

Five Traits for Determining Historical Significance

1. Importance:	Refers to what was considered of primary influence or concern to those who lived the event, irrespective of whether their judgments about the importance of the event was subsequently shown to be justified. Key importance questions include: Who were/have been affected by the event? Why was it important to them? How were people's lives affected?
2. Profundity:	Refers to how deeply people were/have been affected by the event. Key profundity questions include: Was the event superficial or deeply affecting? How were people's lives affected?
3. Quantity:	Refers to the number of people affected by the event. Key quantity question include: Did the event affect many, everyone, just a few?;
4. Durability:	Refers to how long were people affected by the event. Key durability questions include: How durable was the event in time? Was the event lasting or only ephemeral?; and
5. Relevance:	Refers to the extent to which the event has contributed to historical understanding or meaning-making supported by evidence. Comparisons and analogies are more complex and lead to better appreciation of the past. Key relevance questions include: Is the event relevant to our understanding of the past and/or present? Does the event have a sense or signification to us?

Historical Significance Traits Related to Popular Memory, Nostalgia, and Nationalism

(a) Intimate interests:	Use of personal, family, religious, cultural, or ancestral connections to the event to ascribe relevance (e.g., I was there, so it is relevant to me);
(b) Symbolic significance:	Use of particular events for present-day national or patriotic justification (i.e., this is our national holiday so it is relevant to me);
(c) Contemporary lessons:	Use of historical events to draw simplistic analogies in order to guide present-day actions, usually away from the "errors" of the past (e.g., the Great Depression shows what happens when the economy is over prosperous).

Adapted from Stéphane Lévesque, "Teaching Second-Order Concepts in Canadian History: The Importance of "Historical Significance" *Canadian Social Studies* 29 (Winter 2005).