854

6. The sin of idleness greatly increases, in spite of laws against it. This court orders that town constables shall inspect families, and present a list of names of all idle persons to the town officials, who will punish them as required. If necessary, idle people will be sent to the house of correction.

Based on the Puritan data you've analyzed so far, make a master list of ideas and ways of acting that Puritans seemed to share. Check earlier Puritan data in Part 2 for similar evidence of shared ideas.

Sometime before 1690, a Boston man named Benjamin Harris put together *The New England Primer*. For about 150 years, the primer was the most widely used textbook in New England. Here's the "Alphabet of lessons for youth" from the primer:[1]

In *Adam's* fall
We sinned all.

Thy life to mend
This *Book* Attend.

The *Cat* doth play
And after slay.

A *Dog* will bite
A thief at night.

An *Eagle's* flight
Is out of sight.

The idle *Fool*
Is whipt at school.

As runs the *Glass*
Man's life doth pass.

My book and *Heart*
Shall never part.

Job feels the rod
Yet blesses God.

Kings should be good;
Not men of blood.

The *Lion* bold
The *Lamb* doth hold.

The *Moon* gives light
In time of night.

(Continued)

[1] *New England Primer*, 1727 (Rare Book Division, New York Public Library).

Nightingales sing
In time of Spring.

Young **Ob***adias*,
David, Josias,
All were pious.

Peter denies
His Lord, and cries.

Q*ueen* Esther sues,
And saves the Jews.

R*achel* doth mourn
For her first-born.

Samuel anoints
Whom God appoints.

Time cuts down all
Both great and small.

Uriah's beauteous wife
Made David seek his
life.

Whales in the sea
God's voice obey.

Xerxes the great did
die, And so must you
and I.

Youth forward slips,
Death soonest slips.

Zaccheus he
Did climb the tree
His Lord to see.

Do a "content analysis" of the Puritan ABCs:

1.   Look up references you don't understand. Most refer to people and incidents in the Bible.

2.   For each listed letter, determine if a "lesson" or significant idea of some kind is being taught. Make a list of them.

3.   Identify some "themes" (similar, repeated ideas), and list them in your journal. Record the number of times each theme appears.

Based on this analysis, identify important Puritan ideas and add them to your master list, and list ways of acting likely to grow out of them.

Follow-Up: Shared Ideas in Ads

Within every society, including your own, shared ideas affect almost everything people say and do. Sometimes it's hard to identify your own important ideas because they're so familiar and "natural" you rarely think about them. However, if you carefully analyze what people around you are doing and saying, (especially when they're trying to influence you), you'll often find important themes.

Want to:

- *Take control?*
- *Leave the crowd behind?*
- *Get away from it all?*

Consider advertising, for example. The TV commercials, billboards, and newspaper ads you see all reflect important ideas of your society and some important societal sub-groups. Often they're buried, but they're there. An advertisement in a magazine for teens probably won't say, "Buy this and you'll be more popular." An advertisement in a magazine read by middle-aged people won't say, "Buy this and you'll look younger." You have to read between the lines.

Collect a half-dozen magazine advertisements, and paste them on sheets of paper. For each ad, ask yourself, "What basic shared idea is the advertiser using to get people to buy what's being advertised?" Circle the appropriate words and write the idea in the margin.

For Teacher/Mentor:

As a rule, the ideas shared by members of a society are extremely stable, changing very slowly in response to shared experience.[1] This stability is essential if a society is to function, but it can also create problems. If a society's situation changes—if, for example, a natural resource on which it depends is exhausted—a strongly-held idea may make it harder to adjust to the changed circumstance.

Unfortunately, it's very difficult for the members of a society to "see" their main values and beliefs clearly enough to evaluate their practicality. The problem is suggested by the old saying that a fish would be the last to discover water. One advantage of the study of American history is that it allows us to look at our society during its "childhood" to better understand how we're the same and how we've changed. See http://www.carrollquigley.net/Articles/Needed-A-Revolution-in-Thinking.htm.

Is a knowledge of shared ideas practical and useful? Is this key idea worth months or years of study? Absolutely.

- If we're not aware of our own fundamental ideas and values, we don't really know ourselves. Those unaware of their assumptions are slaves of those assumptions. Only the awareness of *alternative* patterns of thought gives us options from which to choose.

- Some of our shared ideas are logically inconsistent. Recognizing these inconsistencies makes it possible to deal with them rationally, reducing their stress-causing potential.

- Changes beyond human control are constantly altering society, making certain ideas and values either more or less functional. A conscious awareness of cultural assumptions makes adaptation to inevitable social change less painful.

- Most people have some contact with others whose ideas and values are unlike their own. A sensitivity to the thoughts that pattern our lives makes it possible to pinpoint areas of potential misunderstanding, disagreement or conflict.

- Climate change and geopolitical upheavals are almost certain to cause migrations that push different societies together. Conflicts between value/belief systems will be a major problem. An analytical tool for clarifying those conflicts is invaluable.

This isn't esoteric knowledge. Awareness of the middleclass American assumption that young adulthood is the ideal age helps us understand why Barbie dolls have largely replaced baby dolls. It tells us much about why there are retirement ghettos, mid-life crises, and many age-stratified institutions. It helps us understand the billions spent on cosmetics, therapies, diets, surgery and youth-oriented activities, and why millions of Americans are unhappy, frustrated people, preoccupied with advancing age. **Appendix B summarizes ideas shared by most Americans that shape our culture and society.**

---

[1] Two exceptions with historical impact: Ideas about "outsiders" and their influence can change abruptly because of threats or attacks, and ideas about the future can change from optimism to pessimism immediately when economic panics occur.

Historical Notes:

One Puritan belief that comes through clearly in this data is their assumption that humans are basically evil, and that only strict discipline and adherence to God's word as revealed in the Bible would counteract this evil tendency.

Another prominent assumption was that whatever happened was in the hands of God. Good fortune came to those who were humble and adhered to the rules. When undesirable things happened, such as attacks by Native Americans, the bad experiences were punishment for sins such as pride and deviance from proper behavior. These ideas are particularly apparent in the 1675 court decision (p. 50).

The *New England Primer* reinforces these ideas, and also (in remarkable contrast to what might appear in a primer today) made sure young readers were conscious of their own mortality. To reinforce this, the Primer also includes the old child's bedtime prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Content analysis by learners should bring out this concern with death and other shared Puritan Ideas.

Additional units: Four optional additional units suitable for insertion after completing investigations in this Part are available at:
http://www.marionbrady.com/MoreInvestigationsinAmericanHistory.asp:

- Colonial Exchange Patterns, 1725-1765
- Stamp Act, Colonials React, 1765-1766
- Biased Reporting/Boston Massacre, 1770
- Constitution/Bill of Rights, 1787-1791

Summarizing the book to this point:

We see three major problems in the traditional American history curriculum:

1. The passive role assigned to students in most classroom activity,

2. Failure to provide a mental framework to organize what's being learned,

3. Failure to emphasize important principles with universal explanatory power.

We've suggested ways to overcome these problems: (a) using primary sources instead of relying on textbook narrative, and (b) using a conceptual framework—the Model—as a system-based analytical tool to generate questions to focus on what's important, and to organize what's learned.

These two, (a) and (b), are interdependent. Without good analytical questions, primary sources aren't very effective as classroom materials, and without primary sources flowing from reality, it's difficult or impossible to create intellectually compelling activities for historical study, or to create and refine an analytical model.

Note: A single page elaboration of the Model is in student materials in the next part.
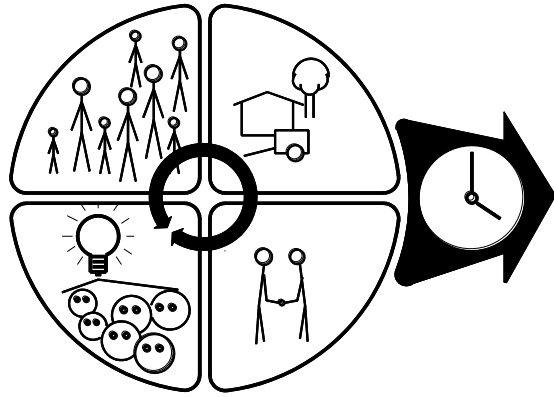
8: Identifying Systemic Relationships

Student understanding grows not by acquiring isolated facts, but by discovering relationships between many different kinds of information. Only when parts of knowledge are linked together—earth's rotation, the moon's gravity, and tides, for example—do facts become useful tools for interpreting reality.
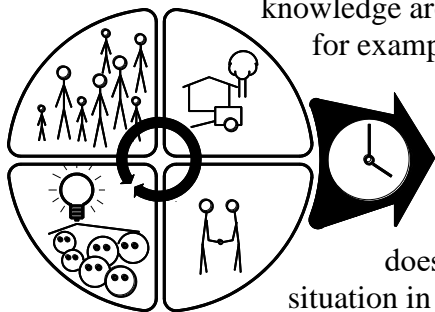
Unfortunately, most history textbooks, preoccupied with "telling the story," give students little or no chance to explore relationships more complex than claims that "this caused that."

The Model, using the principles of General Systems Theory, does far more. It says, "If you really want to understand an event or situation in the past, present or future, you must take into account everything that might have shaped it. Here's a template to remind you of what those things might be." The categories of the Model say, "Look at setting, demographics, action patterns and shared ideas, and how they interact."

Each of the primary sources we've presented so far has—inevitably—contained elements of every part of the Model, even though we've emphasized one element at a time. Buried within the Spanish "Ordinances for New Towns" are assumptions about the "right" patterns for living, about who should make decisions, and about how these decisions should be made. Even elements of demographics (i.e. population distribution) can be inferred. For example, the Spanish assume that those doing farming will live in the town, and not on individually-owned farms.

Each of the previous investigations contains similar clues to setting, demographics, action patterns, and ideas. **And in every case, these elements are intricately, systemically interwoven.**

Using the Model as an analytical tool provides a way to understand any society— Puritan, Pennsylvania German immigrants, native nations, or any other society or organized human group—far more thoroughly. Whether students deal with the exploits of Alexander the Great, or next year's Middle Eastern conflict, the elements of the Model, and their systemic interrelationships, will provide insight far beyond what's possible from simply reading or hearing the "story."

The student material in this part (beginning next page) introduces the kinds of interrelationships that are integral to understanding historical change.

(Student materials that follow: Systemic Relationships; The Model: History and System Change; Systemic Relationships on the Ohio Frontier)

Systemic Relationships

A system is an assembly of related parts that interact in patterned ways. If one part of a system changes, other parts will change. You're surrounded by an uncountable number of systems, and they affect every moment of your life. Systems are everywhere in history. For example, consider the development of a *transportation system*:

Early bicycles were expensive, hard to ride, uncomfortable, and dangerous. However, in the late 1880s, the modern bicycle was developed. This design had the same size front and rear wheels, pedals and a chain to drive the rear wheel, along with air-filled rubber tires to smooth the bumps. These improvements made the bicycle safe, fast, and easy to ride. Huge numbers were sold, since they were now practical transportation for workmen. New companies sprang up to manufacture bicycles, tires, and bicycle parts.

Because of the growing popularity of bicycles, local governments began using smooth paving for streets and roads, replacing dirt and cobblestones.

Women began riding, and their way of dressing became simpler, to make bicycle riding practical. In 1896 Susan B. Anthony said, "The bicycle has done more for the emancipation of women than anything else in the world." The bicycle began a new transportation system, with changes that literally paved the way for the automobiles that came along a few years later.

