

Culminating Project: Historical Significance

Teacher Instructions

Students are encouraged to complete this culminating project at the end of a content unit that focuses on **Historical Significance**.

Essential Question: *How do we decide what is important to learn about the past?*

Goal: Through this activity, students will determine who/what has historical significance. They might reference the three ways historians traditionally determine significance: 1) something is significant if it **resulted in change**, 2) if it is **revealing**, or 3) if it is **incorporated into the historical narrative**. Students should also understand that historical significance can change over time and in different contexts.

Teacher Note: Before beginning this project, you might consider taking students to visit a museum or a historical monument (see [Content Applications: Field Study Guide](#)). Alternatively, you could show a PowerPoint of famous memorials (see example [here](#)).

Use the following questions to frame classroom discussions about memorials:

- Whose stories have been celebrated or commemorated in our textbooks? In the classroom? Why are these individuals, groups, or events considered significant?
- What individuals, groups, or events have been left out of the popular narrative? Why?
- Are there individuals, groups, or events in your local community that inspire you? Why are their stories significant?
- Are there individuals, groups, or events that we have studied this year or in past history classes that inspire you? Why are their stories significant?
- What do memorials reveal about historical significance in a community?
- What role do memorials play in a community, state or nation's collective consciousness and remembrance?

The description of historical thinking in this exercise is informed by the scholarship of Peter Seixas and the Historical Thinking Project (<http://historicalthinking.ca/>).

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Performance Task: Creating a Memorial

Name _____

Focus Question: How should we remember the past?

Task: Design and create a memorial around **one** of the following topics:

- a. A person, group or event of significance in your community
- b. A person, group, or event of significance to you
- c. A person, group, or event of significance in the content you have been studying

Step 1: Choose a person, group or event of significance.

Step 2: *Why is this significant?*

Create a two-three sentence argument regarding their significance.

Step 3: As you plan your memorial, answer the questions below on a separate piece of paper.

- i. *Where would the memorial be located and who will see it?*
- ii. *What wording, if any, would be included? Think about the title of the memorial and any possible inscriptions.*
- iii. *Why is this event/person important to be memorialized?*
- iv. *What does your memorial accomplish? What is the impact of your memorial?*
- v. *Are there other examples of memorials that have been done on this topic? How is your memorial similar or different to what has been created in the past?*
- vi. *How does your memorial result in change, reveal something about our current time, and/or fit into an historical narrative?*

Step 4: Create a model, blueprint, or sketch of your memorial, including any inscription you might include.