

Mathematics Level 7

Chapter 8 — Historical concepts and skills: concepts and communicating

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Tracking change over time

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10S07

Draws on — VC2HH10S07.E01, VC2HH10S07.E02, VC2HH10S07.E03

Builds on — the content this skill applies to: sections 2A–2E, in particular section 2D, section 3F, and the source and perspective skills of sections 7B–7E. **Leads to** — section 8B, section 8C and section 8D.

In section 2D you met Australia around 1900 — a new nation, new laws, old habits. In section 3F you watched the nature of warfare change between 1914 and 1945, while other things stayed stubbornly the same. This section steps back from the stories and studies the skill itself: **how do historians analyse continuity and change?** It is one of the two big measuring skills of history (section 8B takes the other one — causes and consequences — next).

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- define continuity, change, turning point and periodisation, and apply the four analysis questions — what changed, what stayed the same, for whom, and at what pace;
- sort changes into four vantage points — political, economic, social and cultural;
- show how one event, such as World War II, took different forms in different places (VC2HH10S07.E01);
- use the views held at the time, and the accounts written later, to work out what changed and what stayed the same in Australia around 1900 (VC2HH10S07.E02);
- build and read a chronology of Australia from 1750 to 1914, and name the patterns of change and continuity it shows (VC2HH10S07.E03).

Theory

1. What continuity and change mean (VC2HH10S07)

Defining the terms. The Victorian Curriculum names *continuity* and *change* as historical concepts but does not define them. This section therefore treats a **continuity** as *what stays the same across a chosen stretch of time*, and a **change** as *what does not*. Other definitions exist — some writers reserve “continuity” for deep structures such as law or belief — and are not interchangeable with this one. Every question in this section is answerable on the definitions above alone.

To **analyse** means more than list. To analyse continuity and change, you break a period into its parts, sort them, and weigh which mattered — *what changed, what stayed, for whom, and at what pace*.

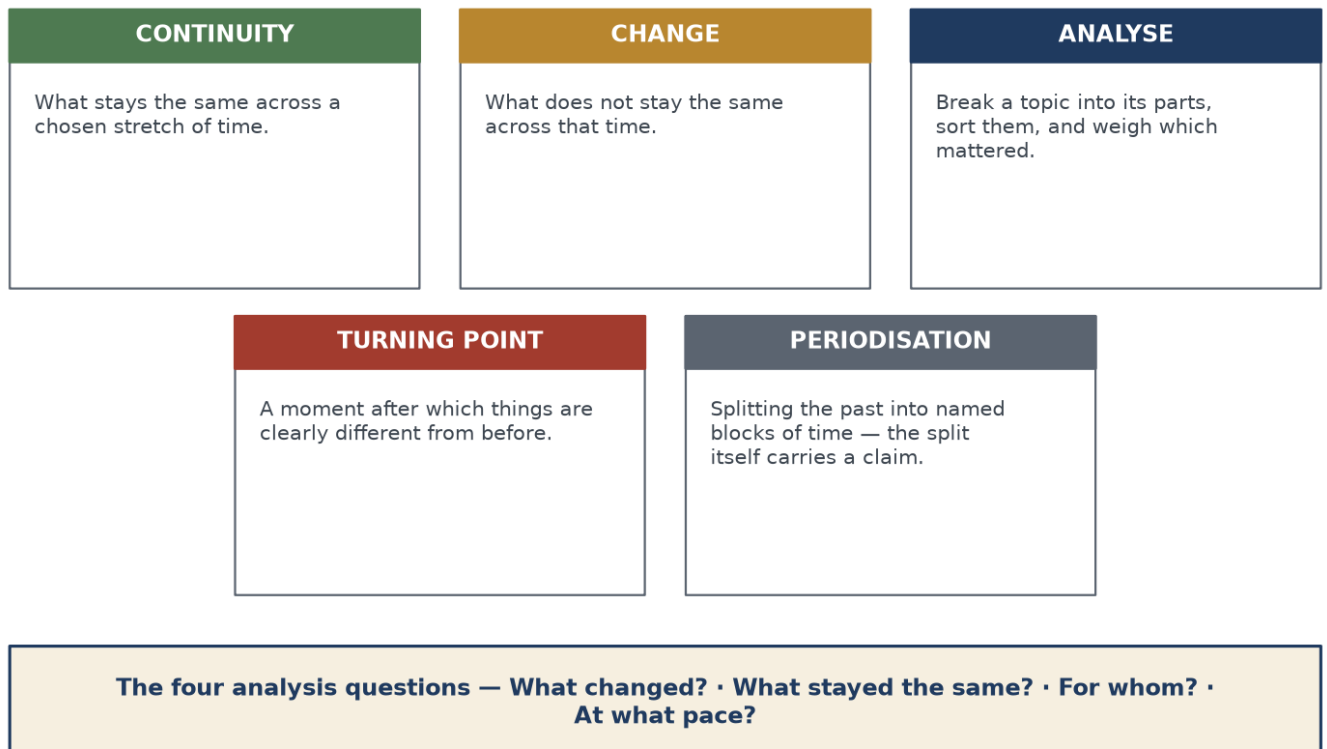
Four habits do most of the work:

1. **Ask “what changed?”** — and give each change a date and a place. “Life got better” is not analysis; “the federal parliament gave women the vote in 1902” is.
2. **Ask “what stayed the same?”** — continuities are not failures of change. They are findings. A society where parliaments, churches and family routines carry straight through a decade of reform is a society you now understand better.
3. **Ask “for whom?”** — a change is rarely the same change for everyone. The pension of 1908 mattered to the old and the ill; it did not touch a young shearer’s daily life at all.
4. **Ask “at what pace?”** — laws can change in a day; housing and habits move across generations. Saying *when* and *how fast* is part of the analysis.

Two more terms need fixing at first use. A **turning point** is a moment after which things are clearly different from before — Federation on 1 January 1901 is the classic Australian example. **Periodisation** is the splitting of the past into named blocks of time — “the colonial period”, “the Federation era” — so we can talk about it. Periodisation is not neutral: a historian who starts “modern Australia” at 1901 is making a claim that Federation matters more than any other date. Notice the claim, and decide whether you share it.

The measuring words of this section

Continuity and change — the concepts, and the four questions that carry the method



Definition cards for the five key terms of the section — continuity, change, analyse, turning point and periodisation — each with a one-line plain-language definition, and the four analysis questions: what changed, what stayed the same, for whom, at what pace

Figure 1. The measuring words of this section, and the four questions that carry the method.

2. Four vantage points, and the pace of change (VC2HH10S07)

When you sort changes, it helps to sort them *into something*. Historians commonly use four vantage points, and Figure 2 sets them out with an Australian example of each from around 1900.

- **Political** — who governs, what laws exist, who has rights: Federation (1901), the federal vote for women (1902).
- **Economic** — work, trade, money and how a society makes its living: the basic wage set by the Harvester Judgement (1907), frozen meat and wool exports.
- **Social** — daily life, living conditions, class, roles, welfare: old-age pensions (1908), the maternity allowance (1912), sewers and trams in the cities.
- **Cultural** — the stories, songs, paintings and sports through which a society talks about itself: the bush ballads of the 1890s, the paintings of the Heidelberg School.

Four vantage points for sorting change

Political · economic · social · cultural — with Australian examples from around 1900

Vantage point	What it looks at	Australian example, c. 1900
Political	Who governs; laws and rights	Federation (1901); the federal vote for women (1902)
Economic	Work, trade, money — how a society makes its living	The Harvester Judgement's basic wage (1907); frozen meat and wool exports
Social	Daily life, living conditions, welfare, roles	Old-age pensions (1908); the maternity allowance (1912)
Cultural	The songs, paintings, sports and stories a society tells about itself	The bush ballads of the 1890s; the paintings of the Heidelberg School

Two checks for every answer — PACE: how fast did it move, a single stroke of the pen or generations? ·
FOR WHOM: who felt the change, and who was passed by?

Table of the four vantage points used to sort change — political, economic, social, cultural — each with what it looks at and a dated Australian example from around 1900, with a base band on pace and the question for whom

Figure 2. Four vantage points for sorting change, and the two checks — pace and “for whom?” — that sharpen any answer.

Two checks sharpen any sorting you do. **Pace**: the same decade can hold fast change (a new law, a war) and slow change (housing, speech, custom) at once — say which is which. **For whom**: name the people the change reached, and the people it passed by. A paragraph that sorts, dates and names is analysis; a paragraph that only says “things changed a lot” is description.

3. One event, many places (VC2HH10S07.E01)

.E01 asks you to identify the different forms an event’s consequences take — its **manifestations** — in different places. A *manifestation* is simply the form an event takes as it shows itself somewhere — one event, many local forms. World War II is the cleanest example, because this book has already taught the war in sections 3A–3G.

The war was one event. It was not one experience. Figure 3 sets out five places and what the war was like in each.

One event, five places — World War II The same war took a different form wherever it landed (VC2HH10S07.E01)			
Place	What the war was like there	What the war changed	What kept going anyway
Britain	Cities bombed from the air — the Blitz of 1940–41 — and children moved to the country for safety.	Food and clothing were rationed; women took factory and farm work.	Parliament kept sitting; the monarchy stayed in place.
Egypt and North Africa	A desert land war; Australian troops fought in both battles of El Alamein in 1942.	German and Italian forces were driven back after El Alamein.	Control of the Mediterranean stayed the prize both sides fought for.
Singapore	A British base to the north of Australia, attacked by Japan.	The base fell on 15 February 1942; about 80,000 Allied troops, many of them Australian, became prisoners of war.	Australians kept serving in other parts of the war — one lost base did not end it.
Australia (home front)	Air raids on the mainland — Darwin, 19 February 1942 — the first attacks on the mainland by Japan.	Defence attention turned from Europe to Australia's north.	Parliament, courts and daily work continued at home.
Russia	A German invasion in 1941; the heaviest land fighting of the war.	Armies swept across huge distances; whole regions changed hands.	Russia fought on from 1941 to Germany's defeat in 1945.