The four-part Model you've been developing is a tool for analyzing systems. For example:

```
(Setting) New
tool—a safe,
practical bicycle
        ↓
(Action Pattern)            (Setting) Building        (Action pattern)
Rapidly growing      →      better roads         →    Higher taxes          →
number of
bicycles and                (Setting & action          (Demographics)
riders               →      pattern) Factories    →    More factory      ↗  Other
                            for bicycles and           workers              changes
                            parts                                        →

                            (Action Pattern)           (Shared ideas)
                     →      Women riding         →     Changes in        ↗
                            bicycles                   women's              →
                                                       freedom
```
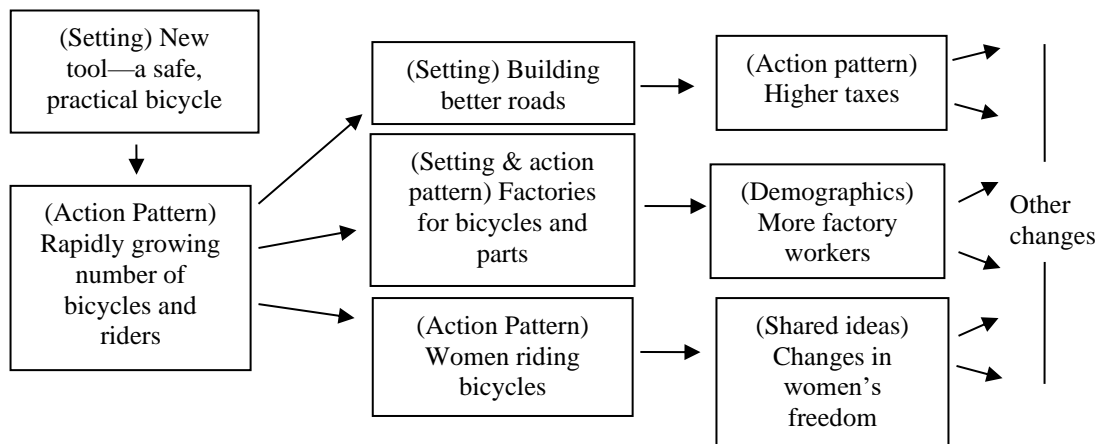
A change in setting—the bicycle—changed a pattern of action (using bicycles for everyday transportation), which caused other changes in setting, demographics, and even ideas about women. **Diagrams like the one above show "systemic relationships."**

The Model: History and System Change

Category ▼	Subcategory ▼	Sub-subcategory ▼	Etc.►

Setting

Natural — Climate, Resources, Land, Oceans, Rivers, Living Things, Etc.

Secondary (human-made) — Towns & Cities, Buildings, Transportation facilities, Communications networks, Tools, Energy, Outside groups, Etc.

Demographics (People)

Number, Population density, Population distribution, Age Distribution, Rate of change, Etc.

Event, experience, situation, etc.

Ways of Acting (Action Patterns for…)

Work, Exchange of goods and services, Teaching the young, Behavior control, Decision making, Etc.

Shared Ideas (about…)

Human nature, The "good life", Ownership, Acceptable action, Status, Cause, Outsiders, The future, Etc.

> This chart summarizes the main parts of the "sense-making model" you've been developing. As you can see, it's a tool that can be used for making sense of any place, any time, in the real world or in imagination.

Systemic Relationships: In every situation, each category and sub-category is affected by many others. Changes across time can occur in every category, and will trigger other changes.
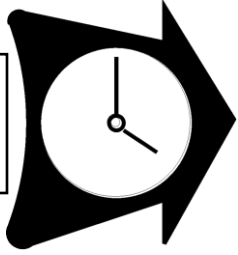
Investigation: Systemic Relationships on the Ohio Frontier

Using the categories and subcategories on the Model as a checklist, read the data for Ohio and identify the important parts of setting, demographics, patterns of action and shared ideas, including changes described in any of the four.

Next, identify possible systemic relationships between the elements you've identified, and diagram them. For example:

Setting: Main building material is logs.	→	**Pattern of action:** Cooperative work in building houses and barns
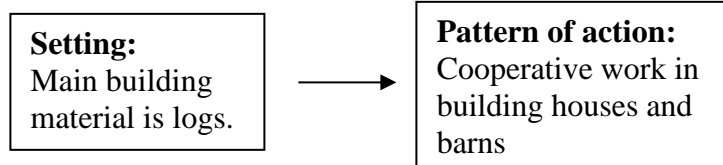
Below is an excerpt from *Recollections of Life in Ohio from 1813 to 1840*, by William Cooper Howells.[1]

The life of the people was rather primitive and simple. None of them was wealthy. The possession of a quarter section [160 acres] or two of land, pretty well cleared up—about a third or half of it under cultivation with a log-house and barn—was thought to make a man well off. Nearly every man lived in a piece of land he owned, usually in 80- or 160-acre tracts. Their stock was small in number; their families were unusually large. Almost every man was the son of a farmer in an older settlement who had come into this area in order to have a farm of his own. Or else, some man who had been a farm laborer or renter in an older place had bought land here and was beginning a home.

As for clothing—that was very plain. Fortunately, there was little temptation to be extravagant in this way. The women of the family, in almost every case, produced something to wear.

Particularly remarkable was the general dependence of all upon the neighborly kindness of others. Their houses and barns were built of logs and were raised by a group of as many neighbors as was necessary to handle the logs. Since every man was ready with the ax and understood this work, all came together where the raising was to be done and all worked together with about equal skill. The men understood handling timber, and accidents seldom happened, unless the logs were icy or wet. I was often at these raisings. We had raisings of the same kind to do, and it was the custom always to send one from a family to help, so that you could claim assistance in return.

This kind of help was needed in many kinds of work, such as rolling up the logs in a clearing, grubbing out the underbrush, splitting rails, cutting logs for a house, and the like. When a gathering of men for such a purpose took place, there was usually some sort of cooperative job laid out for the women, such as quilting, sewing, or spinning up a lot of thread for some poor neighbor.

---

[1] William Cooper Howells, *Recollections of Life in Ohio from 1813 to 1840,* 1895.

Frances Trollope, a well-known English writer, toured America in the 1820s. In her book, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, she had this to say about life in Ohio in 1828.[1]

Mohawk, as our little village was called, gave us an excellent opportunity to compare the peasants of the United States with those of England and to judge the average degree of comfort enjoyed by each. I believe Ohio is typical; if they have the roughness and inconveniences of a new state to deal with, they also have higher wages and cheaper supplies.

Laborers, if they are good workmen, are certain to find a job with good wages, higher than in England. The average wage of a laborer is $10 a month, with lodging, boarding, washing, and mending. It appears to me that the necessities of life—meat, bread, butter, tea, and coffee (not to mention whiskey), are within the reach of every sober, industrious, and healthy man who chooses to have them.

There was one man whose progress in wealth I watched with much interest and pleasure. When I first became his neighbor, he, his wife, and four children were living in one room. They had plenty of beef-steaks and onions for breakfast, dinner, and supper, but very few other comforts. He was one of the finest men I ever saw. He was intelligent and active of mind and body, but he could neither read nor write. He drank very little whiskey and rarely chewed tobacco. (He was therefore more free from that spitting which made male conversation so difficult to bear.) He worked for us frequently and often used to walk into the drawing room and seat himself on the sofa and tell me all his plans. He made a deal with the owner of a wooded hill, by which half the wood he could cut was to be his own. His hard work made this a good bargain. From this earning he bought the materials for building a comfortable wooden house. He did the work almost entirely himself. He then got a job cutting rails and because he could cut twice as many in a day as any other man in the neighborhood, he did well. He then rented out half his pretty house.

He hopes to make his son a lawyer. I have little doubt that he will live to see him sit in Congress. When this time arrives, the woodcutter's son will rank with any other member of Congress, not of courtesy, but of right. The idea that his origin is a disadvantage will never occur to the imagination of his fellow-citizens.

Any man's son may become the equal of any other man's son, and knowing this makes them work harder. On the other hand, it also encourages that coarseness and lack of respect for their betters they often display.

---

[1] Mrs. Frances Milton Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 1832

A statement by an Ohio resident in 1827: [1]

We of this generation are only pioneers. We have done much, but nothing in comparison with what the next generation will do. We are their "cutters of wood and drawers of water;" we came and saw and conquered, but the profit will be theirs. The state of Ohio has progressed at a rate that has far outstripped the most optimistic predictions. Everything around us—improvement in building, the bustle of business in the villages, the emigration of intelligent and enterprising men, the successful work on the canals, the improvement in roads, the increased travel and facilities available to travelers, the increased attention to education, a higher tone of moral feeling in the community—these and a variety of other facts show clearly that Ohio is rapidly progressing in all that make a people happy and respectable.

A description of Cincinnati:

Eleven years ago, [1813], this was the only place that could properly be called a town on the Ohio and Mississippi from Steubenville to Natchez. It is far different now. But even then it was a large and compact town, with fine buildings rising on the opposite shore and with the steam-factories darting their columns of smoke into the air. All this wealth, large population, and activity has been won from the wilderness within 40 years. In 1815-16 Cincinnati contained between 8,000 and 9,000 inhabitants, handsome streets, a number of churches, and two large market houses. It now is supposed to contain between 16,000 and 20,000 inhabitants. It now has the fourth largest population in the Union.

[**Note:** The ranking of Cincinnati as fourth largest city in 1824 by this writer is incorrect. Six other cities were larger at the time—New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans and Charleston, S.C. However, the writer was correct about rapid growth. Official U. S. census figures for Cincinnati: 1810—2,540; 1820—9,642; 1830—24,831.]

---
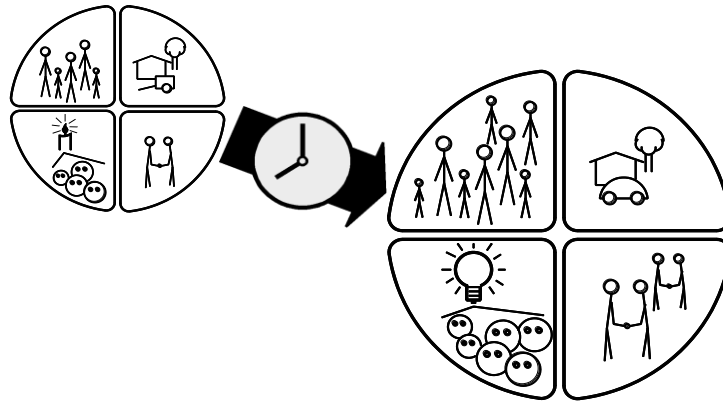
[1] "Prospects of Ohio," *Ohio State Journal.* July 12, 1827
[2] Timothy Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years..* 1826.

Another description of Cincinnati (1839): [1]

Cincinnati is delightful to anyone who loves labor more than anything else. But whoever has a taste for pleasure and expense, amusements and gaiety, would find this beautiful city, with its pure sky and beautiful scenery, a wearisome place. It would be even worse for men of leisure interested in the fine arts. For a person like that, life in Cincinnati would be miserable. He would be attacked, because there is a feeling in the United States that men of leisure are the foundations for an aristocracy.

Follow-Up: System Change Here and Now

Important changes are happening almost everywhere in the United States.

Prepare a report about system change in your own community, city or county:

1. *Gather demographic data for the past 30 years or so. You may already have some of this information from earlier investigations. (Choose a time interval over which major change has occurred, but not more than 50 years.)*

2. *Interview adults who've lived in your area and remember what the area was like as far back as they can recall. Ask what they see as important changes.*

3. *If possible, find copies of old newspapers (in library archives, for example) for your area.*

Use the Model to analyze this data, and identify system changes. For example, how has demographic change affected the human-made setting? Identify changes in patterns of action having to do with transportation, communications, business, or government, and cite reasons for the changes.

Show changes you've identified in a flow chart diagram similar to the one you made for historical changes in Ohio.

---

[1] Michael Chevalier, *Society, Manners, and Politics in the United States, Letters on America.* 1839

For Teacher/Mentor:
This Investigation:

The investigation in Chapter 8 looks at descriptions of the Ohio frontier early in the 19th century. Under the land ordinances passed by Congress under the Articles of Confederation, the "old Northwest" (now Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota) developed rapidly. Farms came first, then towns and villages to provide services. Improvements—canals and railroads—enhanced the growth and prosperity of the region.

The frontier lifestyle encouraged cooperation in some endeavors, self-reliance in much else. Entrepreneurs of all sorts usually did well, reinforcing the general optimism. This optimism was a strong element everywhere in the growing West.

Students are required to use the entire Model as an analytical tool to look at frontier society.

Expanding the investigations: We've generated five optional additional free units that explore systemic relationships:

- Northeastern Region 1800-1850
- Southern Region, 1800-1850
- Western Region 1800-1850
- Comparing Regions, 1800-1850
- Native Americans, 1840-1900

These are available at:
http://www.marionbrady.com/MoreInvestigationsinAmericanHistory.asp.

Note that the first four of these units also give background information for some of the social and ideational differences that led to the Civil War. The unit on the South has a sub-section focusing on the slave experience.

9: System Change: Polarization

When two individuals or groups have different ideas about what's right or fair, and feel strongly about those differences, it often triggers a process that ends in a schoolyard fight, the breakup of a friendship or marriage, a labor strike, a war.

This process—called "polarization"—is so important in human relations it needs to be well understood. However, traditional American history textbooks tend to focus on details of particular conflicts and neglect the general principles underlying them.

The polarization process proceeds like this:

> "Side A" thinks "Side B" is doing something wrong or unfair—saying something untrue about "A," stepping into A's territory, taking more than a fair share, or doing something else that seems threatening or *offensive*.

> So "A" reacts *defensively*—refuses to talk, calls "B" a name, puts up a fence, picks up a rock or stick, steps into "B's" territory, or does something else that gets "B's" attention or arouses suspicion.

