Historical thinking – “the big six”

**“Histories are stories we tell about the past.”** (What problem(s) does this definition of history highlight when studying/understanding history?)

# How do we make sense of the past and present?

“The Big Six” comes from the work of historians. Just like scientists have the Scientific Method Model to help their thinking (steps to test out/guide their theories/thinking/research), historians have what we will call **“The Big Six” Model.**

Our goal is to become historians by using **“The Big Six” Model** to better understand the past and present.

1. ***Establishing Historical Significance***. How do we decide what is important to learn about the past?

a) Resulting in change (The event/person/development had *deep* consequences, for *many* people, over a *long period* of time.)

b) Revealing (The event/person was important at some stage in history.)

1. ***Evidence.*** How do we know what we know about the past?

a) History is an interpretation based **on inferences made from primary sources.** Primary sources can be accounts, but they can also be traces, relics, or records.

b) Ask good questions: “What is it?” “Who created it?” “When was it created?” “What story is told?”

c) Author: What is the author saying? What is the purpose?

1. ***Continuity and Change.*** How can we make sense of the complex flows of history?

a) Some aspects of life change more quickly in some periods than others. Turning points help to locate change.

b) Progress and decline are ways of evaluating change over time. Change is not always good.

1. ***Cause and Consequence.*** Why do events happen, and what are their impacts?

a) Some aspects of life change more quickly, in some periods, than others. Turning points help to locate change.

b) Progress and decline are ways of evaluating change over time. Change is not always good.

1. ***Historical Perspective.*** How do we better understand the people of the past?

a) Any historical event involves people who may have different opinions.

b) Perspective is understood best by considering historical **context** (when/where/how it happened).

c) Taking the perspective of a historical person does not mean that you agree with that person.

1. ***The Ethical Dimension.*** How can history help us to live in the present?

a) All meaningful historical accounts involve moral judgment (is something ‘right’ or ‘wrong’).

b) When making moral judgments about the past we must consider what things were like back then (context).