Read down a row for one place's mix of change and continuity; read across the rows for the many forms of one event.

Table of World War II in five places — Britain, Egypt and North Africa, Singapore, the Australian home front and Russia — with what the war was like there, what the war changed and what continued despite it

Figure 3. One event, five places: World War II as it showed itself around the world. Read down the rows, then across them.

Read Figure 3 two ways. Read down a row, and you see one place's mix of change and continuity. Read across the rows, and you see the same event wearing a different face in every place: in Britain the war came as bombs from the air; in Egypt and North Africa as armies in the desert; in Singapore as capture; in Australia as air raids on the mainland and a turn of attention to the north; in Russia as invasion and the heaviest land fighting of the war.

The same move works for World War I — one war, different forms: the trenches of France and Belgium, Gallipoli, the home front (see section 3C). Practise the move until it is a habit: whenever you meet a significant event, ask *where* it landed, and *what it looked like when it landed there*.

4. Reading the evidence: Australia around 1900 (VC2HH10S07.E02)

.E02 asks you to read both kinds of evidence — the views people held at the time and the accounts written later — to work out what changed and what lasted in Australia around 1900. As in section 2D, “around 1900” has no fixed edge until we give it one; this section keeps section 2D's frame, **c. 1890 to c. 1914**. Two reminders about the source words, which sections 7C–7E teach in depth: a **perspective** is a point of view held at the time, shaped by what its holder saw and lived; an **interpretation** is an account of the past put together afterwards, using evidence.

The sources below are the worked material of this section. Both are **primary sources** — made at the time they describe — and both hold continuity and change at once.

Source A — the opening lines of “Waltzing Matilda”, 1895

Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong,
Under the shade of a coolibah tree ...

Words by A. B. “Banjo” Paterson, 1895; the tune set by Christina Macpherson; first sung at Oondooroo Station, probably in the first week of September 1895; the words printed in a regional newspaper on 23 November 1901.

A song about the bush and its old ways of life, written and sung just as those ways of life were changing — the most famous song Australians made about themselves.

Source A, the opening two lines of the song Waltzing Matilda, words by A. B. Paterson, 1895, with attribution and a note that the song was first sung at Oondooroo Station in September 1895

Figure 4. Source A: the opening lines of “Waltzing Matilda”, 1895 — a song about the bush, written as the bush’s old ways of life were changing.

Source B — the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 (summary)

The new federal parliament's Franchise Act of 1902 set who could vote at federal elections. It gave the vote to British subjects by birth, over twenty-one years of age, male or female, married or single — women as well as men. Women voted under it for the first time at the federal election of 16 December 1903.

This card is a modern summary of the Act's effect — not the Act's own words. A source's form always matters, so say which one you are reading.

Vida Goldstein, who led suffrage groups, stood for the Senate at that 1903 election — the first of her five campaigns for federal parliament.

Source B, a summary of section 3 of the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902, which gave the federal vote to women as well as men, with attribution and the date of the first federal election held under it, 16 December 1903

Figure 5. Source B: the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902, summarised. Note: this card carries a modern summary of the law's effect, not the law's own words — a limit to name, not hide.

Source A is a song. Banjo Paterson wrote the words in 1895, and Christina Macpherson set them to the tune; the song was first sung at Oondooroo Station, probably in the first week of September 1895, printed in a country newspaper in November 1901, and by 1903 it was being sung across the country. Source B is a law — the Commonwealth Franchise Act of 1902 — summarised here because the job is what the law did, not its exact wording: it gave the federal vote to women as well as men, and women voted under it for the first time at the federal election of 16 December 1903.

The worked analyses of both sources follow in the Worked examples section. Read them once now for the story, then again later for the method.

5. Timelines and patterns, 1750–1914 (VC2HH10S07.E03)

.E03 asks you to read chronologies and spot the patterns of change and continuity across Australia from 1750 to 1914. A **chronology** is the events of a period set out in time order. A **pattern** is something in the arrangement — a cluster, a gap, a repetition — that lets you say something true about the whole.

Figure 6 gives you the chronology of this book's Australia chapters in one view, colour-coded by vantage point.



Chronology of Australian history from 1770 to 1914, with nineteen events colour-coded by vantage point — political, economic, social and cultural — from Cook's claim of the east coast in 1770 to the start of World War I in 1914

Figure 6. The chronology of sections 2A–2D on one line, 1770–1914. The colours are the four vantage points of Figure 2.

Now read it for patterns — three jumps out at once, and Figure 7 names them.

Reading the chronology for patterns		
Two clusters of fast change — and the long continuities underneath (Figure 6)		
Cluster 1 — the 1850s	Cluster 2 — 1890 to 1912	The long continuities
Gold (1851), Eureka (1854) and responsible government (1855–56) all fall inside one decade. A burst of fast political and economic change.	Strikes and bank crashes, women's votes in South Australia (1894), Federation (1901), the federal vote for women (1902), the basic wage (1907), pensions (1908), the maternity allowance (1912). The new nation built its laws and institutions fast.	Through both clusters: wool and other exports still paid the way; Australia stayed part of the British world; parliaments and courts kept working. Continuity is not the absence of history — it is what the bursts of change stood on.
A pattern is what you can say about the whole arrangement — a cluster, a gap, a repetition. A chronology is the list; the pattern is your reading of it.		

Three pattern panels read from the chronology: a cluster of fast political and economic change in the 1850s, a cluster of nation-making reforms from 1890 to 1912, and three long continuities running underneath — the export economy, the British connection, and parliaments and courts

Figure 7. Three patterns the chronology shows: two clusters of fast change, and the long continuities that ran underneath both.

- **Clusters of fast change.** The 1850s hold gold, Eureka and self-government in a single decade. The years 1890–1912 hold strikes, a depression, women's suffrage, Federation and the first federal social laws. Change in Australian history did not drip evenly — it came in bursts.
- **Long continuities underneath.** Through both clusters, the economy still rode on wool and other exports; Australia still saw itself as part of the British world; parliaments and courts kept working through every upheaval. Continuity is not the absence of history — it is what the bursts of change were standing on.
- **Pace differs by vantage point.** Political change (laws, votes, a constitution) moved in single strokes; economic change (export trades, wages) moved in decades; social change (housing, habits) moved slowest of all.

One caution: chronologies do not read themselves. What counts as a pattern depends on which events you put in and what question you ask — so a chronology is an argument as well as a list. That is why section 8C (significance) and section 8D (sustained interpretations) follow this one.

6. Bringing it together: a method you can carry (VC2HH10S07)

Historians genuinely disagree about how much changed in any period, and the honest way to handle that is to steelman both sides before you weigh them — give each position the strongest form its own supporters would recognise. Figure 8 does it for the biggest question of this section's period.

Was c. 1900 Australia an age of change — or an age of continuity?

Each side is stated as its own supporters would recognise it, then weighed

Position 1 — c. 1900 was an age of change

Strongest evidence: one nation from 1901; the federal vote for women from 1902; a basic wage from 1907; pensions from 1908. Laws remade the country inside a decade.

Its limit: laws moved faster than daily life — who actually held power changed slowly.

Position 2 — continuity ruled

Strongest evidence: wool and exports still paid the way; parliaments, courts and the monarchy carried straight through; Source A shows the old bush living on in song.

Its limit: it underplays what was truly new — a constitution, a federal parliament, new rights.

Weighing: the institutions changed fast; daily life changed slowly and unevenly. Both positions are right — about different vantage points.

Debate diagram with two panels and a weighing band: Position 1, c. 1900 Australia was an age of change, with its strongest evidence and its limit; Position 2, continuity ruled, with its strongest evidence and its limit; and a weighing — institutions changed fast while daily life changed slowly and unevenly

Figure 8. The section's big question, steelmanned. Each position is stated as its own supporters would recognise it, then weighed.

And here is the whole method on one page — five steps you can carry into any period you study, in this book or beyond it.

The five-step method of this section

A scaffold you can carry into any period you study

1 • Fix the frame

Choose the period and the question — for example: 1890 to 1914, how far did Australia change?

2 • Sort the evidence

Put each item under a vantage point: political, economic, social, cultural.

3 • Name changes and continuities

Give each one a date and a place. Dated findings, not impressions.

4 • Ask the sharp questions

For whom did it change? At what pace — a stroke of the pen, or generations?

5 • Claim — then steelman

State your claim, give the other side its strongest form, then judge.

Section 8B adds causes and consequences to these steps; section 8D turns them into a written argument.

Five-step method card: fix the frame, sort the evidence by vantage point, name each change and continuity with dates, ask for whom and at what pace, then make a claim and steelman the other side before judging

Figure 9. The five-step method of this section. Section 8B adds causes and consequences to it; section 8D turns it into a written argument.

Sources for this section

- Victorian Curriculum 2.0, History, Levels 9 and 10: VC2HH10S07 with elaborations .E01–.E03 (VCAA export, 29 July 2026).
- Wikipedia, “Waltzing Matilda”: words by A. B. “Banjo” Paterson, 1895; tune by Christina Macpherson; first sung at Oondooroo Station, probably in the first week of September 1895; words printed in a regional newspaper 23 November 1901; first published musical setting 20 December 1902; retrieved 2026-08-26.
- Wikipedia, “Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902”: the Act gave the federal vote to women as well as men; the franchise as summarised by the article (“born British subjects over twenty-one years of age, male or female, married or single”); women first voted under it at the federal election of 16 December 1903; retrieved 2026-08-26. Source B in this section is a summary of the Act’s effect, labelled as such; it is not a quotation of the Act’s text.
- Wikipedia, “Vida Goldstein”: five campaigns for federal parliament (1903 Senate; 1910; 1913; 1914; 1917), never elected; secretary of the United Council for Woman Suffrage; founded suffrage newspapers including *The Australian Women’s Sphere*; retrieved 2026-08-26.
- Wikipedia, “Bombing of Darwin”: first Japanese air raid on the Australian mainland, 19 February 1942; about 236 killed by one count, about 250 by the Lowe Commission’s estimate; retrieved 2026-08-26.