> Then "B," feeling threatened, thinks "A's" *defensive* reaction is an *offensive* action, which, of course, causes "B" to react *defensively*, which comes across to "A" as an *offensive* action.

> Everything "A" does seems to "A" to be *defensive*, but "B" sees it as an *offensive* action. Everything "B" does seems to "B" to be *defensive*, but "A" sees it as an *offensive* action. When "A" and "B" are societies, the process may accelerate to war, or continue for generations, long after anyone can remember what started the cycle of action/reaction.

Conflict and violence are inescapable parts of the story of the past. The causes, courses and consequences of war probably fill more pages of history books than any other subject, with many of the remaining pages dealing with other kinds of conflict— riots, demonstrations, labor strife, and so on.

Historians differ in their assumptions about the causes of conflict, but however it starts, polarization—the action/reaction spiral—is the process that often turns minor differences or disagreements into tragedies.

Polarization is a pattern of human behavior. Like all good key ideas, the concept has within it several important and interrelated sub-concepts that help students understand a wide range of past, present and future conflicts. The period that led to the Civil War is a case study in protracted polarization.

Expansion: The increasingly polarized conditions prior to the Civil War are illustrated in more detail in the free optional unit, "Slavery and Polarization, 1821-1860." See: http://www.marionbrady.com/MoreInvestigationsinAmericanHistory.asp. If those materials are used, we suggest you postpone "Selection D" and the Follow-Up activity on present-day polarization until learners have worked through the optional unit.

(Investigation: Polarization before the Civil War)

Investigation: Polarization before the Civil War
System Change: The Process of Polarization
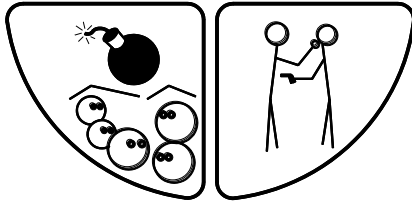
Study the brief description below of what can happen when people have different opinions about what's right or fair. Then apply it to the four data selections (A-D) in the Investigation that follows.

Two groups moving toward war or other major conflict, usually change in predictable, patterned ways:

1. They choose sides, becoming "us" and "them."

2. Feelings on each side intensify.

3. Each side becomes more unified. They "rally around the flag."

4. The issue itself—although originally probably complicated, with "gray areas" about which reasonable people might disagree—increasingly becomes a simple, "black and white" matter. "We" are right and good; "they" are wrong and bad.

5. The views each group has about the issue become simplified, turning into an "ideology."

6. The opinions of each side about the other also become simplified and exaggerated, becoming "stereotypes."

7. Eventually, the two sides grow so far apart that the very same action is viewed totally differently by each. Side "A" acts, sincerely believing that its action is "defensive." Side B, however, looks at that very same action and sees it as an "offensive." That, of course, requires them to take what they see as another "defensive" reaction, which Side A will interpret as even more "offensive" and threatening. This defensive-offensive cycle continues and escalates.

This process of increasing hostility is called "polarization."
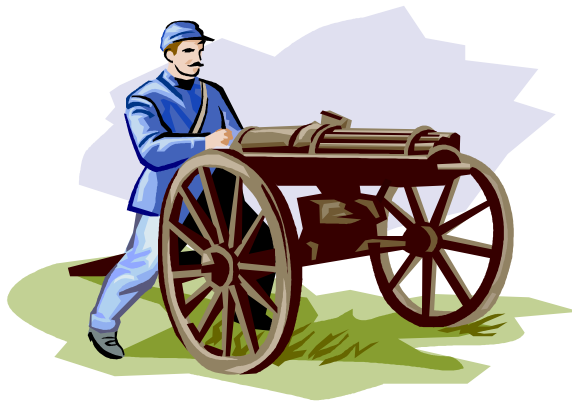
Historical Data: Ideas and Actions before the Civil War

For Selections A through C, identify differences between the data blocks within each selection. For example, what are the differences between the speeches by Congressman Giddings? What aspects of polarization (see previous page) are illustrated in each selection?

Selection A:

Two speeches by Congressman Joshua Giddings of Ohio:[1]

> **(1844)** It is well known, Mr. Chairman, that since the formation of this country there has been a supposed conflict between the interests of free labor and of slave labor, between the Southern and Northern states. I do not say that the conflict is real; I only say that in the minds of the people, both North and South, and in this hall, such conflict exists. This supposed conflict has given rise to difference of policy in our national councils.

> **(1850)** What protection does this law lend to the poor, weak, oppressed, degraded slave, whose flesh has often quivered under the lash of his inhuman owner, whose youth has been spent in labor for another, whose intellect has been nearly blotted out? When he seeks safety in a land of freedom, this worse-than-barbarous law [Fugitive Slave Law] sends the officers of government to chase him down. The people are forced to become his pursuers. Starving, fainting, and numbed with the cold, he drags his weary limbs forward, while the whole power of the government under the President's command, the army and navy, and all the freemen of the land are on his track to drag him back to bondage, under this law.
>
> Every man here [House of Representatives] and every intelligent man in the free states knows that if he delivers a fugitive into the custody of his pursuers the fugitive will be carried to the South and sold to the sugar and cotton plantations. And the slave's life will be sacrificed in five years on a sugar plantation and in seven years on a cotton plantation.
>
> We will not commit this crime. Let me say to the President, no power of government can force us to involve ourselves in such guilt. No! The freemen of Ohio will never turn out to chase the panting fugitive—they will never be made into bloodhounds, to track him to his hiding-place, and seize and drag him out, and deliver him to his tormentors. Rely upon it, they will die first. They may be shot down. The cannon and bayonet and sword may do their work upon them. They may drown the fugitives in their blood. But never will they stoop to such degradation.

---

[1] Joshua R. Giddings, *Speeches in* Congress, 1853; Joshua R. Giddings, *Congressional Globe,* 31st Congress, 2nd session, Dec. 9, 1850.

Selection B:

Identify differences between these three southern opinions. What aspect of polarization is shown by the change from earlier to later opinions?

Letter to the editor of the Milledgeville, Georgia *Journal*; December 4, **1821**:

Georgia should set an example for the other states. She should prevent the growth of a practice everyone agrees is wrong by keeping new slaves out of the state, while allowing citizens to continue to have them for their own use. In the long run, Georgia would probably be better off to follow Virginia's plan. That state has closed all its doors to new slaves, and is doing everything possible to get rid of slavery itself, a practice they now wish had never been introduced.

From a speech by Governor George McDuffie to the legislature of North Carolina, **1835**:[1]

No human institution, in my opinion, is more obviously in keeping with the will of God than slavery, and no one of His laws is written in plainer letters than the law which says this is the happiest condition for the African. That the African Negro was meant to be a slave is clear. It is marked on his face, stamped on his skin, and proved by the intellectual inferiority and natural helplessness of this race. They have none of the qualities that fit them to be freemen. They are totally unsuited both for freedom and for self-government of any kind. They are, in all respects, physically, morally, and politically inferior.

From an excess of labor, poverty and trouble our slaves are free. They usually work from two to four hours a day less than workers in other countries. They usually eat as much wholesome food in one day as an English worker or Irish peasant eats in two. And as for the future, slaves are envied even by their masters. Nowhere on earth is there a class of people so perfectly free from care and anxiety.

---

[1] *American History Leaflets, Colonial and Constitutional*, Albert B. Hart and Edward Channing, eds., No. 10, July 1893

William Harper was a South Carolina lawyer and politician. From his "Memoirs on Slavery," **1860**:[1]

> President Thomas Dew of the College of William and Mary has shown that slavery is a major foundation of civilization. It is, it seems to me, the *only* foundation. If anything can be said for certain about uncivilized man, it is that he will not work any more than just enough to stay alive.
>
> Slavery alone forces man into the habit of regular work, and without regular work there can be no accumulation of property, no saving up for the future, and no taste for comfort or the finer things in life. When a man can command the labor of another, civilization can begin. Since the existence of man on earth, with no exception whatever, every society which has become civilized has done it by enslaving others.
>
> Does man have the right to rule the beasts of the field? To make them labor for him? To kill them for food? Of course he does. It is the right of the being of superior intelligence to decide what kind of relationship he will have with beings of inferior intelligence, and what use he shall make of them.
>
> For the very same reason, civilized man has the right to decide what kind of relationship he will have with the ignorant and the savage. It is a law of nature and of God that the being of superior power should control and use those who are inferior, just as animals prey on each other.

---

[1] *Cotton is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments*, E. N. Elliot, ed., Augusta, Ga., 1860; pp. 549ff.

Selection C:

How are the cartoons different? What aspects of polarization does each demonstrate?
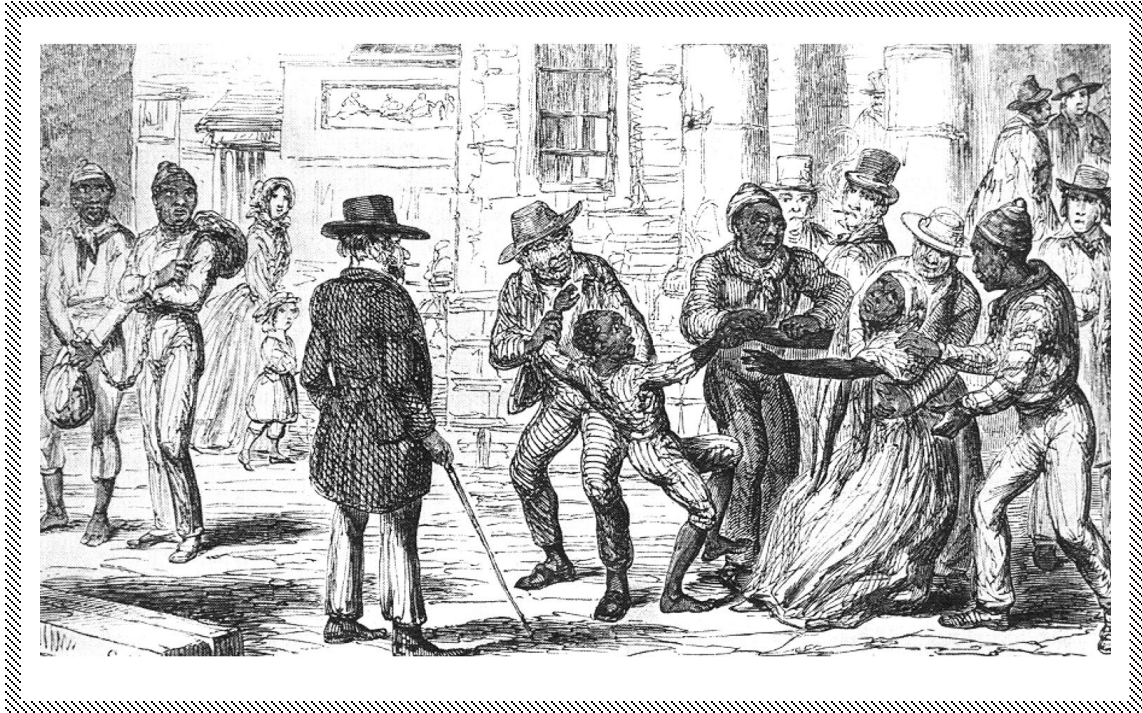
Library of Congress
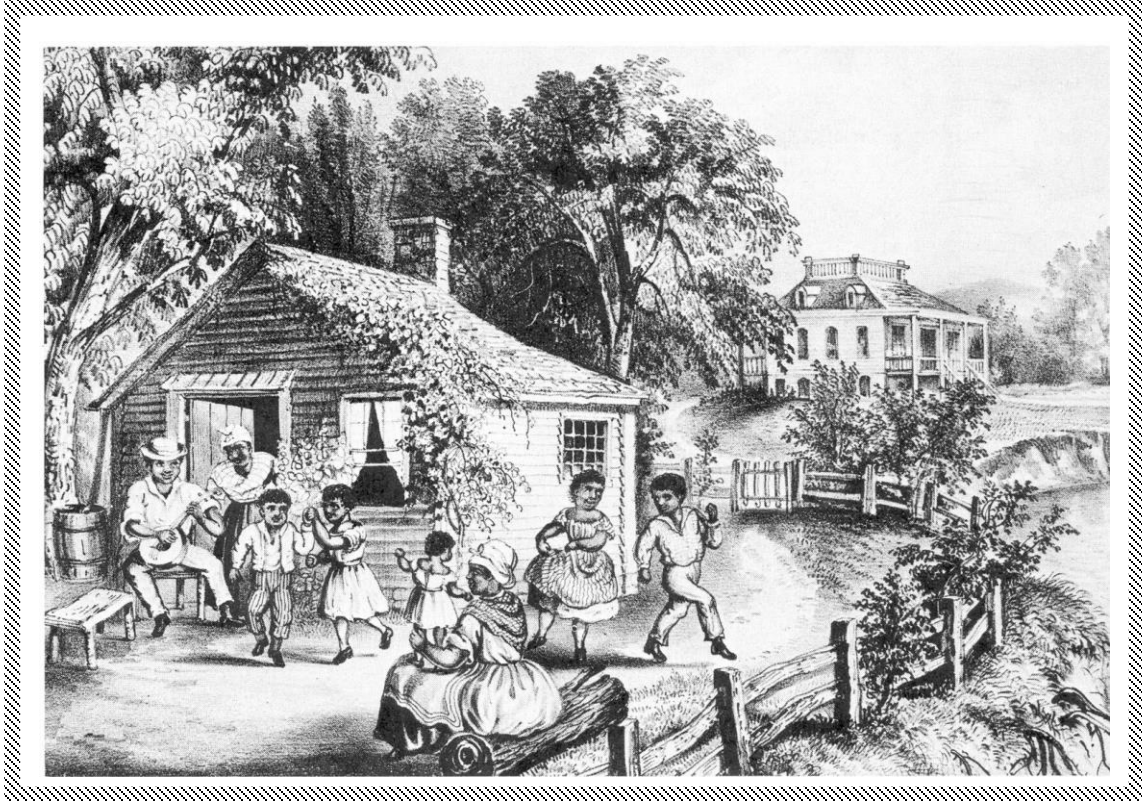
New York Public Library Collection

Selection D:

List phrases that indicate polarization, and identify the aspect of polarization that's occurring (see page 66).

