# Cause and Consequence

## Suggested Subject Levels: 7

## Subject: History

## Suggested Ontario Curriculum Expectations:

* **British North America**
  + illustrate the historical development of their local community (e.g., its origins, key personalities, and the contributions of various cultural groups), using a variety of formats (e.g., a heritage display, posters, a drama skit or role play, a brochure, a Web page
* **Conflict and Resolution**
  + compare and contrast historical conflict-resolution strategies with those used today to resolve disputes at home, at school, and in the community
  + analyze, synthesize, and evaluate historical information

## Topic: Benchmarks of Historical Thinking

## Content: Historical Causes and Consequences

## Working Definition:

“Causes are thus multiple and layered, involving both long-term ideologies, institutions, and conditions, and short-term motivations, actions and events. Causes that are offered for any particular event (and the priority of various causes) may differ, based on the scale of the history and the approaches of the historian.”[[1]](#footnote-0)

## Goals (Aims and Outcomes):

Students should be expected to explore and understand the concepts of cause and consequence in historical analyses and be able to utilize these in their independent research.

## Objectives (Performance and Behavioural Indicators):

Students should be able to:

* conceptualize and explain the human capacity for provoking historical changes within particular contexts.
* Students should be able to consider the limits to change imposed by the context, including the natural environment, geography, topography, and systems (economic and political).
* In particular instances, identify the relationship between human agency and contextual limitations with regards to causes and consequences of historical events;
* Construct counterfactual questions (e.g. If the battle at the Plains of Abraham had gone otherwise, how would Canada be different?)

## Materials (Aids/AV/Technology):

Computers with Internet Access

## Introductory Activity (Focusing Event):

Students can begin to think about the cause and consequence in history by building on their personal histories and beginning with stories relating to personal experiences. An example of a focusing and leading question could probe students to consider the factors that went into the selection of their name. Students could, independently, or with a partner, list factors or conditions, including cultural influences, that might have contributed to the decision leading to their naming.[[2]](#footnote-1)

Further questions can probe discussion, such as:

If you were born in a different country, or a different historical period, different environmental factors might have influenced your naming?

Imagine that you were born in a different culture, what conditions involved in your naming might not have been as influential?

The factors listed by students can then be categorized.

Categories can include: Individuals, groups, and social conditions.

A question might be asked:

How do these different kinds of factors differ, particularly in relation to human decisions within a broader social, political, and economic context?

Another provocative question might be:

How is history made? Do humans make history, or do larger forces determine their decisions?

## Development Activity (Modeling/Explanation/Demonstration):

Present to the entire class, using articles from the news or a clip from the television media, matters of local, provincial, federal, or global issue being currently debated in the press. For example, the debate surrounding Canadian Arctic sovereignty, the building of high-rise condominiums in the city core, or the potential nuclear armament of countries, could be introduced.[[3]](#footnote-2)

Students should be invited to select one contemporary news article and, working in groups, identify the human agents involved in the story. If different interest groups are involved, they should be identified. Who, in other words, are the individual stakeholders involved in promoting, shaping, resisting, and explaining the actions being debated.

Students should then identify the various causes and factors involved in making the story significant or contentious. These can be separated according to categories, including, for example: Political, economic, environmental, psychological, and social causes. Individual students can write a reflective journal entry, considering how individual causes can be distinguished in light of the complexity of human life in an ever-evolving world.

### Follow-up Activity:

Students can identify potential resolutions to a contemporary problem or debate that resonated with them in considering media coverage. Following this, potential consequences of these resolutions, foreseen and unforeseen, in local or broader spheres, can be explored through discussion and conference with the teacher.

## Practice (Guided/Monitored Activity):

Concentrate on one event discussed in the history textbook or alternative sources of instruction used in class. For example, the composition of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the BNA Act can be used to introduce the idea that causes and consequences are complex factors, involving conditions and decisions having rather long term consequences.

Students can list some of the consequences of the event being discussed that were identified and elaborated upon within the history text or instructional resource. Following that, students should speculate on some of the unintended consequences of the event or issue, particularly in the present context in which they live.

## Independent Practice (Relation to STONES social history research):

Students can be asked to read the text on the Prisoner Community in Kingston.[[4]](#footnote-3) Take the tour online or, if possible, in person. A class trip to the sites might be possible.

Students should be asked to jot down, as they emerge, thoughts or feelings provoked by the tour text or sites. They should be asking themselves what the events, individuals, concepts, artifacts and places depicted in the text/tour meant in relation to the past activities on continuity and change in history.

Students can use the worksheet, included in the folder under the title “Cause and Consequence Worksheet” to cultivate their historical thinking using the STONES materials. Firstly, students will decide on an event or trend identified or perceived in the text or primary sources uploaded to the site. Then, they will decide which individuals, groups and social forces were involved then consider to what extent they influenced the event or trend. Students will be asked to indicate the extent to which the event/trend was influenced by these various factors.

## Accommodations (Differentiated Instruction)

Extra time can be afforded to students.

## Checking for Ongoing Understanding (Formative Assessment/Feedback Opportunities)

Students can journal, following each activity within the units of study, a reflective entry considering their ongoing understanding of the benchmark for historical thinking, as well as its implications for active, participatory citizenship in contemporary contexts.

Teachers can take the opportunity to read these journals and adjust the lessons / course of study to the pace, concerns, and questions raised in the entries.

Student and teacher journals can be shared in online space using a blogging tool such as blogger.com

## Closure (Wrapping up Activities):

Students can be asked to review the text of the Prisoner community tour, as well as the uploaded digital pictures on the STONES site.[[5]](#footnote-4) Again, they will be asked to consider the timeline of events depicted and imagine that some external intervening factor would change the course of events.

Using a creative medium—drama, art, comic strips, film, short story, poetry—the students will depict a counterfactual argument, in which some cause were to provoke unforeseen consequences. For example, a student might present a scenario in which management of the federal prisons in Kingston was outsourced to an educational organization committed to literacy and the arts. The anticipated consequences of such an event would be the subject of the student’s artwork.

1. http://www.histori.ca/benchmarks/concepts/analyze.php [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. An exemplary lesson for introducing this benchmark, written by Tom Morton and Christina Lanteigne, can be found at http://www.histori.ca/benchmarks/tasks/view.php?taskId=73. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. A particularly useful lesson plan model written by Catriona Misfeldt can be found at: http://www.histori.ca/prodev/lp.do?id=17997. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Downloaded, or viewed online, at http://stoneskingston.ca/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. http://stoneskingston.ca/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)