- Wikipedia, “Fall of Singapore”: Singapore fell on 15 February 1942; about 80,000 British, Indian, Australian and local troops became prisoners of war; retrieved 2026-08-26.
- Wikipedia, “Battle of El Alamein” and “Western Desert Campaign”: the 9th Australian Division fought in both battles of El Alamein in 1942; retrieved 2026-08-26.
- Wikipedia, “The Blitz”: German bombing campaign against British cities, September 1940 to May 1941; civilian evacuations from British cities during the war; retrieved 2026-08-26.
- Dates for the Australian chronology (Figure 6) carry the sourcing already listed in sections 2A and 2D of this book (Federation, women’s suffrage, the Harvester Judgement, the pensions and maternity allowance laws, the plague and slum resumptions, the strikes and bank crashes of the 1890s).

Worked examples

Worked source analysis 1 — with help

Question. Read Source A (the opening of “Waltzing Matilda”, Figure 4). What does this source show about continuity and change in Australia around 1900?

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the source. Words by A. B. “Banjo” Paterson, written in 1895; a tune set by Christina Macpherson; first sung at Oondooroo Station in September 1895; printed in a country newspaper in 1901. A song is cultural expression, made at the time: a primary source .	Start with what the source <i>is</i> — a song, not a law or a letter. That shapes what it can tell us.
Step 2: Describe the content. A swagman camps by a billabong under a coolibah tree, singing as his billy boils. The whole song tells of a man on the move in the bush, living outside settled law.	Use the source’s own words and images where you can.
Step 3: Explain the context. By the 1890s the bush life the song paints was already changing: machine shearing was spreading, cities were growing, and most of the song’s first listeners lived in towns. Section 2D’s Bulletin debate ran over the same ground.	Context explains why a song about the bush landed with city readers.
Step 4: Read the perspective and purpose. Paterson wrote from the city’s side of the fence: the song is how town Australia chose to picture the bush, not a record of how bush life felt to live. Its purpose was to entertain and to give readers a shared picture of the country they were becoming.	Perspectives include what a source <i>chooses</i> to show — and what it leaves out.
Step 5: State significance and inference. The source holds change and continuity at once. The way of life it paints was fading (change), yet the song kept that life alive in memory and song for more than a century (continuity). Historians can infer that around 1900 Australians wanted to hold on to an older Australia in story, even as a newer one arrived in law and machinery.	An inference must rest on the source plus its context — and be labelled as an inference.

Answer: Source A shows a society in the middle of change: the bush life of the swagman was already passing, but the song preserved it as part of how Australians pictured themselves — continuity carried inside cultural expression, while material life changed around it.

Worked source analysis 2 — with help

Question. Read Source B (the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902, summarised, Figure 5). What changed, what stayed the same, and how should we read the source itself?

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the source. An Act of the new federal parliament, passed in 1902, one year after Federation. A law made at the time: a primary source , and an official one. Note the card's own limit: it carries a summary of the Act's effect, not the Act's exact words.	Knowing the form matters; so does naming a source's limits.
Step 2: Describe the content. The Act gave the federal vote to women as well as men, married or single. Under it, women voted — and could stand — at the federal election of 16 December 1903.	State what the source did before you judge it.
Step 3: Explain the context. The colonies had led the way: South Australian women had won the vote in 1894. Suffrage groups had pressed the cause for decades; Vida Goldstein, who helped lead them, stood for the Senate in 1903.	Context shows the change had a history behind it — it did not arrive out of nothing.
Step 4: Read the perspective and purpose. The source is the parliament's own view of the new nation's voters. Women's groups read the same Act as a victory won, not a gift given — the same law, two perspectives, and both belong in the analysis.	One source can carry more than one perspective on the same change.
Step 5: State significance and inference. The change was real — a federal vote for women, among the first in the world — but the pace was slow: four women stood at the 1903 election and none won, and Vida Goldstein stood five times between 1903 and 1917 without winning a seat. The continuity is just as real: the same Act kept the British-style parliament and monarchy in place. Historians can infer that political change in the new nation was deep in law but slow in practice.	A strong answer names the change <i>and</i> the continuity, with dates.
Answer: Source B records one of the new nation's biggest political changes — the federal vote for women — while also showing what stayed: the system of government itself. The gap between the law of 1902 and the seats women actually won shows why pace is part of every continuity-and-change answer.	

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Match the term to the case. Copy the table and complete it using the definitions in Figure 1. One row is done for you.

Case from this section	Term (continuity, change, turning point, pace)
The Commonwealth Franchise Act gave women the federal vote in 1902	change
Parliaments and courts kept working through the upheavals of the 1890s	
After 1 January 1901, laws for the whole country came from one federal parliament	
Sewers and clean water came to country towns late, decades after the cities	

(Hint: ask whether each case is something that stayed, something that shifted, the moment things split into before and after, or a note about speed.)

Q2. Read the event table. From Figure 3: (a) in which place did the war come mainly as bombing of cities? (b) which two places were where Australian troops fought and were captured? (c) name one continuity that appears in both the Britain row and the Australia row. (*Hint: read the last column across.*)

Q3. Define and apply. In your own words, define *manifestation*. Then give one example from Figure 3, naming the place and the form the war took there.

Q4. Read Source B. From Figure 5 and Worked example 2: (a) who gained the vote under the Act? (b) state one thing the new nation kept unchanged. (c) state one sign that the change ran slow in practice. (*Hint: Vida Goldstein's five campaigns.*)

Q5. Read the chronology. From Figures 6 and 7: (a) name two events that sit inside the 1850s cluster; (b) name the three long continuities that ran underneath both clusters; (c) which vantage point holds most of the items dated between 1890 and 1912? (*Hint: count the colours.*)

Q6. Put them in order. Arrange these four items in time order, starting with the oldest: the Harvester Judgement; the first federal election at which women voted; Federation; the Victorian Education Act. (*Hint: Figure 6 holds every date.*)

On your own

Q7. One event, one place (E01). Choose one place from Figure 3. In one paragraph (4–6 sentences), describe how World War II showed itself there, and give one change and one continuity the war brought to that place. Use at least two dated facts from this section or sections 3A–3G.

Q8. Weigh the sources (E02). “Sources A and B show that Australia around 1900 was changing fast.” Do you agree? Write two sentences beginning “The strongest case that change was fast is ...”, then two sentences beginning “But the strongest case that change was slow is ...”. Do not caricature either side.

Q9. Extend the chronology (E03). Add two more events from chapters 1–3 of this book to the chronology in Figure 6. For each: give its date, place it in the sequence, and label its vantage point. Then state which of the three patterns in Figure 7 your two events support — or whether they start a pattern of their own.

Q10. The full method (continuity/change). In one paragraph (5–7 sentences), evaluate how far Australia changed between 1750 and 1914. Use the five moves of Figure 9 — claim, dated evidence, steelman, weighing, judgement — with your own dated facts from this section, not the model's.

Inquiry task

Turning point or long trend? How far did Australia change between 1890 and 1914?

This is the section's inquiry: a small investigation you carry from question to finished answer, using the method of Figures 8 and 9.

Your brief. Build a labelled chronology of the years 1890 to 1914 using sections 2B–2D of this book, then use it to answer the question above in one written judgement.

Steps (Figure 10 maps them).

1. **Build the chronology.** Place at least ten events from sections 2B–2D in time order on one line. Colour each by vantage point, as Figure 6 does.
2. **Choose your evidence.** Pick two changes and two continuities from your chronology. Give each a date.
3. **Add a source.** Attach one source of evidence to at least one change and one continuity — you may use Sources A and B from this section, or any source from sections 2B–2D.
4. **Ask the sharp questions.** For whom did each change happen? At what pace? Which vantage point moved fastest?
5. **Steelman before you judge.** Write one sentence giving the strongest case for the position you plan to *reject*.
6. **Write the judgement.** One paragraph, using the moves of Figure 9: claim, dated evidence, steelman, weighing, judgement.

Criteria for a strong answer: a clear claim up front; at least four dated items of evidence, each sorted by vantage point; at least one named source with its perspective considered; a fair steelman of the other side; a judgement that answers “how far” rather than “yes or no”.

Inquiry — how far did Australia change between 1890 and 1914?

From question to finished judgement, using the tools of Figures 8 and 9

1 Build the chronology At least ten events from sections 2B–2D, in time order, colour-coded by vantage point.	Criteria for a strong answer • A clear claim up front. • At least four dated items of evidence, each sorted by vantage point. • At least one named source, with its perspective considered. • A fair steelman of the other side. • A judgement that answers how far — not yes or no.
2 Choose the evidence Two changes and two continuities, each with a date.	
3 Add a source Attach a source of evidence to at least one change and one continuity — Sources A and B are on hand.	
4 Ask the sharp questions For whom? At what pace? Which vantage point moved fastest?	
5 Steelman One sentence giving the strongest case for the position you plan to reject.	
6 Write the judgement One paragraph: claim, dated evidence, steelman, weighing, judgement.	

Inquiry planning scaffold: the task question at the top, then the six steps — build the chronology, choose the evidence, add a source, ask the sharp questions, steelman, write the judgement — and the five criteria for a strong answer

Figure 10. The inquiry, mapped. Each step uses a tool this section has already taught.

Answers

Q1. Parliaments and courts keeping going — continuity. One federal parliament from 1901 — turning point (Federation splits the story into before and after). Sewers arriving late — pace.

Q2. (a) Britain (the Blitz). (b) Egypt and North Africa (fought at El Alamein) and Singapore (captured when it fell). (c) Accept either: parliaments kept sitting, or the monarchy continued (Britain) alongside parliaments and courts continuing (Australia) — any one shared continuity across the two rows.