After South Carolina voted to split off from the United States, the status of Federal property around Charleston came into question. U.S. (Union) troops occupied two forts in the mouth of Charleston harbor. Originally most were at Fort Moultrie, but on December 26th, 1860, all were moved to Fort Sumter, on a tiny island at the mouth of the harbor. (See Map) A member of the staff for the U. S. troops wrote a detailed account of subsequent events:[1]
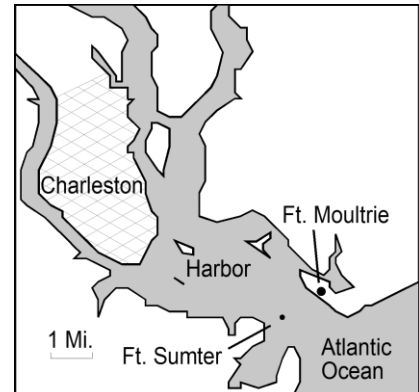
News of the evacuation of Fort Moultrie by Major Anderson was soon learned by the authorities and people of Charleston, creating intense excitement. Crowds collected in streets and open places of the city, and loud and violent were the expressions of feeling against Major Anderson and his action.

On the morning of the 27th, the Governor of South Carolina sent his aide-de-camp, Col. Johnston Pettigrew, of the First South Carolina Rifles, to [meet with] Major Anderson. Col. Pettigrew and his military staff went over to Fort Sumter.

Col. Pettigrew informed Major Anderson that the governor was much surprised that he had reinforced "this work" [i.e. strengthened defenses at Fort Sumter].

Major Anderson promptly responded that there had been no reinforcement of the work; that he had removed his command from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter, as he had a right to do, being in command of all the forts in the harbor.

Colonel Pettigrew replied that when the present governor (Pickens) came into office, he found an understanding existing between the previous governor (Gist) and the President of the United States, that the status in the harbor should remain unchanged. The governor hoped that a peaceful solution of the difficulties could have been reached, but that the governor thought the action of Major Anderson had greatly complicated matters, and that he did not now see how bloodshed could be avoided.

To this Major Anderson replied that he knew nothing about any understanding between the President and the governor. He could get no information or positive orders

(Continued)

---

[1]Samuel Wylie Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War (The Story of Sumter 1860-61).* New York, Webster & Company, 1887.

from Washington, and that his position was threatened every night by the troops of the State.

Major Capers, who accompanied Colonel Pettigrew, asked him how his troops were threatened.

He answered, "By the steam-powered boats that are sent out armed and carrying troops. These steamers pass Fort Moultrie going north, and I fear a landing, and occupation of the sand-hills just north. One hundred riflemen on those hills, which overlook Fort Moultrie, would make it impossible for my men to serve their guns there. Any man with a military head must see this. To prevent this," said he earnestly, "I moved the troops. My only intent was to prevent bloodshed."

Major Capers replied that the steamer was sent out just to patrol, as much to prevent disorder among his own people as to find out whether any irregular attempt was being made to reinforce the fort. The idea of attacking him was never entertained by the little squad who patrolled the harbor.

Major Anderson replied that he was wholly in the dark as to the intentions of the State troops. He had reason to believe that they meant to land and attack him from the north. The desire of the governor to have the matter settled without bloodshed was precisely his object in moving his command from Moultrie to Sumter. He considered that the safety of his command required it. "In this controversy," said he, "between the North and the South, my sympathies are entirely with the South. These gentlemen," said he (turning to the officers of the post who stood about him), "know it perfectly well."

Colonel Pettigrew replied, "Well, sir, however that may be, the governor of the State directs me to say to you courteously that you must return to Fort Moultrie."

"Give my compliments to the governor," said Anderson, "and say to him that I do not agree to his request; I cannot and will not go back."

"Then, sir," said Pettigrew, "my business is done." Both officers, without further ceremony, left the fort.

Follow-Up: Present-Day Polarization

Polarization is present in conflicts of all kinds—labor/management disputes and strikes, international incidents, ethnic and religious conflicts. Even between friends or husbands and wives, small differences can grow into problems out of reach of logic and reasonableness.

Choose a present day conflict that's generating news. Collect documents which include statements by participants on each side of the conflict.

Analyze the statements and events to identify ideology, stereotyping, growth of strong feelings, and other aspects of polarization. Document your analysis.

For Teacher/Mentor:
Elements of Polarization

In-Group Cohesion: Faced with a perceived threat from outsiders, people tend to forget their differences and come together, forming a unified group. This process of "in-group cohesion" is one important characteristic of polarization.

For example, virtually all history books are careful to point out that when the Civil War started only a minority of Southern whites owned enslaved persons. Many Southerners were struggling farmers with small farms and no slaves. They had very little in common with the slave-owning class. However, as polarization accelerated, differences were disregarded, and the South unified in response to the "interference" of Northerners. Cohesion also grew in the North, though not to the degree found in the South, probably because the South didn't seem to present much of a threat to Northern interests.

Stereotyping: Strong words are a natural outgrowth of strong feelings, but something additional happens as a part of polarization. Members of each group tend to "stereotype,"—adopt an oversimplified set of opinions about the characteristics of their opponents. They assume that virtually all opponents share a set of undesirable characteristics.

Selective Perception: Underlying the development of stereotyped ideas and other aspects of polarization, is the phenomenon called "selective perception." We tend to see and hear what we *expect* to see and hear, especially when emotions are aroused. Based on what we perceive, we often react in ways that antagonize others, and they, in turn, act in ways that confirm our expectations.

The more intense the emotion, the more likely this is to happen.

Ideology: We described a tendency for polarized groups to develop oversimplified ideas—stereotypes—about opponents. A tendency toward oversimplification of ideas and opinions about one's own group is also typical. In the forty years before the Civil War, ideas about slavery held by many Southerners changed in the way illustrated by sources given in the student material. In the highly-polarized days just prior to the war, slavery was glorified as a positive moral good by Southern spokesmen. Southern ideas and rationalizations transformed into "ideology"—simplified statements justifying Southern feelings.

The growth of ideology accompanies any significant polarization, and becomes a kind of mental shorthand—easily stated, easily communicated, easily called to mind by a few phrases. "No taxation without representation!" "Aryan Master Race." "Workers of the world, unite. . ." Because the ideas are simplified and imprecise, the ideology becomes an umbrella covering and unifying people who might otherwise disagree. Caught up in the process of polarization and its attendant emotions, few stop to compare ideology with reality.

"Defensive" Reaction: One of the most significant patterns when polarization is taking place is the development of "defensive" responses by each group. The process builds in an action/reaction spiral, which may ultimately result in lots of dead "defenders." The crucial element in this process, of course, isn't what's true, but what's *thought* to be true.

The action/reaction spiral and seeing the opponent's actions as offensive aren't necessarily irrational processes. As each group comes to see the other as a real threat, and polarization builds, at some point a "first strike" attack becomes the next logical "defensive" maneuver. An army massed at a border to *repel* an invasion looks very much like an army getting ready to invade.

A Model of Polarization
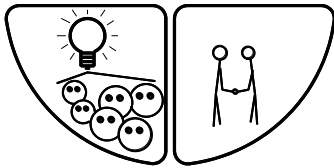
We've pointed out patterns of human behavior that make up the process of polarization. Students who understand the process are less likely to be caught up in it.

Understanding is usually aided by organizing a series of concepts so they interrelate more closely than mere listing provides. A model for organizing the sub-concepts of polarization follows. It may help students identify and remember them:

A Model of Polarization			
	Ideas	**Actions**	**Feelings**
Toward/About Out-Group: ("Them")	Stereotyping, perceptions of danger	Retribution, preemptive attack, boundary building	Dislike, fear, prejudice, anger
Toward/About In-Group: ("Us")	Ideology, adoption of symbols	Unification, cohesion, demonstrations, defensive mobilization, pamphleteering	*Esprit de corps*, patriotism, "brotherhood"
General response:	Simplified ideas, selective perception	"Defensive" actions	Increasing arousal of emotions

This conceptual model, of course, is a special sub-set of the main Model introduced earlier, beginning in Part 3. Shared ideas and actions are both changing. The increasingly tense emotions are actually a sub-element of shared ideas, but it's helpful to separate "feelings" and treat them as a third element of polarization.

Note that, as with all other suggested student activities, primary sources are needed to provide the basis for student analysis.

One way to use the model above is to present it showing only the main categories, leaving the inside blocks to be filled in as understanding grows. Students who develop at least part of the organizing scheme themselves are much more likely to understand and remember it.

Some additional effort and time could be spent investigating the outcomes of polarized situations. Defeat of one group by the other, as in the Civil War, doesn't end the polarization unless one group is virtually destroyed. In situations like that between Israelis and Palestinians, for example, or between the Shiites and Sunni in Iraq, the polarized situation can extend through generations.

In other cases, time, common sense, common cause, and—sometimes—the force of government and laws, may gradually cause the polarized situation to disappear.

This Investigation:

The few data selections included in this investigation can't, of course, illustrate all aspects of pre-Civil War polarization. However, they give examples of increases in emotional intensity and stereotyping (Gidding's speeches, Selection A), the growth of ideology about slavery in the South (Selection B), both ideology and stereotyping (drawings depicting two views of slavery, Selection C), and finally, biased perceptions and the action/reaction spiral (Selection D). For further development and reinforcement, we recommend using additional primary data related to polarization in the optional unit, "Slavery and Polarization;" see "Expansion" note p. 65.

The level of emotion of a speaker or writer will generally be indicated by adjectives. One useful step is to have learners list the "emotionally loaded" words.

Applying the *entire* model to the study of this—or any other—period will yield additional understanding. Environmental and demographic differences between North, South and West had much to do with history prior to the Civil War. However, changes in *actions* and *shared ideas* point up the main characteristics of polarization.
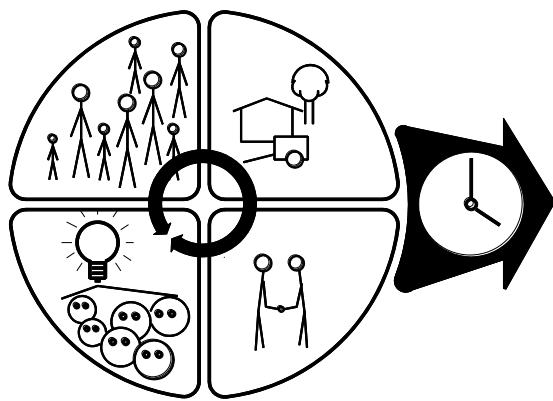
10: System Change: Autonomy

The Model component "Shared Ideas" includes values—emotionally charged beliefs—the members of a society hold as part of their fundamental worldview. If an important value is violated, people react with anger, fear, frustration, or other strong emotions.

One powerful value in many (perhaps all) societies has to do with autonomy—the ability to control one's own self and situation. If autonomy is threatened or lost, the accompanying emotions usually lead to some sort of action such as those listed on page 78.

American attachment to words such as "freedom," "liberty," "independence," and "democracy" grows out of a desire for autonomy.