Q3. Model: a manifestation is the form an event takes as it shows itself in a particular place. Example: World War II manifested in Australia as air raids on the mainland — Darwin, 19 February 1942 — and as a turn of defence attention to the north.

Q4. (a) Women, as well as men, married or single. (b) The British-style parliament and monarchy. (c) Four women stood at the 1903 election and none won; Vida Goldstein stood five times (1903–1917) without winning a seat.

Q5. (a) Any two of: gold rushes begin (1851), Eureka Stockade (1854), responsible government in NSW and Victoria (1855–56). (b) The export economy (wool and other exports), the British connection, and parliaments and courts. (c) Political — most of the 1890–1912 items are laws, votes and institutions.

Q6. Victorian Education Act (1872); Federation (1 January 1901); first federal election at which women voted (16 December 1903); Harvester Judgement (1907).

Q7–Q10. There is no single right answer; the checklist is: one place, two dated facts, one labelled change and one labelled continuity (7); both positions stated in their strongest form, neither caricatured, each tied to a source (8); two dated events correctly placed and labelled by vantage point, and a pattern claim that follows from them (9); a claim up front, dated evidence, a fair steelman, a weighing that answers it, and a judgement that returns to the claim (10).

Fully-worked solutions

Q7.

Model answer (Britain). In Britain, World War II showed itself above all as a war from the air: German bombers attacked British cities through the Blitz of 1940–1941, and families, including many children, were moved out of the cities to safer country areas. The war changed daily life — food and clothing were rationed, and women took factory and farm work while the men served. Yet much continued: the parliament kept sitting through the war, and the monarchy stayed in place. The pattern is the section's in miniature: the same war that changed who worked and what was allowed also left Britain's oldest institutions standing.

Q8.

Model points. “The strongest case that change was fast is that the new Commonwealth moved in single strokes of the pen: Federation on 1 January 1901 created a nation and a federal parliament, and the Franchise Act of 1902 gave women the federal vote a year later. Source B shows a law remaking who counted as a voter in a single year.” — “But the strongest case that change was slow is that Source A shows Australians still picturing themselves through the old bush even as it disappeared, and the record shows the new rights ran slow in practice: four women stood in 1903 and none won, and Vida Goldstein stood five times between 1903 and 1917 without a seat. Laws changed in a day; who actually held power moved across generations.”

Q9.

Model answer (one of several possible). Two additions: the *Immigration Restriction Act*, which section 1F studies and the first federal parliament passed in 1901 — a political event that sits inside the 1890–1912 nation-making cluster and supports the pattern that the new parliament used its power at once; and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914, the political spark of the war that closes this chronology (section 3A). Any two correctly dated, placed and labelled events from chapters 1–3 are accepted, with a pattern claim that follows from them.

Q10.

Model answer. Between 1750 and 1914 Australia changed from a set of British colonies into a self-governing nation, but the change ran at different speeds in different parts of life. The dated evidence is strong on both sides of the ledger: six colonies became one nation on 1 January 1901, women won the federal vote in 1902, and the Harvester Judgement of 1907 set a basic wage of seven shillings a day — political and economic change in single strokes. Against this, the continuities held fast: wool and other exports still paid the nation's way from the 1820s through 1914, the states kept their schools and hospitals after Federation, and Australians still thought of themselves as part of the British world. The strongest case for the other side is that a new constitution, a new court and a wave of federal laws between 1901 and 1912 amount to a genuine break, not tinkering. That is true of the institutions — and it is exactly why the weighing turns on pace: laws can be made in a year, while housing, work and habits move across generations. Judgement: by 1914 Australia had changed its frame of government almost completely, while most of daily life had changed far less and far more unevenly — a fast political revolution riding on slow social ground.

A model paragraph, with its moves labelled

The answer to task 10, broken into the moves of Figure 9

CLAIM	Between 1750 and 1914 Australia changed from a set of British colonies into a self-governing nation, but the change ran at different speeds in different parts of life.
EVIDENCE — changes	Six colonies became one nation on 1 January 1901, women won the federal vote in 1902, and the Harvester Judgement of 1907 set a basic wage of seven shillings a day.
EVIDENCE — continuities	Wool and other exports still paid the nation's way from the 1820s through 1914, the states kept their schools and hospitals after Federation, and Australians still thought of themselves as part of the British world.
STEELMAN	A new constitution, a new court and a wave of federal laws between 1901 and 1912 amount to a real break, not small repairs.
WEIGHING	That is true of the institutions — and it is exactly why the weighing turns on pace: laws can be made in a year, while housing, work and habits move across generations.
JUDGEMENT	By 1914 Australia had changed its frame of government almost completely, while most of daily life had changed far less and far more unevenly.

Steal the moves, not the facts.

Model paragraph for task 10 with its moves labelled: five sentence cards labelled claim, evidence, steelman, weighing and judgement

Figure 11. The model paragraph of task 10, with its moves labelled. Steal the moves, not the facts.

Looking back. You can now define continuity, change, turning point and periodisation; sort changes into political, economic, social and cultural vantage points; show how one event takes different forms in different places; read sources of evidence for the continuity and change they hold; and build and read a chronology for patterns. The causes of the changes you have analysed are section 8B's territory; their significance is section 8C's; and writing the whole method up as a sustained argument is section 8D.

Key terms

continuity — what stays the same across a chosen stretch of time. **change** — what does not. **analyse** — to break a topic into its parts, sort them and weigh them. **turning point** — a moment after which things are clearly different from before. **periodisation** — the splitting of the past into named blocks of time; the split itself carries a claim. **vantage point** — a category for sorting change: political, economic, social, cultural. **pace** — how fast a change runs: a single stroke of the pen, or generations. **manifestation** — the form an event takes as it shows itself in a particular place. **chronology** — the events of a period set out in time order. **pattern** — something in the arrangement of events — a cluster, a gap, a repetition — that lets you say something true about the whole. **perspective** — a point of view held at the time. **interpretation** — an account of the past put together afterwards, using evidence. **inference** — a conclusion a source suggests but does not state outright; always label it. **steelman** — to put a position in the strongest form its own supporters would recognise, before you judge it.

Why things happen, and what follows

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10S08

Draws on — VC2HH10S08.E01, VC2HH10S08.E02, VC2HH10S08.E03

Builds on — the content this skill applies to: section 3A, section 3B, section 4D, and the continuity-and-change skill of section 8A. **Leads to** — section 8C and section 8D.

In section 3A you met the causes behind World War I — the alliances, the arms race, the killing at Sarajevo. In section 3B you met the reasons Australians enlisted. In section 4D you met what the war left behind. This section steps back from the stories and studies the skill itself: **how do historians analyse causes and consequences?** It is the second of the two big measuring skills of history (section 8A took the first — continuity and change).

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- define cause, consequence, short-term cause, long-term cause, intended consequence and unintended consequence, and apply the four questions of Figure 2 to any event;
- use graphic organisers — concept maps, fishbone diagrams, causal spider webs and ripple effect charts — to sort out causes and consequences (VC2HH10S08.E01);
- tell intended consequences from unintended consequences (VC2HH10S08.E02);
- organise the causes and consequences of World War I into a concept map, and copy that shape for any event, individual, idea or development you study (VC2HH10S08.E03);
- link consequences to continuity and change, using section 8A's skill.

Theory

1. The language of causes and consequences (VC2HH10S08)

Defining the terms. The Victorian Curriculum names *causes* and *consequences* as historical concepts but does not define them. This section therefore treats a **cause** as *anything that made an event more likely to happen, or made it happen when and how it did*, and a **consequence** as *any result or effect that follows from an event, person, idea or development*. Other definitions exist — some writers sort causes into deeper kinds than this one — and are not interchangeable with it. Every question in this section is answerable on the definitions above alone.

Two splits do most of the work in this section.

1. **Short-term versus long-term causes.** A **short-term cause** sits close in time to the event — often the spark that sets it off. A **long-term cause** builds up over years or decades before the event. The spark only works because the fuel was already laid.
2. **Intended versus unintended consequences.** An **intended consequence** is a result that people at the time planned or wanted. An **unintended consequence** is a result that nobody planned, even though people's actions caused it. History is full of plans that misfired, and VC2HH10S08.E02 asks you to tell the two apart, every time.

Figure 1 sets out the eight words of this section, each with a World War I example.

The language of causes and consequences

The eight words this section uses, each defined and shown with one World War I example

Word	What it means	World War I example
Cause	Something that made an event more likely to happen, or made it happen when and how it did	The system of alliances helped turn one killing into a wide war
Consequence	A result or effect that follows from an event, person, idea or development	The Treaty of Versailles followed the war
Short-term cause	A cause close in time to the event, often the spark that sets it off	The killing at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914
Long-term cause	A cause that built up over years or decades before the event	The growth of rival alliances from the 1880s
Intended consequence	A result that people at the time planned or wanted	The Allies planned to defeat Germany and its partners
Unintended consequence	A result that nobody planned, even though people caused it	The bitter feelings in Germany that helped bring on a second war
Continuity	What stayed the same, or kept going, across a period of time	Australia stayed part of the British Empire after 1918
Change	What became different across a period of time	Four great empires fell between 1917 and 1922

Section 8B, part 1. The World War I examples are drawn from the taught content of chapters 3 and 4.

Table of the eight key words of the section — cause, consequence, short-term cause, long-term cause, intended consequence, unintended consequence, continuity and change — each with a one-line definition and a World War I example, from the killing at Sarajevo to the fall of four empires

Figure 1. The measuring words of this section, each pinned to a World War I example.

2. The four questions (VC2HH10S08)

Every cause-and-consequence analysis answers four questions, and Figure 2 lays them out with World War I as the running example.

The four questions

Every cause-and-consequence analysis in this section answers these four questions. Examples: World War I.

CAUSES - before the event: when and why did it happen?

1. Short-term causes

What sparked it, close to the time?

World War I: the killing of the heir to

Austria-Hungary at Sarajevo, 28 June 1914;

the crisis that followed in July

2. Long-term causes

What had been building for years?

World War I: rival alliances, growing armies

and navies, competition for empires,

national pride and rivalry

CONSEQUENCES - after the event: what followed from it?

3. Intended consequences

What did people at the time plan or want?

World War I: the Allies planned to defeat

Germany; the peacemakers planned a treaty

and a league of nations

4. Unintended consequences

What happened that nobody planned?

World War I: four empires fell; a deadly flu

spread with the armies; bitterness in

Germany helped bring on a second war

Section 8B, part 2.

The four questions in four panels — short-term causes, long-term causes, intended consequences, unintended consequences — each with the question it asks and a World War I example, under two header bands: causes, before the event, and consequences, after the event

Figure 2. The four questions. Causes sit before the event in time; consequences after it.

The questions look simple; the discipline is in the answering. Give each cause a date and a kind (short-term or long-term). Give each consequence a kind too (intended or unintended), and name who did the intending wherever intention is claimed. “The war caused bitterness” is description; “the war-guilt clause bred bitterness in Germany that outlived the 1920s” is analysis — dated, named and sorted.

One term needs fixing at first use. The **war-guilt clause** is the name given to Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles (1919), the clause in which Germany accepted responsibility for the war’s damage — the legal ground for reparations, the payments Germany had to make for that damage. Whether that clause is a fair statement of the war’s causes is contested, and section 6 below handles the contest the way section 8A handles debate: by steelmanning both sides.

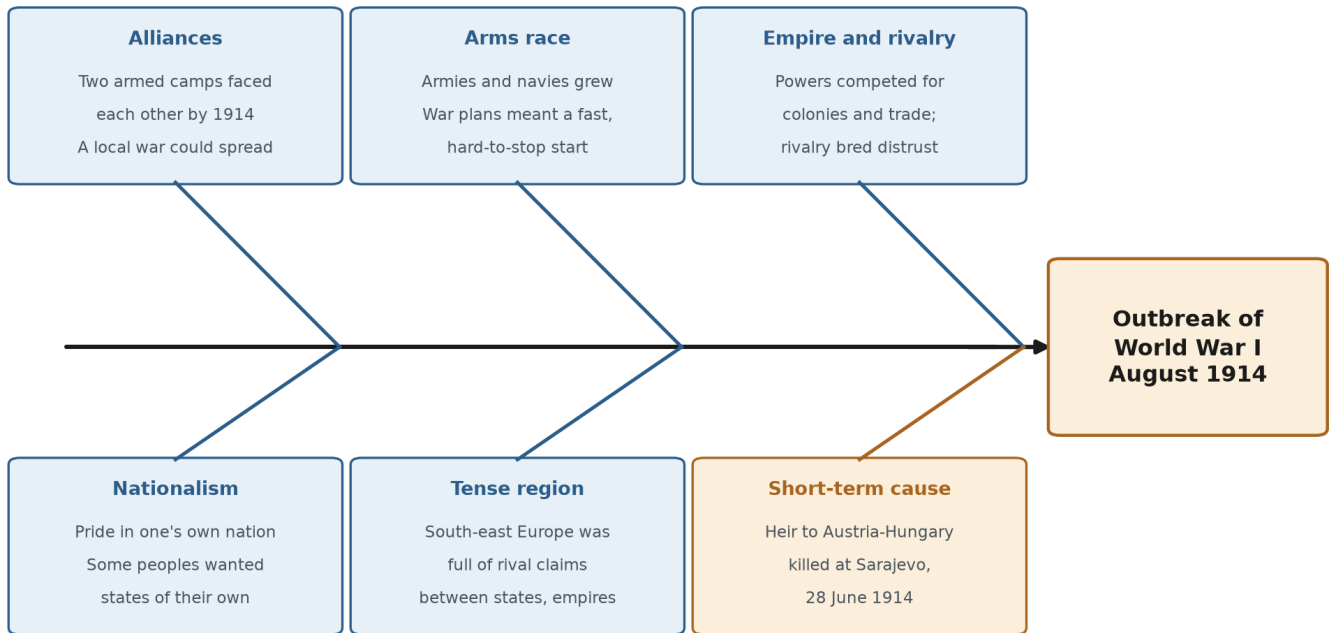
3. Graphic organisers I: fishbone and ripple (VC2HH10S08.E01)

.E01 names four graphic organisers — concept maps, fishbone diagrams, causal spider webs and ripple effect charts. A **graphic organiser** is a drawing that makes thinking visible: boxes, bones, rings or legs standing in for causes and consequences, so the shape of an analysis can be seen and checked. This section uses all four.

The **fishbone diagram** holds causes. The event sits at the head; the long-term causes are the bones; the short-term cause is drawn apart, as the trigger. Figure 3 builds one for the outbreak of World War I from the causes you learnt in section 3A.

Fishbone diagram: the causes behind World War I

A model for VC2HH10S08.E01. The bones are the long-term causes; the head is the event. The trigger is the short-term cause.



Section 8B, part 3. Long-term causes built the load; the short-term cause lit the fuse. Facts as taught in section 3A (VC2HH10K13).

Fishbone diagram of the causes behind World War I: five bones — alliances, arms race, empire and rivalry, nationalism, and a tense region in south-east Europe — feeding a spine that ends at the head, the outbreak of war in August 1914, with the short-term cause, the killing of the heir to Austria-Hungary at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, drawn beside the head

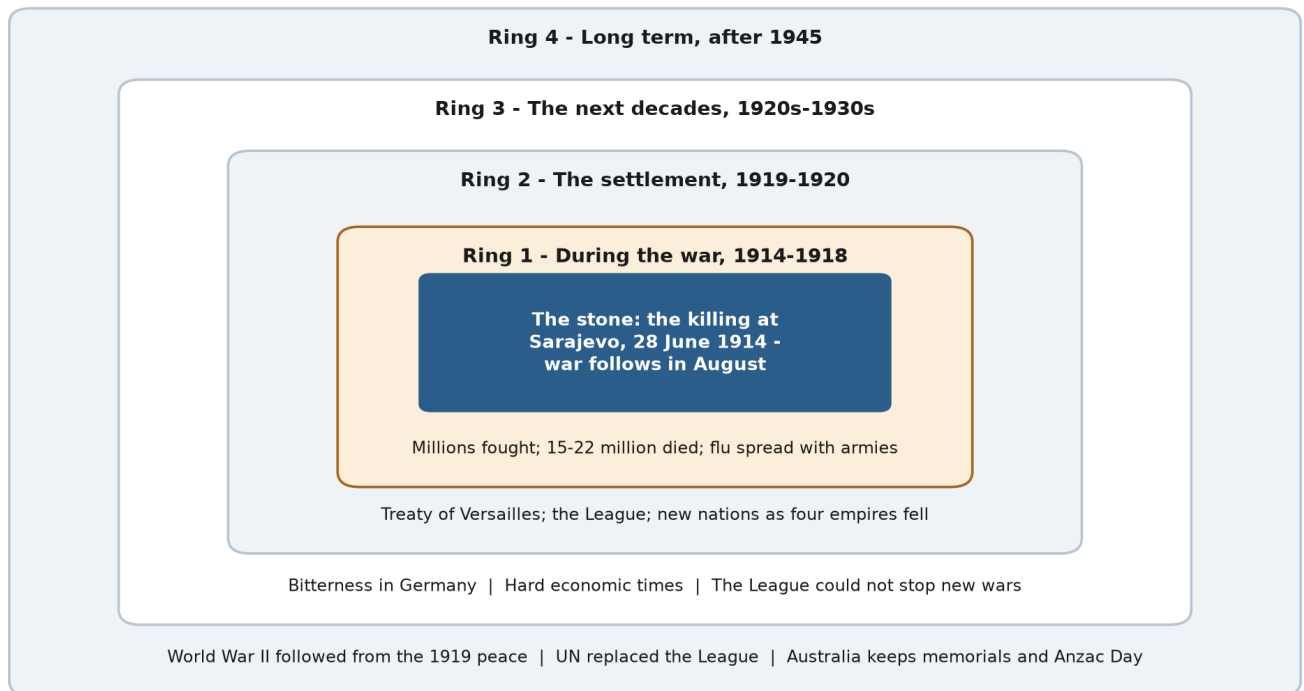
Figure 3. Fishbone diagram: the long-term causes built the load; the killing at Sarajevo lit the fuse.

Read Figure 3 as an argument, not a list. Each bone says *how* it loaded the event: alliances meant a local war could spread; war plans meant a fast, hard-to-stop start once armies moved; empire rivalry and nationalism bred distrust; south-east Europe held rival claims that could explode. The trigger is not drawn as a bone because without the bones, the trigger would have stayed a local crime and a local war.

The **ripple effect chart** holds consequences. The event is the stone; the consequences spread outward in time like rings on water. Figure 4 builds one for World War I.

Ripple effect chart: the consequences of World War I

A model for VC2HH10S08.E01. Consequences spread outward in time, like rings from a stone dropped in water.



Section 8B, part 4. Death figures: Wikipedia, 'World War I', accessed 26 August 2026.