Early America was settled mostly by people who had a strong drive to be autonomous or they wouldn't have been willing to leave settled societies in Europe and take a chance on what they'd find here. And when they arrived on shore, many kept right on going west, far enough to be "out of the sound of another man's axe."

In 1765, American colonists saw the Stamp Tax as a threat to their autonomy, and reacted with boycotts, demonstrations, appeals to Parliament, and even violence. Though the Act was repealed, it had become a step in the polarization leading up to the American Revolution. Every period of American history has evidence of reactions to threatened or thwarted autonomy.

The two most important sources of inadequate autonomy are *repression by more-powerful people or groups*, and *adverse economic conditions*.

Reactions to loss of autonomy depend on how clearly those who feel threatened understand the cause of their problem, and how much freedom they have to act.

"Autonomy" is a key idea. Identifying those lacking it, and tracing their actions and reactions, is essential if human history is to be understood.

Once learners begin to have a grasp of the concept of autonomy, the excerpt (http://www.marionbrady.com/americanhistory/NorrisTheOctopusExcerpt.pdf) from Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901) may be used as a dramatic introduction to this unit. It tells the story of a farmer suddenly realizing that he's in a situation over which he has no control. (One possibility is to read this selection aloud.) Questions: What's happened to Dyke's autonomy? What do you think he'll do? (This second question, if answered thoughtfully, will elicit a variety of responses that could help learners generate their own versions of the "stress responses" list in the student materials, reinforcing the validity of that list.)

 (Investigation: Problems in Late 19th Century America)

Investigation: Problems in Late 19th Century America

System Change: Autonomy

Have you ever said, or heard someone else say, "You're not the boss of me"? Having control of one's own life and fate—"autonomy"—is a deep-seated human need (an important Shared Idea). When it's missing, feelings of **helplessness** and **frustration** cause stress.

Action Patterns: People often react to these feelings in one or more of the ways listed below. Some reactions may help increase autonomy, others may help cover up feelings of helplessness:

1. **Group formation.** Those lacking autonomy and feeling stressed may join forces with others in similar circumstances, organizing groups to gain collective power.

2. **Opinion appeal**: Those who lack autonomy and feel they're being treated unfairly may publicize their situation in an attempt to gain support. Public demonstrations and marches are typical.

3. **Economic pressure**: Workers lacking autonomy may "strike," refusing to work. "Boycotting"—refusing to buy a particular product or from a particular firm—is another way of pushing for change.

4. **Violence.** Those frustrated by a lack of autonomy sometimes direct their anger at others seen as causing the problem, and take violent action against people or property.

5. **Scapegoats**: People may blame their problems on individuals or groups with little or no responsibility for the situation. People considered "outsiders" are often viewed as scapegoats by those who feel they lack autonomy.

6. **Over-conformity:** Strangely, those dominated by others may react by conforming as closely as possible to what they assume are the desires of the dominating group. This reaction is more likely when the dominating group has overwhelming power.

7. **Escape**: Stress may be alleviated or masked through use of alcohol, drugs, entertainment, or other means, or by physically moving away from the problem situation.

8. **Hope for supernatural intervention**: Those feeling particularly helpless may turn to religion or superstitions, attracted by those who promise some form of intervention by God or the gods to bring justice.

9. **Stasis**: Some may feel paralyzed and do nothing.

Historical Data: People Respond to Loss of Autonomy

For each data block, identify:

1. *The group or kind of people that lack autonomy*

2. *The problem they're facing*

3. *The response, if one is suggested in the data block. The list of stress responses on the previous page will help with the analysis.*

In 1883 an unemployed textile worker named Thomas O'Donnell appeared before a Senate committee meeting in Boston, Massachusetts:[1]

Question: What is your business?

Answer: I am a mule spinner [operator of a machine that spins fiber into thread] by trade. I have worked at it since I came to this country from England 11 years ago.

Question: Do you have work right along?

Answer: No sir, since that strike we had down in Fall River (Massachusetts) about three years ago I have not worked much more than half the time.

Question: Why?

Answer: Well, at Fall River if a man has not got a boy to act as a 'back-boy" it is very hard for him to get along. In a great many cases they discharge men and put in men who have boys who can work in a mill at 30 or 40 cents a day.

Question: Is the idea to help the boy earn something for himself?

Answer: Well, no; the object is this: They are doing away with a great deal of mule spinning and putting in ring spinning. For that reason they get all the small help they can to run these ring frames. There are so many men in the city to work, and whoever has a boy can have work, but whoever has no boy stands no chance. Probably he may have a few months of work in the summertime, but will be discharged in the fall. That is what leaves me in poor circumstances. Our children, of course, are very often sickly from one cause or another, on account of not having sufficient clothes, or shoes, or food, or something.

---

[1] *Report upon the Relations between Labor and Capital* 48th Congress, 1885.

Testimony of a visitor to a Massachusetts factory (1868):[1]

> I inquired of the manager of a major factory whether it was the custom of the manufacturers to do anything for the physical, intellectual, and moral welfare of their workpeople. "We never do," he said. "As for myself, I regard my workpeople just as I regard my machinery. So long as they can do my work for what I choose to pay them, I keep them, getting out of them all I can. What they do or how they fare outside my walls I don't know, nor do I consider it my business to know. They must look out for themselves as I do for myself. When my machines get old and useless, I reject them and get new, and these people are part of my machinery."

1875 petition of Atlanta workers:[2]

> The greed of certain rich business people would force us into hopeless poverty, and thus enslave us and our children forever. Therefore, we, the undersigned mechanics and workingmen, pledge our sacred honor that from and after this date
>
> - We will not deal in a business way, or support for public office, any man or men (whether grocer, dry goods, provision, or other dealer) who oppresses us by employing Negro instead of skilled white labor.
>
> - We will not trade with anyone who buys his supplies from those who employ Negro instead of skilled white labor.
>
> - We will not rent houses owned by persons who employ Negro to the exclusion of skilled white labor in their construction or repairs.

In 1870, Mrs. Myra Blackwell applied to the Illinois State Supreme Court for a license to practice law. The Court explains its refusal to give her a license:[3]

> God designed the sexes to do different kinds of work. It is man's work to make, apply, and execute the laws—this has always been considered true. The legislature gave the power of granting licenses to practice law to this court. They didn't have the slightest expectation that this privilege would be extended to women.
>
> If we did this, we believe that soon every official job in this state would be filled by women—even those of governor, judges, and sheriffs.

---

[1] Massachusetts Senate Document No. 21, 1868
[2] *Iron Age,* July 22, 1875.
[3] Stanton, Anthony et al., eds., *The History of Woman Suffrage,* vol. II, 1881.

During the 1890s, a new political party—the Populists—appeared. It was mainly formed by groups of farmers and workers. Between 1890 and 1896, many Populist candidates gained seats in state legislatures and in Congress. Populist goals were stated at a convention held in Omaha, Nebraska in 1892. Here's part of their platform:[1]

…The rich of America and Europe have joined together and are rapidly taking over the world. If they are not overthrown at once, either terrible social problems, the destruction of civilization or a dictatorship will result.

We declare:

First—That the laboring people of this country are going to stand together permanently.

Second—That wealth belongs to those who do the work that creates it; that making money from the labor of others is robbery.

Third—That the railroads are either going to own the people, or the people are going to own the railroads.

Transportation

Since transportation is a necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads. And since telegraph systems and telephone systems serve the same purpose as the post office, they should also be owned and operated by the government.

Land

The land and its resources are the heritage of the people. Ownership of land by foreigners should be prohibited. All land now held by railroads and other corporations which is not actually needed by them should be taken back by the government.

In 1893, John Peter Altgeld, former governor of Illinois, gave a Labor Day speech in Chicago. This was his advice to the working people of America:[2]

Let the laborer learn from industry. Faultfinding and idle complaint are useless. Great forces, like great rivers, cannot be stopped. You must be able to fight your own battles. If the laborer stands single-handed before giant corporations, he will be destroyed. The world gives only when it is forced to give, and respects only those who command its respect.

Whenever you prove that you are an active, concentrated power, moving along lawful lines, then you will be felt in government. Until then, you will not.

[1] Populist Party Platform, July 4, 1892.
[2] **"**Address to the Laboring Order of Chicago," *Live Questions,* 1899

From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*, July 14, 1892. Caption: "The Labor Troubles at Homestead, Pennsylvania—Attack of the strikers and their sympathizers on the surrendered Pinkerton men." The Homestead Strike at a steel mill near Pittsburgh resulted in a number of deaths of both striking workers and Pinkerton men, a private army hired by the mill manager.
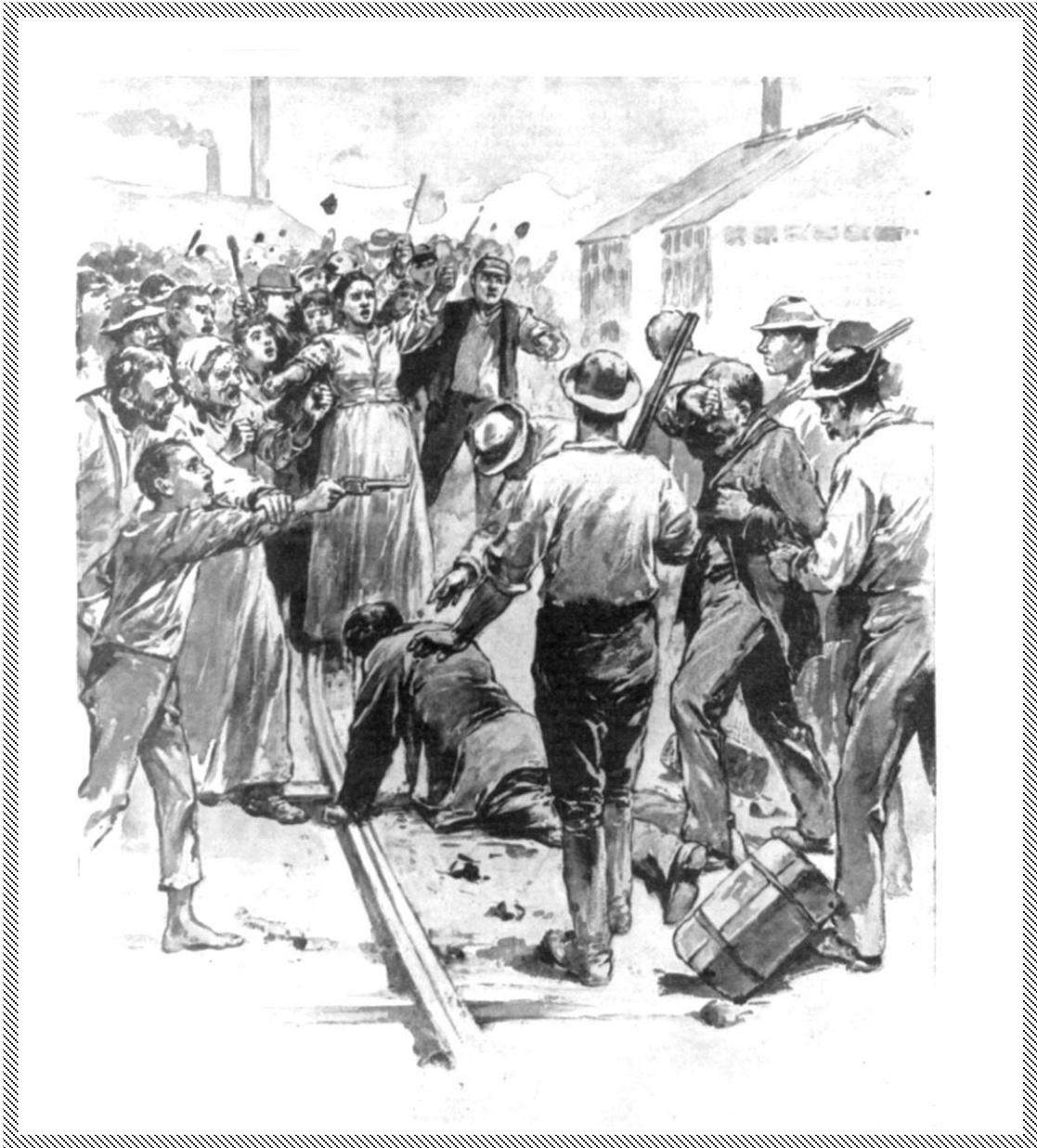
One of the most successful labor leaders was John Mitchell, president of the United Mine Workers from 1898 until 1908. From a book he wrote in 1903: [1]

Under normal conditions the individual workman cannot bargain with his employer about the wages he will receive. The workman usually has not saved much money, and must have work and wages to survive. Each worker has only his own labor to sell. The employer buys the work of hundreds or thousands of men. He can easily do without the work of any one man who asks for more money. Because of this, the individual has little power. The best man is forced to work for the wages of the worst and lowest.