Ripple effect chart of the consequences of World War I: the stone is the killing at Sarajevo, and four dated rings spread outward — the war years 1914 to 1918, the settlement 1919 to 1920, the next decades, and the long term after 1945 — each holding the consequences that landed in it

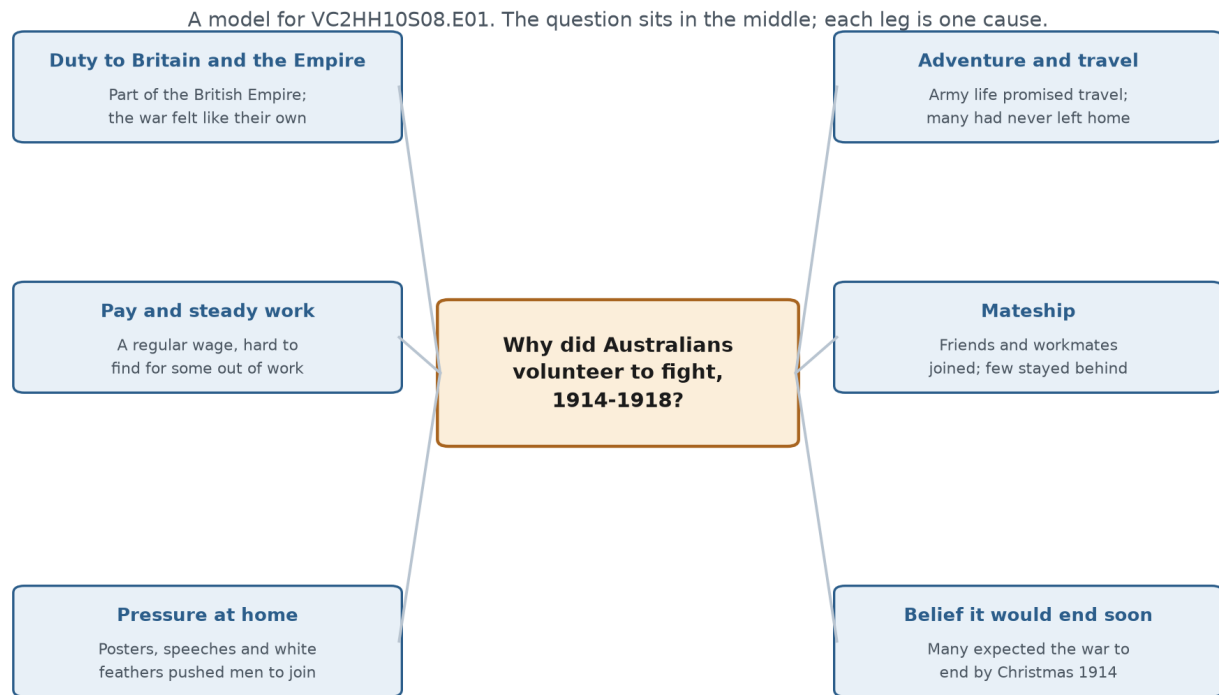
Figure 4. Ripple effect chart: consequences spreading outward in time, from the war years to after 1945.

Read Figure 4 for pace and reach. Some consequences landed at once (the dead; the deadly flu that spread with the armies). Some landed in the next decades (bitterness in Germany; hard economic times; a League of Nations that could not stop new wars). Some are still with us (memorials; Anzac Day). A consequence dated is a consequence you can argue about.

4. Graphic organisers II: the causal spider web (VC2HH10S08.E01)

The **causal spider web** holds the causes of one event around a central question. It is the organiser of choice when the causes are reasons people acted. Figure 5 builds one for a question section 3B has already answered: why did Australians volunteer to fight?

Causal spider web: why did Australians enlist in World War I?



Over 60,000 Australians who served died in the war (section 3B, VC2HH10K14).

Section 8B, part 5. Reasons as taught in section 3B.

Causal spider web with the question “why did Australians volunteer to fight, 1914 to 1918?” at the centre and six legs — duty to Britain and the Empire, adventure and travel, pay and steady work, mateship, pressure at home, and the belief the war would end soon

Figure 5. Causal spider web: six legs, one question. The same event can sit at the head of a fishbone or in the middle of a web — the question chooses the organiser.

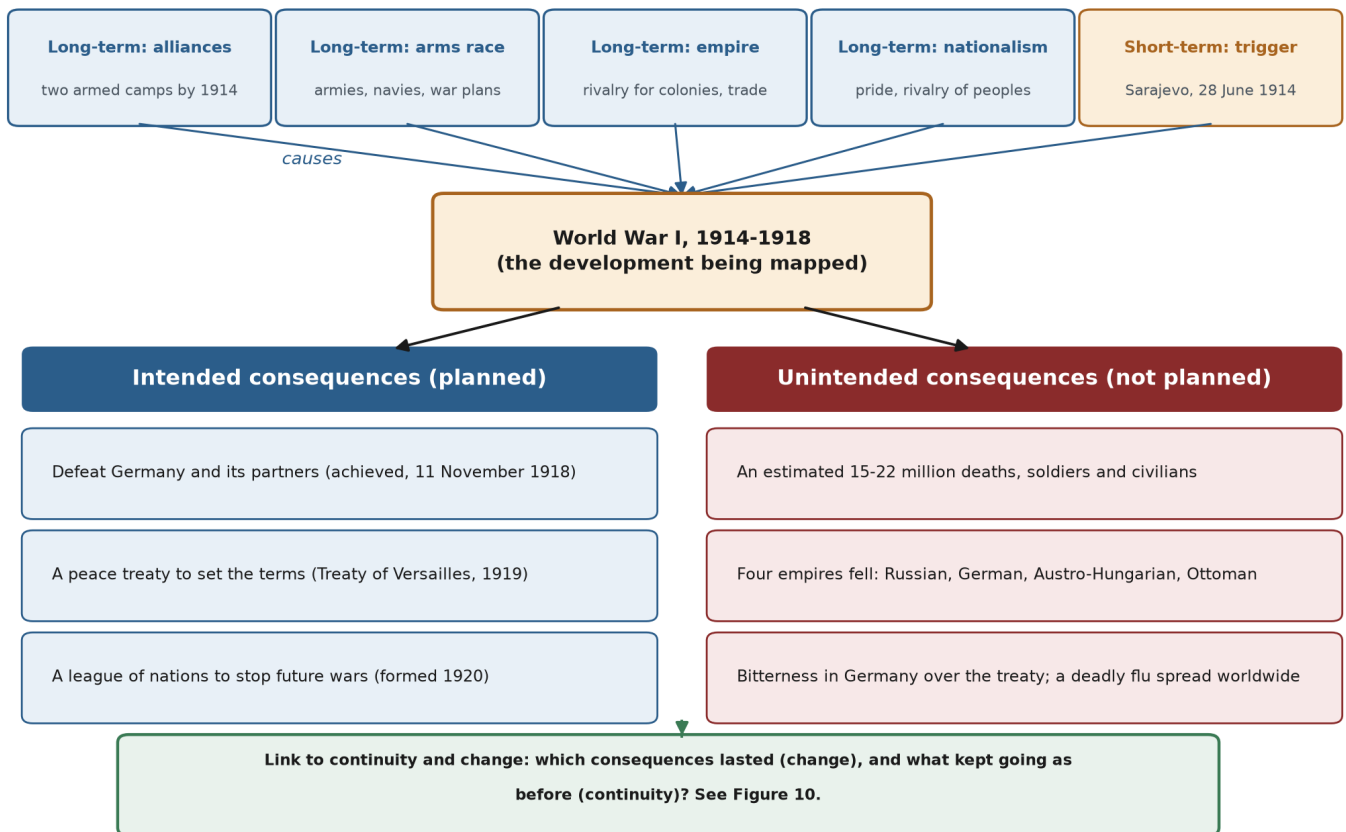
Two habits keep the web honest. First, every leg must be a cause, not a description — “many men enlisted” is not a leg; “friends and workmates joined, and few stayed behind” is. That leg is **mateship**, the bond of friends and workmates, defined here at first use. Second, legs can be weighed against each other: which cause carried the most weight, and for whom? A city worker out of a job and a farmer’s son with a farm to lose did not weigh the same legs the same way.

5. The concept map: the whole analysis on one page (VC2HH10S08.E03)

.E03 asks you to build a concept map of one historical development — its causes on one side, its consequences on the other — and it names World War I as one of its own examples. Figure 6 is the section’s centrepiece: the causes of Figures 3 and 5 above the event, the consequences split into intended and unintended below it, and a link band joining the map to section 8A’s skill.

Completed concept map: causes and consequences of World War I

A model for VC2HH10S08.E03. Copy this shape for any event, individual, idea or development you study.



Section 8B, part 6. Facts as taught in chapters 3-4.

Completed concept map for World War I: four long-term cause boxes and a short-term trigger box above the event box, and below it two columns — intended consequences (defeat of Germany, the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations) and unintended consequences (15 to 22 million deaths, four empires fallen, bitterness in Germany, the worldwide flu) — joined at the foot by a link band on continuity and change

Figure 6. The completed concept map for World War I. Copy this shape for any event, individual, idea or development you study.

Notice what the split does. The Allied powers planned to defeat Germany and its partners, and did (11 November 1918). They planned a peace treaty, and got one (1919). They planned a league of nations to stop future wars, and formed one (1920). Those are intended consequences — aims achieved. Alongside them sit the consequences nobody planned: an estimated 15–22 million deaths; four empires fallen; bitterness in Germany over the treaty; a deadly flu carried worldwide with the armies. The map's bottom band then asks section 8A's questions of every consequence: which results lasted (change), and what kept going as before (continuity)?

6. Two sources on the peace, and a contested claim (VC2HH10S08.E02)

Sources are where intended and unintended consequences get tested against evidence. This section's two sources are both primary — made at the time, by makers of the peace.

Source 1 - Treaty of Versailles, Article 231

Signed 28 June 1919 at Versailles, near Paris, between Germany and the Allied powers

Part VIII (Reparation), Article 231

"The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies."

Text as reproduced in Wikipedia, 'Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles', accessed 26 August 2026.

Source card 1: Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, signed 28 June 1919 at Versailles near Paris, quoted exactly, in which the Allied powers state, and Germany accepts, the responsibility of Germany and her allies for the loss and damage of the war

Figure 7. Source 1: Article 231, the war-guilt clause, quoted exactly.

Source 2 - President Woodrow Wilson, Fourteen Points, Point 14

Address to the United States Congress, 8 January 1918 - ten months before the war ended

Point 14 of 14: the plan for a league of nations

"A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike."

Wilson was awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize (announced in 1920) for his work on the League of Nations.

Text from The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp, accessed 26 August 2026.

Source card 2: Point 14 of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, from his address to the United States Congress of 8 January 1918, quoted exactly, calling for a "general association of nations" to protect the independence of states great and small, with a note that Wilson was awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize, announced in 1920

Figure 8. Source 2: Point 14 of the Fourteen Points, quoted exactly — the plan for a league of nations.

Source 1 is the treaty's own claim about causes: Germany and her allies caused the war's damage, and Germany accepts it. Source 2 is the plan of the United States president, Woodrow Wilson, for a league of nations, offered ten months before the war ended. Wilson was awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize (announced in 1920) for his work on the League.

The claim in Source 1 is the section's contested claim, and the honest move is to steelman both sides — give each the strongest form its own supporters would recognise.

- **The Allied case, steelmanned.** After Sarajevo, Germany backed Austria-Hungary's hard line; in August 1914 German armies invaded neutral Belgium to get at France; the war's damage followed from those choices. To the treaty-makers of 1919, naming Germany as the cause was not blame for its own sake — it was the legal ground for making Germany pay for the damage.
- **The other case, steelmanned.** The war grew from a web every great power helped weave — rival alliances, arms races, empire rivalry, nationalism — and Serbia, Russia, Austria-Hungary and the rest all made choices in July 1914 that no single power controlled. On this view responsibility was shared, and Article 231 was the winners' statement of the war, not a historian's verdict.

Most historians today hold the second view. The Wikipedia article on Article 231 records both the clause's purpose — a legal ground for payment — and the modern historians' view that the war's causes were shared across the powers, not carried by Germany alone (retrieved 2026-08-26). Notice what follows for the skill: Source 1 is evidence of what the winners *intended* (Germany to pay; the peace to hold) — and of what they did *not intend* (a clause that fed bitterness in Germany and helped poison the peace).

7. A six-move method (VC2HH10S08)

The whole skill fits into six moves, and Figure 9 sets them out in order. Moves 1–2 sort the causes; moves 3–4 teach VC2HH10S08.E02; move 5 joins the map to section 8A; move 6 teaches VC2HH10S08.E01.

A six-move method for analysing causes and consequences

Use these moves on any significant event, individual, idea or development

Move 1	Name the event, individual, idea or development Be exact: what, where, and when?
Move 2	List its causes and sort them Short-term (the spark) from long-term (built up over years)
Move 3	Ask what people at the time meant to make happen These aims and plans become the intended consequences
Move 4	Look for results nobody planned These are the unintended consequences
Move 5	Judge what changed and what kept going Link the consequences to continuity and change
Move 6	Set it all out in a graphic organiser Concept map, fishbone, spider web or ripple chart

Section 8B, part 7. Moves 3-4 teach VC2HH10S08.E02; move 6 teaches VC2HH10S08.E01.

Six move cards in order for analysing causes and consequences — name the event; list its causes and sort them; ask what people at the time meant to make happen; look for results nobody planned; judge what changed and what kept going; set it all out in a graphic organiser

Figure 9. The six moves of this section, in order. Carry them into any event, individual, idea or development.

8. From consequences to continuity and change (VC2HH10S08)

A consequence is only half analysed until you ask what it did to the story: did it change things, or did things keep going? Figure 10 runs six consequences of World War I through section 8A's test.

From consequences to continuity and change

Each consequence of World War I judged: did it change things, or did things keep going?

Consequence	Change or continuity?	Why
Four empires fell (Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman)	Change	New nations appeared across Europe and the Middle East in their place
Treaty of Versailles, 1919	Change	Germany lost land and military power and had to pay for damage
League of Nations, 1920	Change with limits	A new world body - but the USA stayed out, and it could not stop new wars
Women's wartime work	Change, then partial continuity	Women took jobs during the war; many had to leave them when soldiers returned
Australia's tie to Britain	Continuity	Australia stayed part of the British Empire after 1918
Grief and wounds of returned soldiers	Change for families and towns	Over 60,000 Australian dead; many more came home wounded (section 4D)

Section 8B, part 8. Links: continuity and change are analysed in section 8A (VC2HH10S07).

Table judging six consequences of World War I as change or continuity — the fall of four empires, the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations, women's wartime work, Australia's tie to Britain, and the grief and wounds of returned soldiers — each with a one-line reason

Figure 10. Six consequences of World War I, judged as change or continuity. Some rows are both at once — “change with limits” is a finding, not a failure.

Read the middle rows carefully. The League of Nations was a change with limits: a new world body, but the United States stayed out, and it could not stop new wars. Women's wartime work was change, then partial continuity: women took jobs during the war, and many had to leave them when soldiers returned. History rarely sorts into pure change and pure continuity; the honest answer names the mix.

9. Traps to spot (VC2HH10S08)

Five traps catch most weak cause-and-consequence writing, and Figure 11 names them with the way out of each.

Common mistakes in cause-and-consequence analysis

Spot the trap before it catches your argument

The trap	Why it is a trap	What to do instead
After it, so because of it	Two things happening in order does not prove one caused the other	Ask how the first thing actually helped the second happen; find evidence
The one-cause answer	Big events never have a single cause; the spark needs fuel already laid	List many causes and sort them short-term and long-term
Every cause counts the same	Some causes matter far more than others	Rank the causes and explain your ranking with evidence
They should have seen it coming	You know the ending; people at the time did not	Judge actions from what people knew and aimed at the time
Every result was planned	Many results were accidents nobody wanted	Ask who planned what, then list what happened anyway (unintended)

Section 8B, part 9.

Table of five common traps in cause-and-consequence analysis — “after it, so because of it”; the one-cause answer; every cause counts the same; they should have seen it coming; every result was planned — each with why it is a trap and what to do instead

Figure 11. The five traps. Spot them in your own draft before anyone else does.

The deepest trap is the last pair taken together: judging people at the time by what you know happened (they could not know it), and assuming every result was planned (most were not). The discipline is the same in both cases: analyse from what people knew and aimed at the time, and keep the unintended column as full as the intended one.

Sources for this section

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- Wikipedia, “World War I”: an estimated 15–22 million deaths, soldiers and civilians; the fighting ended on 11 November 1918; retrieved 2026-08-26.
- Wikipedia, “Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles”: the clause’s text as quoted in Source 1; the clause’s purpose as a legal ground for payment, and the modern historians’ shared-responsibility view of the war’s causes; retrieved 2026-08-26.
- The Avalon Project, Yale Law School: Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, address to the United States Congress, 8 January 1918; Point 14 as quoted in Source 2; retrieved 2026-08-26.
- Wikipedia, “Woodrow Wilson”, and Nobel Prize records: Wilson awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize, announced in 1920, for his work on the League of Nations; retrieved 2026-08-26.
- Taught content of this book: section 3A (causes of World War I), section 3B (why Australians enlisted, including mateship and the pressure at home), section 4D (legacies of the war, including memorials and Anzac Day), and section 8A (continuity and change).

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — with help

Question. Use the four questions of Figure 2 on the outbreak of World War I, drawing on Figure 3.

Working	Comment
Step 1: Name the event exactly. World War I began in August 1914, in Europe, after the killing of the heir to Austria-Hungary at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.	“What, where, when” first — an analysis built on a vague event stays vague.
Step 2: List the short-term cause. The Sarajevo killing and the July crisis that followed it — the spark, close in time.	The trigger is a cause; it is just a short-term one.
Step 3: List the long-term causes and sort them. Alliances (two armed camps faced each other by 1914); the arms race (growing armies and navies, war plans); empire rivalry (competition for colonies and trade); nationalism (pride, and peoples wanting states of their own).	Four bones, each named, and each saying <i>how</i> it loaded the event.
Step 4: Weigh the causes. The alliances carry the most weight for the <i>spread</i> of the war: a local killing became a world war because the camps pulled in one power after another. The trigger carries the least weight alone — without the bones it stays a local crime.	Ranking with a reason is analysis; ranking without one is opinion.
Step 5: Link to consequences, then to continuity and change. The war’s consequences are the next part of the story — Figures 4 and 6 — and Figure 10 asks what they changed and what kept going.	The four questions never stop at causes.

Answer: The outbreak of World War I had one short-term cause (the Sarajevo killing and the July crisis) and four long-term causes (alliances, the arms race, empire rivalry, nationalism), of which the alliances best explain the war’s spread; its consequences, intended and unintended, are mapped in Figures 4 and 6 and judged for continuity and change in Figure 10.

Worked example 2 — with help

Question. Read Sources 1 and 2 (Figures 7 and 8). What did the peacemakers intend, and what followed that they did not intend?

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the sources. Source 1: the Treaty of Versailles, Article 231, signed 28 June 1919 — the treaty’s own words, a primary source. Source 2: Point 14 of Wilson’s Fourteen Points, 8 January 1918 — a president’s public plan, ten months before the war ended, also a primary source.	Both sources are primary: made at the time, by makers of the peace.
Step 2: Name the intended consequences. The defeat of Germany and its partners (achieved 11 November 1918); a treaty fixing responsibility and payment on Germany (Source 1, achieved 1919); a league of nations to protect the independence of states great and small (Source 2, formed 1920).	Intended = planned or wanted by people at the time; date each achievement.
Step 3: Name the unintended consequences. Bitterness in Germany over the war-guilt clause, which outlived the 1920s and helped bring on a second war; the United States never joining the League its own president	Unintended = caused by people’s actions but planned by no one.

planned; a death toll of 15–22 million that nobody in 1914 had imagined.

Step 4: Test the split against the sources. Source 1 shows intention (Germany to accept responsibility, and to pay), and it doubles as evidence of the unintended: a clause meant to ground payment fed the bitterness that poisoned the peace. Source 2 shows the same twice over: a league intended to stop wars, formed without the United States.

One source can carry both kinds of consequence — that is what makes it worth reading.

Step 5: Link to continuity and change. The tie that held: Australia stayed part of the British Empire after 1918 (Figure 10). The tie that broke: four empires fell between 1917 and 1922 (Figure 10).