Trade unionism starts with understanding these facts.

From a book written in 1893:[2]

Gather up the money that the working classes have spent for rum during the last 30 years, and I will build for every workingman a house, and layout for him a garden, and clothe his sons in broadcloth and his daughters in silks. I will place at his front door prancing horses, and secure him a policy of life insurance so that the present home may be well maintained after he is dead. The most overpowering enemy of the working classes is intoxicating liquor.

---

[1] John Mitchell, *Organized Labor,* 1903
[2] T. DeWitt Talmage, *Temperance Selections For Readings and Recitations* 1893.

The graph below shows business trends from 1860 to 1897, which had important effects on the autonomy of many Americans. See the note below the graph.

BUSINESS TRENDS

The dark areas <u>above</u> the center line represent times of prosperity. The areas <u>below</u> the line represent times when business was poor and many people were out of work.
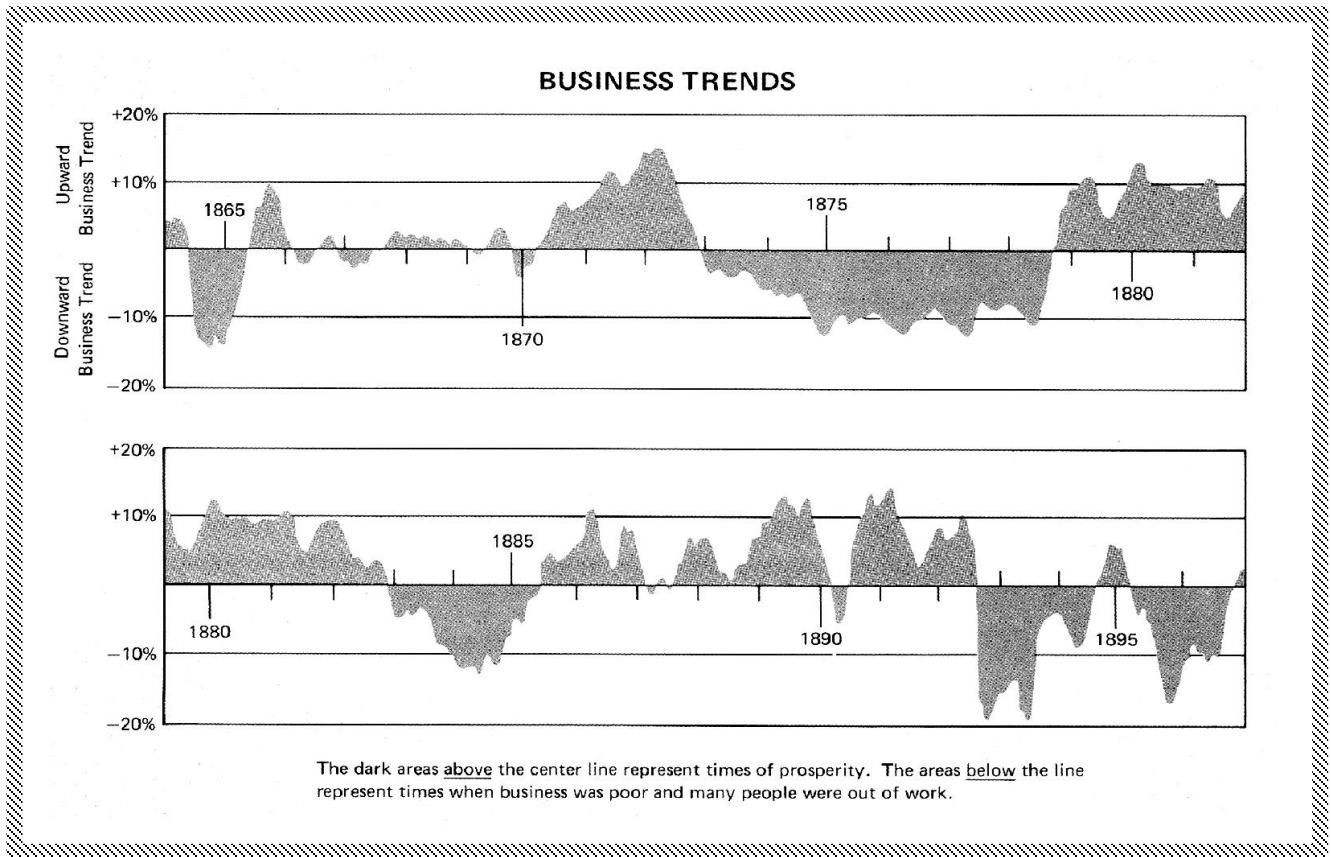
Follow-Up: Autonomy Here and Now

 A great many news stories describe a situation affecting the autonomy of those involved. Wars, elections, natural disasters, crime, advances in science, land development, business changes—all have consequences for autonomy.

From the front section of one or more daily newspapers, select three stories in which a group's autonomy is affected in some significant way.

Analyze the situation and identify the kinds of people likely to lose or gain autonomy. Describe the probable effects of the situation on the autonomy (or feelings of autonomy) of group members. Identify any response described, and possible future responses of those affected.

In some cases, these effects may not be spelled out. For example, a terrorist attack such as that which occurred on September 11, 2001 affected the feelings of autonomy of millions of Americans. There were additional consequences for the autonomy of Muslims in the U.S. and elsewhere.

For Teacher/Mentor:
Autonomy and Stress

A main cause of stress, both individual and social, is loss or lack of control over one's own fate. Stress due to loss of autonomy is one of the prime drivers of historical change, and it's nearly impossible to overstate its importance in influencing past and future events. Pick up any newspaper, and look for articles and letters about demonstrations, violence, anti-government protests, calls for organization, or complaints against "outsiders." Feelings of lack of autonomy will motivate those speaking and taking action.

The period after the Civil War was one of rapid industrial growth, increased immigration to the United States, growing cities and expansion into the West. It was also the "Gilded Age"—a period during which wealthy leaders were indifferent to workers and unconcerned about working conditions. Powerful monopolies did as they pleased, living conditions were often appalling, Jim Crow laws demeaned African-American people and made life difficult, the lack of child labor laws took a toll on the young, Native Americans lived hard lives on unproductive reservations, and frequent business downturns affected all but the wealthiest.

Farmers, factory workers, miners and other laborers, blacks and Native Americans—all suffered at the hands of railroad and bank barons, factory owners, and others in positions of power.

In response to these conditions, this period saw the growth of labor movements, the formation of unions, strikes, strife and violence, and the origin of organizations such as the Grange and the Populist Party. The poor, black people, and immigrants were often scapegoats, blamed for problems they didn't create. Injustices led to the rise of religious movements preaching what was called the "social gospel."

Which of the nine reactions to thwarted autonomy emerges depends on how the loss or threat is perceived by those affected, their assumptions about possibilities for change, and how clearly they understand the source of the threat. Sometimes, several reactions occur simultaneously. For example, those who join forces to organize almost always seek to publicize their views, and often boycott or strike to bring economic pressure against those exercising power over their lives.

New technology in this and other periods was a threat to autonomy. Consider using a YouTube^TM version of the folk song "John Henry." This storied contest between a black man and a machine reflects the issues brought on by mechanization. Our favorite version, one with great clarity and drama, from many years ago—is the version performed by the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra, at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQOlScMNxMQ. This version, unlike some others, is accurate with regard to the tools and techniques used in the contest.

In the type of drilling done by John Henry, steel shafts, with hardened chisel-shaped tips, were hammered into stone to make holes for explosives to blast the rock. The "shaker" held the drill shaft, and shook and rotated it between blows to clear the tip of broken rock fragments.

Emphasize the economic chart and the effects of economic cycles that came to be

important during this period. Prior to the Civil War, most Americans lived on farms or indirectly depended on agriculture for income, so economic cycles had relatively little effect on them. Gradually, as industries concentrated populations, periods of "booms and busts" created social instabilities that increased uncertainty and generated stress.

Extending investigation of autonomy and stress: We've developed three additional (free) units for more in-depth study:

> "Industrial Change, 1865-1890"

> "African-Americans, 1865-1910"

> "Immigrants, 1870-1920."

See: http://www.marionbrady.com/MoreInvestigationsinAmericanHistory.asp.

Aspects of loss of autonomy and subsequent reactions are also illustrated in the optional unit on Native Americans. That unit focuses on cultural interaction, but loss of autonomy played a central role in events affecting Plains Indian nations.

For further discussion, we suggest this question: "What is the relationship between the role of government and autonomy?"

It could be argued that optimizing autonomy is *the* primary purpose of government. Providing the "commons"—shared government-supplied facilities from roadways and other infrastructure, courts, police protection, commercial and contract laws, currency and a great deal more—supplies the necessary framework and environment for individual and collective liberty and enterprise. Damping the effects of economic woes and protecting the autonomy of minorities is, and should be, an essential role of government.

The vast significance of autonomy (or its lack) in shaping history and ongoing human behavior makes it an essential concept. For more on this subject, see http://marionbrady.com/americanhistory/AutonomyQuotes.pdf.
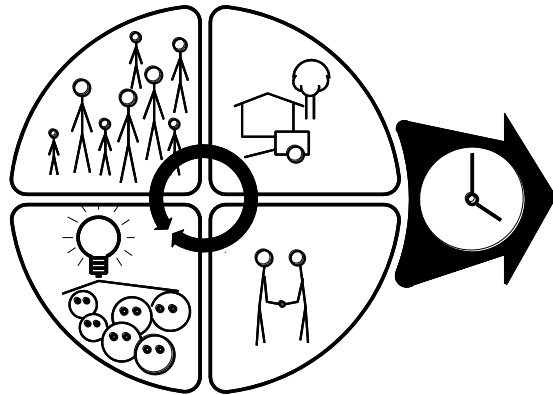
11: System Change: Complex Causation

The causes and consequences of change in human affairs are complex, but understanding them is easily the most important reason for studying the past. They're the best source of insight into present-day events, and probable or possible futures. Traditional instruction vastly oversimplifies the causes of events and change. And, because the writers of history make their theories of change part of "the story," it blocks students from inferring, hypothesizing, and engaging in other critical thinking processes.

We've already touched on the complexity of change. Was the Civil War "caused" by regional differences in economic life? Yes, in part. Differing views of the rights of states to control their own destiny? Yes, in part. Differences over slavery? Yes, in part. The growth of polarization? Yes, in part. Other factors? Probably. But even if all the causes could be identified, how much weight should be attached to each would be impossible to say. Settling these kinds of questions isn't nearly as important as developing the skills to consider them rationally.

One serious result of the failure of history courses to teach the complexity of change has to do with "the law of unintended consequences." Politicians and policymakers may pass a law to solve a particular problem, then discover that the new law—although perhaps solving a problem—creates other problems they hadn't anticipated. They could, for example, pass a law requiring that everybody who committed a certain illegal act had to spend a certain number of years in prison, only to discover that more prisons had to be built, prison staff hired, prisoners fed, and so on, requiring the raising of taxes, a consequence they hadn't anticipated.

In investigating past or future change, an important question is "What else might be changing?" The Model can act as an "hypothesis generator" to bring up possible links between changes. For example, it suggests that if the population density in a region changes, changes may occur in such diverse things as religious practices, child-rearing patterns, or the level of pollution in the water supply.

If students learn from the study of American history how change can ripple through the fabric of society, and develop the ability to trace the causal links that tie changes together, they'll be far better equipped to deal with a complex future.

(Student materials: Investigation: Changes in a Native American Group; System Change: Complex Causes and Effects; Investigation: Changes Due To World War I)

Investigation: Changes in a Native American Group

About 1900, a government agency left a wooden wagon with a group of Tohono O'Odham (Papago) Native Americans living in the southwestern part of the United States. The people began using it, leading to a series of changes in their way of life.

Listed below are the most important changes, in random order. Copy each change on a separate slip of paper, then arrange them in what you think was the order in which they occurred.[1]

- Increasing use of water in households

- Men began selling firewood to whites in the nearest town.

- The wagon was used to transport people and equipment between summer and winter camps.

- One man learned to work with iron so he could shoe horses and repair metal parts.

- Everyone switched from using clay pots to carry water to wooden barrels which wouldn't break. (Clay pots were still used to store water, because they kept it cool.)

- Women stopped picking up firewood; instead, men cut firewood.

- Horses were trained to pull the wagon.

- Women no longer carried water to the village from a nearby spring. Instead, water was brought by wagon.

- A road was built so that the wagon could be taken to the mountains.

- Cash crops were grown to sell to the whites.

- Papago people began using money.

Note that each of these changes are in "patterns of action" on the Model. *Use the model to identify other possible changes that may have resulted from the use of the wagon.*

---

[1] Adapted from Mead, Margaret, ed., *Cultural Patterns and Technical Change*, p. 242 (New York and Toronto, New American Library, Inc. (Mentor Books), 1955). Copyright 1955 by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

System Change: Complex Causes and Effects

A story told by a relative of the authors:

"I'm embarrassed to talk about it. It was 1925, and we'd been hearing and reading in the newspapers about all the money people were making buying and selling land in Florida. I'd finished one year of business college, was working in a good job, and had saved some money. Two other boys and I headed for Florida in a Model-T Ford. We got to Miami, and the streets were full of people selling land. We talked to one guy who was leaving to go back north. He'd bought land three weeks before for six hundred dollars, and just sold it for nine thousand dollars.

"We found an agent with brochures that showed beautiful development—streets, palm trees, Spanish-style houses—planned on the land he was selling. Sight unseen, each of us bought a small lot, paying $100 apiece. That was a lot of money in those days, at least for me.

"With our purchase contracts in hand, we went out to look at the land we'd purchased. As near as we could figure, the lots we thought we bought were out in the bay a quarter mile or more beyond where the street ended, and were under several feet of water, even at low tide.

"We went back to find the sales agent, but he'd disappeared, along with our money. We headed home with barely enough money for gas, and not enough for food. A few months later, the papers reported that the Florida Boom had collapsed. Thousands of people lost millions of dollars."

In block diagram form:
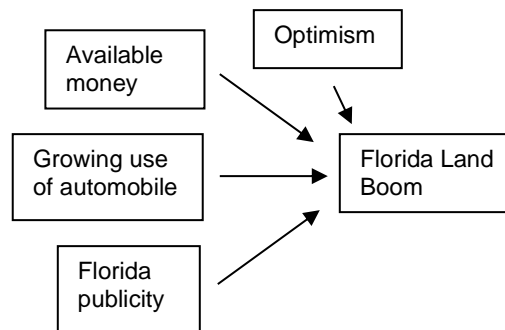
This is an example of "multiple causation." As with most events, the Florida Land Boom grew out of several causes.

Here's a diagram of more of the characteristics of the Florida Boom:
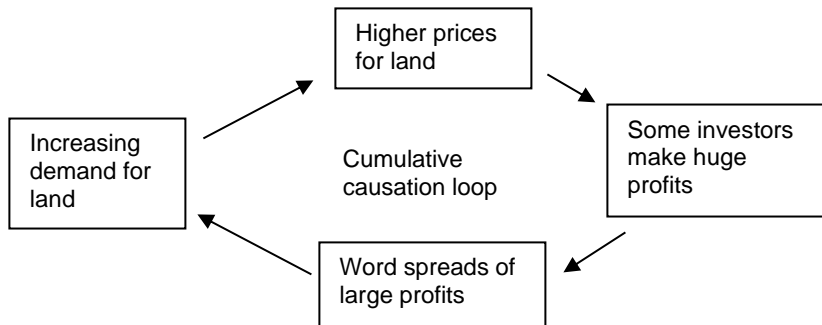
Note the role played by "shared ideas about the future" on all aspects of the land boom. As long as people thought that the future was likely to be good, prices went up.

Players in this drama learned that the ascending economic spiral didn't continue indefinitely. The boom collapsed in 1925 because (1) Crooked agents caused many to lose their money, and this became generally known. (2) Large investors, seeing trouble ahead, sold and got out of the market. (3) Selling drove prices down rapidly. (4) The fear of major losses led to panic selling and (5) collapse of the real estate market.

Both the boom and the bust were examples of "**cumulative causation**."

Investigation: Changes due to World War I

Generate a system change block diagram for Bridgeport, Connecticut, based on the account that follows.

- *First, identify changes and summarize them on small squares of paper or Post-it™ notes.*

- *Arrange the changes to show cause-effect links, and connect them with arrows. Sketch the arrows lightly in pencil so changes can be made easily. Identify examples of multiple and (if possible) cumulative causation.*

Using the Model, find where each change "fits" in the Model framework. The Model may also suggest other changes to be included in the system change diagram.

This account of Bridgeport, Connecticut was written in 1916, just after World War I began in Europe, but before the United States entered the war.[1]

Until last year Bridgeport was a comfortable manufacturing town of about 115,000 people. Its peacetime industries were various. The boom struck Bridgeport early in 1915. War orders and a stream of European money flowed in. Existing factories were rapidly adapted and new ones were run up. One great concern began to turn out heavy motor wagons; another was making submarines. The population grew by some 50,000 in less than 12 months. Men, especially young men, flocked from all the places round into Bridgeport as a city of unlimited opportunity. In the course of a few months a typical New England town became one of the busiest hives of war industry in America. The greatest single factor in this development has been the Remington Arms Company, which during the summer of last year laid the foundations of an immense factory on the edge of the town. In October it had accommodation for 2,000 workpeople; by the beginning of this year about 15,000 were employed.

The first assumption of the Remington Arms Company appears to have been that, since it was giving Bridgeport the benefit of a fresh industry, the responsibility for housing and ordering the new population rested altogether with the city authorities. The consequences are not difficult to imagine.

The problem of house-room became unmanageable. Rents [prices] of houses and rooms leapt up. Land values were inflated. The owners and agents of real estate gathered a glorious harvest. It was estimated that at the end of 1914, the number of empty houses in Bridgeport and its suburbs was not far short of 2,000. A few months later there was not a house of any kind vacant nor a room to be obtained. ... The economic conditions, especially the sharp competition for workmen between the firms and the abundance of money, made a soil favorable to labor disputes. The record of Bridgeport in this regard is quite extraordinary. During a period of two and a half months last summer, fifty-five strikes occurred. They resulted in notable gains to the workers, who were able to secure improved rates of wages and a standard working day. Bridgeport is now an eight-hour town.

Follow-Up: Complex Change Here and Now

Diagram multiple causes that affect present-day local crime rates, amount of local building construction, or local change in population (Choose one or two). Use the Model to suggest possible causes of change.

Diagram cumulative causation in increasing success (or increasing failure) of a sports team or a restaurant.

Diagram multiple and cumulative causation in the "housing bubble" economic collapse in late 2008.

---

[1] "The War Boom Town in America," *Living Age* vol. 290, pp. 751-753. (1916)

For Teacher/Mentor:
The Investigations:

> This Part includes two separate investigations. In both cases, we suggest that students use change diagrams—boxes connected by arrows indicating cause and effect. Small Post-It Notes™ stuck on a larger paper or poster board, and connected by penciled-in arrows are an easy way to generate such diagrams.

> The first investigation illustrates linear causation. It traces changes in a Papago Native American tribe in the early 20th century. Eleven specific changes are listed in random order, and the student must rearrange them to try to identify the actual sequence in which the changes occurred. (The actual sequence is listed below.)

> Few students are likely to be totally successful. The benefits of the activity don't depend on regenerating a particular sequence, but in engaging the thought processes the activity requires. They are complex, and the concepts and thinking skills regarding social and economic change, properly emphasized, may be transferred to many different contexts students will confront in life.

> The second investigation requires analysis of complex causation based on the changes in Bridgeport, Connecticut stemming from World War I. Student materials include examples of multiple and cumulative causation.

The Tohono O'Odham "Cultural Borrowing" Sequence:

> The sequence of events, according to the original article:

- Horses were trained to pull the wagon.
- One man learned to work iron…
- Women no longer carried water to the village…
- Everyone switched from using clay pots to carry water…
- Increasing use of water in households
- A road was built…
- The wagon was used to transport people and equipment between summer and winter camps.
- Women stopped picking up firewood…
- Men began selling firewood to whites.
- Papago people began using money.
- People began growing cash crops to sell to the whites.

Extending the study of complex change: Block-and-arrow system diagramming of economic changes associated with the 1920s and 1930s is an effective learning tool, particularly when contrasting data is given students for the two decades. This makes it easier to see differences between the optimistic '20s and the Great Depression of the '30s. We've generated investigations for this subject that include data for wages, prices, levels of employment, sale of goods and services, attitudes of people toward their situation and the future, and so on. See: http://www.marionbrady.com/MoreInvestigationsinAmericanHistory.asp.

Another system change worth investigating by students is the American city after World War II. **A unit for this study is also available at the above web URL**. Growing prosperity and population led to suburban growth, with its reliance on the automobile. Decreased use of urban transit led to its decline and eventual disappearance in many cities. Lack of downtown parking, and the growth of suburban shopping centers led to the closing of downtown stores and less tax income for city governments. More affluent residents moved to the suburbs, leaving low-income people behind. These people needed city services (health, education, protection, etc.) just when the city had less money. This set up a vicious cycle (cumulative causation, again)—reduced city services, lower tax revenue, increased problems, and more people and businesses moving out of the central city.
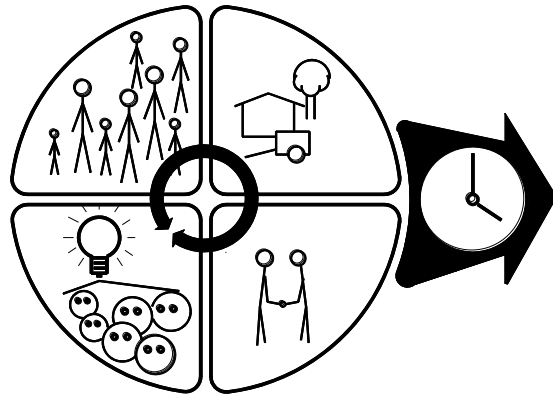
12: How to Build Investigations

The tools we've provided in this book may be used to generate many additional worthwhile Investigations. A new Investigation may be suggested by an interesting primary source or a penetrating historical question. *As with students, you'll find it helpful to work with others in this process of developing student materials.* Here's the sequence we've found effective:

1.   Choose a situation from American history worth investigating, such as:

- Pioneers in your state or locality

- U. S. government problems under the Articles of Confederation

- French immigrants in Louisiana, and their cultural differences with others in America

- Life in gold rush California, and its later effects on the state

- Founding, growth and change of the nearest major city

- Railroad development in your region

- Military technology change and its effects

- Nearby historical events, and so forth. The possibilities are limitless.

2.   Gather primary sources related to the chosen situation. Vast numbers of historical documents are available on the Internet; others are available in libraries. Some Internet sites with collections of documents are listed in this section. *Not all primary sources are effective as materials for active learning. A 200-year-old document can have the same problem as any textbook: If the document contains only generalizations and conclusions (answers), significant intellectual processing by the student may not be possible.*

Here are a few suggestions:

- Keep the Model in mind when checking documents. The sub-categories of the model may trigger ideas about which sources to choose, and how those sources may be used. (Further use of the Model in guiding Investigations is described below.)

- The best primary data is often very specific—describing what a particular person or group did at a particular time and place. The more concrete the data, the more likely it is to provide good material for student analysis and interpretation. Specific, concrete sources also tend to be, intrinsically, more interesting to the reader than collections of generalized information.

- Almost always, a document is more effective if it's compared with other documents. In investigating change, sources can provide "before" and "after" information. Similarly, differences between regions or societies are most evident when data from the two can be contrasted. Two of the most important tools in the active-learning teacher's or mentor's kit are the questions, "How are they alike?" and "How are they different?"

- English historian Philip Bagby pointed out that documents and other sources are often most effective when used in ways not originally intended. Particularly when investigating a group's shared ideas, values, and premises, almost any document, drawing, or other "residue" produced within that group will unconsciously reflect their ways of thinking. *The New England Primer*, for example, reflected the Puritan view that humans were basically evil, and only strict obedience to God's commandments could keep this evil under control. The grim possibility of death is brought up for consideration by small children several times in the familiar rhyming alphabet from the *Primer*. Similarly, shared ideas may often be inferred from a wide variety of documents or other sources.

- Many programs simply have students find information on the web, then prepare reports that "tell what happened." Though this does provide somewhat greater student involvement than simply reading and remembering a textbook, it's still primarily passive, not active and intellectually demanding.

You may find it necessary to focus more narrowly on something interesting within the larger situation. For example:

- Find evidence and describe the environment, demographics, patterns of action and shared ideas of the Native Americans that lived in the local region prior to occupation by members of the dominant American society.

- Between 1865 and 1900, several business cycles affected the United States. Find out what "business cycle" means, when they occurred, and how they affected American workers. Identify possible reasons for the cycles.

- Compare railroad construction in Northeast, South, and Western United States before 1860. Find reasons for differences. Identify the importance of railroads to people living in each region.

3. Use the Model as the main guide for investigation. For example, a document can be analyzed to find the shared ideas that are motivating the people involved, the actions they're taking that reflect these ideas, and relationships between ideas, actions, setting, and demographics. Students can take almost any historical source, go to the second level of the Model, and investigate to find evidence of such things as:

- Economic circumstances

- Decision-making patterns and institutions

- The influence of ideas about the future or about human nature

- Shaping effects of population density or birth rate

- Effects of new technology

- Effects of changes in resources.

This will almost certainly challenge students to move toward active involvement in what they're learning.

Internet links:

American Colonist's Library:

http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/1294965/posts

Huge compilation of documents and links.

AMDOCS: Documents for the Study of American History

http://www.vlib.us/amdocs/index.html

Another large library, with chronological index.

American Journeys:

http://www.americanjourneys.org/

Provided by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Eyewitness accounts of the exploration of North America.

American Memory:

http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html

Site provided by the Library of Congress. Includes enormous resources, including "The Nineteenth Century in Print" (major periodicals such as Harper's Magazine, and books), "A Century of Lawmaking," (the records of Congress 1775-1875), and much more.

Awesome Stories:

http://www.awesomestories.com

This is a compilation of history-related links, primarily designed for educators. Free access for teachers, librarians and administrators; registration required.

Digital History:

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/

Primary sources and links, plus other teacher helps.

History Central:

http://www.historycentral.com/index.html

Sponsored by MultiEducator, Inc. This site for teachers and educators provides access to many primary sources in all periods of American history.

History Matters:

http://historymatters.gmu.edu/

Includes some interesting first-hand accounts not included in other sites.

Internet History Sourcebook Project:

http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/

Large library. Some material is in this collection, some from linked collections. All material is public domain, copy permitted.

U. S. Census Data:

http://www.census.gov/

Statistical Abstracts section has historical information on demographics, along with much other statistical information. Also includes maps and other resources.

Others:

http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collections

http://www.constitution.org/primarysources/primarysources.html

Note: **We've attempted to identify major sites that provide historical documents related to American history, but many other sites include historical materials, and significant sources may have been omitted.**

Appendix A: Some Ramifications of Active Learning

Role of Teacher and Student

In traditional history classrooms, the teacher, backed up by the textbook, is "the voice of authority." Superior knowledge is a source of power and personal satisfaction. "Standards" establishing what students are expected to know imply "higher authority with particular expectations." Standardized tests do the same. Bureaucracy reinforces the teller-listener relationship in myriad subtle ways. Even the design and arrangement of classroom furniture can reinforce the "sit-down, shut-up-and-listen" message.

Active learning requires a major change in the teacher's role. (This change is less of a problem for those who see themselves as mentors.) The teacher must no longer be an "answerer"—a source of information—because giving students answers short-circuits the learning process. Some may find it difficult to change from the "answerer" role to a new role which places less emphasis on textbook text and verbal story telling.

Students are often as reluctant as teachers to switch from the "remember" task to work demanding the use of all thought processes. Not many really like the familiar game, but they know how to play it, and abandoning it can trigger insecurity. "Just tell me what you want me to know," some may say. Others—often "A" students—may be critical. Accustomed to schooling's usual emphasis on memory work, and having been successful in it, they may sincerely believe they're not learning anything.

These issues should be addressed. A thoughtful discussion of the necessity of complex thought, and traditional education's neglect of it, may be necessary.

Pacing

Active learning may seem less efficient than "read and remember" learning. Using a conventional textbook, it's possible to go from Columbus to the latest national election in a school year. Active learning is bound to go more slowly, because the students must be given time to ponder, discuss, move down intellectual blind alleys, and find answers to difficult questions for themselves.

If you're trying to help learners understand something really important, there's no point in moving on to a second idea until they understand the first, even if that takes days, weeks, months. We're dealing with the most significant ideas of all here, so don't rush it. Take as long as it takes.

If you feel uncomfortable about not "covering" something, remind yourself of how little most adults can remember of what they once "learned."

Evaluation

When we play the old "read and remember" game ("Who was king of Spain in 1537?"), keeping score is easy. It's simply a matter of computing the percentage of

"right" answers to the total number of questions asked. There's little room for argument, bureaucracy-generated blanks can be filled in, and public expectations are met.

But when the game changes to "investigate and think" ("Why do you think Spanish and English attitudes toward authority differed?"), keeping score is harder, and arriving at a precise, meaningful number is impossible. Concern switches from the *quantity* of recalled "right" answers, to the *quality* of a whole range of thought processes, and subjectivity becomes unavoidable. Is one "good" hypothesis equal in value to two or three "fair" hypotheses? To a half-dozen poor ones? What *is* a "good" hypothesis? A "logical" inference? A "valid" generalization? A "defensible" value judgment? These are questions of fundamental importance that too few educators address.

Subjective evaluation of student performance by teachers is necessary, even inevitable. However, using active learning investigations in the manner we suggest produces much student-generated material. This material, even without the traditional supplementary quizzes, will generally provide ample evidence of the quality of student thought for evaluation by teacher or mentor.

Abandon the read-and-remember game, and school becomes far more like the real world.

Appendix B: Shared Ideas in American Society

Scholars, such as historian Robin M. Williams, Jr., have identified and described the ideas that motivate present-day Americans. A brief overview is included here; other lists will differ somewhat since the premises tend to overlap and have "fuzzy" edges. For example, American assumptions about the significance of the individual are important in several shared premises.

In general, the eleven brief overviews below summarize those considered very significant. Reading them, some may tend to assume they're "human nature"—beliefs and assumptions common to all people everywhere. They're not.

1. **Americans believe in the inevitability of progress.** Long-term change "for the better" rather than maintenance of the status quo is assumed to be normal. If the course of events doesn't move in a direction that can be labeled "progress," there's an increasing impatience, usually combined with the conviction that if some single obstacle is removed, the trend of history (constant improvement) will reassert itself and the future will be better than the present.

    At a more concrete level, progress is believed to be observable. It's "progress" if there's a reduction of energy required, if time is "saved," if big things are made bigger and small things made smaller. Sometimes mere change for what appears to be its own sake is considered progress.

2. **Closely related to "progress" is "success" for the individual.** Just as progress is usually measured in terms of wealth and material possessions, so is success. That wealth and material possessions are ends in themselves would be denied, but the power, prestige, or security which they're seen as making possible are accepted as desirable and are the symbols of success. Determination of the status of most individuals is thus made relatively easy. Some difficulty and frustration is experienced by most Americans, however, in assigning place to those who don't seem to be directly engaged in the pursuit of the accepted objectives. A "successful" doctor is likely to be considered such because he's gotten rich rather than because he's helped more people get well than other physicians.

    Success is also usually thought of as being the direct result of the individual's behavior instead of luck or external circumstances. Because of this belief, those stuck at the bottom of the status ladder are often blamed for their own condition, and generally given little sympathy.

3. **Americans tend to be preoccupied with "things" or "stuff."** This isn't quite the same as saying Americans are materialistic (a word suggesting a grasping acquisitiveness), but rather that they're more interested in the external world of the palpable and immediate than in some internal experience or meaning. It's this view which contributes to the belief that science offers the most promise in the struggle toward the good life. The world is seen as ordered, predictable, and capable of rational comprehension and manipulation.

4. **Americans are generally considered "practical."** The popularity of the somewhat narrow philosophy of pragmatism, the preference for applied science,

the distrust of the intellectual or "ivory tower types" whose productivity seems of little or no use in the solution of everyday problems, testify to the appeal of the immediately useful.

The tendency is illustrated in education, a field where society's values are sometimes vividly reflected. Much of the time education has been dominated by those advocating a short-term kind of practicality, emphasizing making a living rather than making a life.

5. **Like all peoples, Americans are ethnocentric.** Their "twist" to it is that they're convinced of their national innocence and goodness. Superior national virtue is felt to be the reason for the "full" life Americans enjoy—not national resources, nor the industrial revolution, or some other factor.

6. **Americans believe work is honorable.** This belief is undergoing some change, but it continues to be a dominant one, if work is defined as activity which results in productivity. No stigma is attached to leisure; it's *unearned* leisure that's unacceptable. A variation on the idea of the virtue of work makes the most desirable state of all, one in which a person owns property (an extension of the person) which "works" for that person, by producing rent or some other benefit.

7. **Americans believe in a kind of "equality" of all people.** Asked to differentiate between his own and European society, most Americans would probably begin with some reference to the lack of social classes in this country. They'd be referring, of course, to the absence of traditional European-style formal, institutionalized classes. Only in a rather special way are all people regarded as equal. In Thomas Jefferson's words, "All [people] are *created* equal." What they do or don't do with that equality, Americans believe, is up to them.

Americans are more sensitive to the demands of egalitarian concepts in the realm of politics than in economic and social matters. The tendency of capitalism to polarize wealth has sometimes made it harder to reconcile the reality with the ideal. A way out of the dilemma is provided by insisting that there really is "equality of *opportunity*," a phrase that also does duty as a kind of justification for social and economic inequality.

8. **Americans tend to resent or resist being ordered around.** To "influence" or "suggest" is acceptable, however, and those who can direct the action of others without seeming to be "bossy" are more admired than those who demand blind obedience. This idea is evident in a whole range of relationships, from that between a father and son to that between the individual and various levels of government. During World War II, when many non-professional soldiers served in the armed forces, there were many examples of negative reaction to the military power structure, and stories were common which described as "good" those officers who were "buddies" to their men.

9. **Americans tend to prefer conformity.** The Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville, a visitor to the Americas in the 1830s, discusses this tendency at length in his chapter on "The Tyranny of the Majority" in *Democracy in America*, and David Reisman, in *The Lonely Crowd*, describes similar personality characteristics in the

"other-directed" individual. However, Americans tend to deny this tendency, saying they admire individualism, those that don't "follow the crowd," and so on. This inconsistency is obvious in schooling, with claims that "creativity" and "out of the box" thinking are educational aims, when scores on standardized tests are, too often, the actual determinants of policy and programs.

10. **Americans are much concerned with looking and acting young.** This isn't to say, of course, that in other societies the young don't try to act like adults, or that adults don't admire those who are young and healthy. However, the level of consciousness of and concern for youthfulness makes it an important shared American value.

11. **Americans tend to believe that nature can be controlled and dominated, and should be used for the benefit of humankind.** This idea is under a lot of stress because of the growing concern with environmental matters. The fact that many proposed solutions to environmental problems require further manipulation of nature points up how deep-seated this idea is.

A note to avoid misunderstanding: This list was prepared to represent a kind of "outsiders" view of present-day American ideas and premises, and is intended only to be an objective look, not a criticism. In the interest of full disclosure, we emphatically don't subscribe to the relativistic position that "one set of beliefs is as good as another." We believe in practical and rational approaches to problem solving; are future-oriented; share the American dislike of authority; believe that work is intrinsically worthwhile; insist that people ought to be treated impartially; and believe in the possibility of progress. If we didn't, we wouldn't be trying to reform curricula.

A further note: Although the shared ideas listed here characterize most Americans, many people in important sub-groups differ with respect to one or more of their ideas and values from the "standard" view. Conversely, American shared ideas don't stop at our borders. People in most western nations share many of these same ideas in one form or another.

"Shared ideas," of course, is part of a larger key idea, "culture." Culture is usually defined as "the shared values, beliefs and ideas and patterns of action of a society." Culture is a powerful key idea, but we've avoided using it because so many people use the word casually and imprecisely, diluting its significance.

Of course, ideas are invisible; they can't be observed directly since they're part of the mental life of a society and must be inferred. But inferring them is often less difficult than it sounds. Given the proper materials and guide questions, even elementary students are capable of inferring ideas and values important in America's past.

Evidence for shared ideas is surprisingly easy to find. The values, premises and worldview within a society are so pervasive that they color every significant activity. In his book *Culture and History*, Philip Bagby discussed historian's problems with the reliability of witnesses, but went on to say:

> "Fortunately, in certain spheres we do have evidence which is more reliable than that of witnesses. We have the actual products or by-products of men's activity in the past: their artifacts, their art and architecture, even their rubbish.

These mute testimonials are all the more reliable because they were not intended to convey information;... Even documents may be considered in this fashion, not for the information which they are intended to convey, but for what they can reveal, quite unintentionally, about the thought, the purposes and the prejudices of their authors and the sort of world in which they lived."[1]

When we attempt to understand America's past and present—rebellions, elections, policies, migrations, economic panics, and so on—nothing explains more than an analysis of the ideas shared by members of societies and organized human groups.

---

[1]Bagby, Philip, *Culture and History*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963, University of California Press) p. 35.

Index