Section 8A’s questions close the analysis.

Answer: The peacemakers intended to defeat Germany, to fix responsibility and payment on it, and to build a league to stop future wars — and they achieved all three (1918, 1919, 1920). They did not intend the bitterness the war-guilt clause bred in Germany, a League without the United States, or the death toll the war had already caused; those unintended consequences, and the continuity of Australia’s tie to Britain, complete the analysis.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Match the term to the case. Copy the table and complete it using the definitions in Figure 1. One row is done for you.

Case	Term (short-term cause, long-term cause, intended consequence, unintended consequence, continuity, change)
The killing at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914	short-term cause
The growth of rival alliances from the 1880s	
The Allies’ plan to defeat Germany and its partners	
Bitter feelings in Germany that helped bring on a second war	
Australia staying part of the British Empire after 1918	
Four great empires falling between 1917 and 1922	

(Hint: two time frames for causes, two kinds of consequence, and section 8A’s pair.)

Q2. Read the fishbone. From Figure 3: (a) which bone holds “two armed camps faced each other by 1914”? (b) why is the Sarajevo killing drawn apart from the bones, beside the head? (c) which bone holds the idea that a war, once started, would start fast and be hard to stop? (Hint: the trigger is not a bone.)

Q3. Read the ripple. From Figure 4: (a) which ring holds the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations? (b) name one consequence placed after 1945; (c) what does the ring order itself say about consequences and time? (Hint: the rings are dated.)

Q4. Read the spider web. From Figure 5: (a) which leg is about money and work? (b) which leg is about pressure at home? (c) which leg proved wrong, and what dated fact in this book shows it? (Hint: section 3B’s death toll.)

Q5. Sort the consequences (E02). Copy the list and mark each item intended or unintended, naming who did the intending where you can: the Treaty of Versailles, signed 1919; 15–22 million deaths; the League of Nations, formed 1920; the deadly flu spreading with the armies; bitterness in Germany over the treaty. (Hint: ask who planned what.)

Q6. Read the sources. From Figures 7 and 8: (a) according to Source 1, who caused the loss and damage of the war? (b) what must be formed under Point 14, and to what end? (c) name one limit of the League from Figure 10. (*Hint: use the source's own words where you can.*)

On your own

Q7. The four questions on the treaty (E02). The Treaty of Versailles (1919) is itself an event with causes and consequences. In one paragraph (5–7 sentences), answer the four questions of Figure 2 about the treaty, using Sources 1 and 2 and Figure 10 as your evidence.

Q8. Steelman the contest. “Article 231 was a fair statement of the war’s causes.” Write two sentences beginning “The strongest case for the clause is ...”, then two beginning “But the strongest case against it is ...”. Do not caricature either side.

Q9. Start the next map (E03). One event’s consequence is often the next event’s cause. Place these three items into the blank template of Figure 12 for World War II, each in the right box and each carrying a dated fact from this section: bitterness in Germany over the Treaty of Versailles; the League of Nations’ failure to stop new wars; the founding of the United Nations. Then add one more item of your own from chapters 3–4 of this book.

Q10. The full method. In one paragraph (6–8 sentences), analyse the causes and consequences of World War I using all six moves of Figure 9 — with your own weighing in move 4 and your own continuity-and-change line in move 5.

Inquiry task

Your own concept map: what caused World War II, and what followed from it?

This is the section’s inquiry: a small investigation you carry from question to finished map to written judgement, using the six moves of Figure 9. World War II is the development the curriculum’s own elaboration (.E03) names beside World War I, and chapters 3–4 of this book have already taught its story.

Your brief. Fill the blank template of Figure 12 for World War II, then write one paragraph defending your choices.

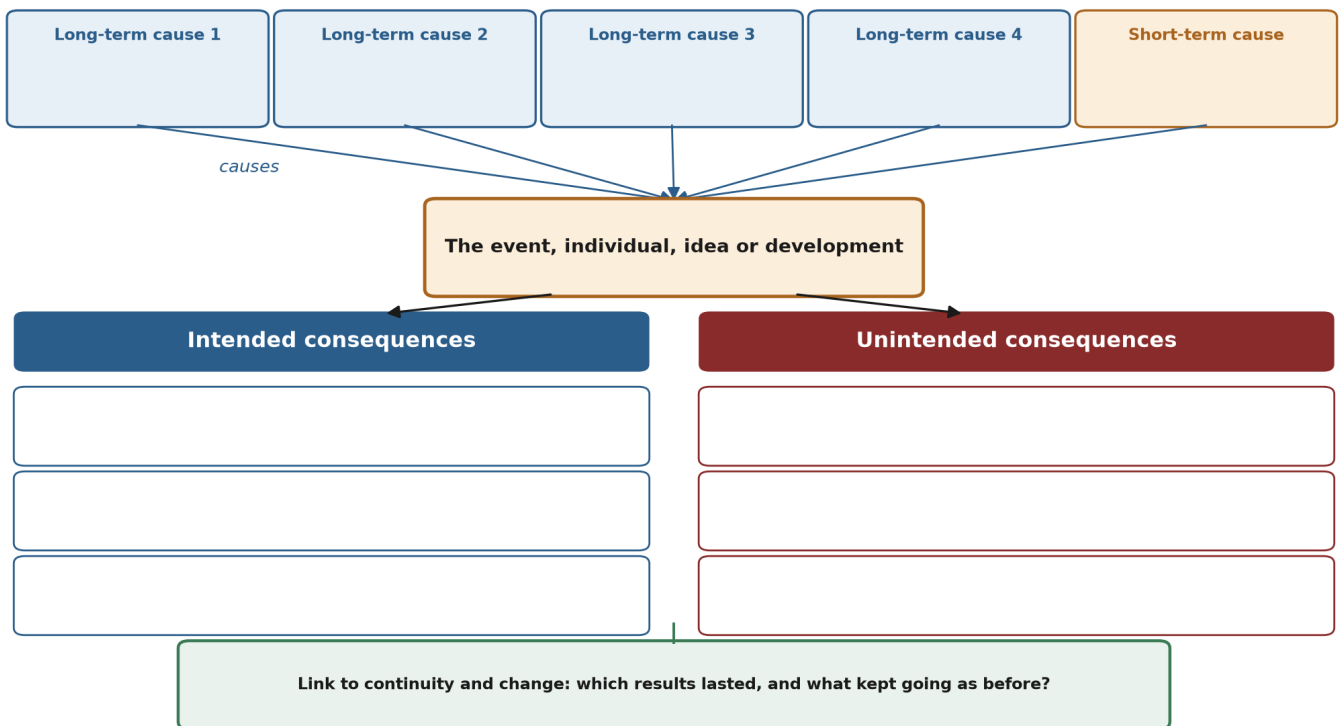
Steps (Figure 12 maps them).

1. **Name the development.** What, where, when — one sentence. For example: war in Europe began on 1 September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland; Britain and Australia entered the war two days later.
2. **Lay out four long-term causes and one short-term cause.** Use the bones of Figure 3 as your model: the bitterness left by the Treaty of Versailles; the League of Nations’ failure to stop new wars; the rise of dictators in Germany and Italy; the world’s economic hardship after 1929 — and the trigger of 1939.
3. **Split the consequences.** Two intended and two unintended, dated where you can. On the intended side: the defeat of Germany (1945) and the founding of the United Nations (1945). On the unintended side: the Cold War split that followed the peace, and a death toll heavier than the first war’s.
4. **Judge continuity and change.** Write the link band’s line: which of your consequences lasted (change), and what kept going as before (continuity)?
5. **Steelman before you judge.** Write one sentence giving the strongest case for the cause you ranked second, not first.
6. **Write the judgement.** One paragraph: your map’s claim, two dated facts, your weighing, your continuity-and-change line.

Criteria for a strong answer: every box filled and every arrow labelled; causes sorted short-term from long-term; consequences split intended from unintended, with at least one dated item on each side; a continuity-and-change line that names both; a steelman sentence the other side would recognise.

Template: your own concept map

Blank copy of the Figure 6 model, for the inquiry task. Fill every box; label every arrow.



Section 8B, inquiry task. Keep each box short; put your evidence in your written paragraph.

Blank concept map template copied from the Figure 6 model — four long-term cause boxes, one short-term cause box, an event box, and intended and unintended consequence columns with a link band to continuity and change — for the inquiry task on World War II

Figure 12. The blank template. Fill every box, label every arrow, and keep each box short — the evidence goes in your paragraph.

Answers

Q1. The growth of rival alliances from the 1880s — long-term cause. The Allies' plan to defeat Germany and its partners — intended consequence. Bitter feelings in Germany that helped bring on a second war — unintended consequence. Australia staying part of the British Empire after 1918 — continuity. Four great empires falling between 1917 and 1922 — change.

Q2. (a) The alliances bone. (b) Because it is the short-term cause — the trigger that lit a fuse the bones had laid; without the bones it would have stayed a local event. (c) The arms-race bone (war plans meant a fast, hard-to-stop start).

Q3. (a) Ring 2 (the settlement, 1919–1920). (b) Any one of: World War II following from the 1919 peace; the United Nations replacing the League; Australia keeping its memorials and Anzac Day. (c) That consequences land in time order — some at once, some decades later — and that the chart dates them.

Q4. (a) Pay and steady work — a regular wage, hard to find for some out of work. (b) Pressure at home (posters, speeches and white feathers). (c) The belief the war would end soon — many expected it to end by Christmas 1914, yet over 60,000 Australians who served died in the war.

Q5. Intended: the Treaty of Versailles (the peacemakers planned and signed it, 1919); the League of Nations (planned by Wilson and the peacemakers, formed 1920). Unintended: the 15–22 million deaths; the deadly flu spreading with the armies; the bitterness in Germany over the treaty. Who did the intending: the Allied powers at Paris in 1919, and Wilson for the League.

Q6. (a) Germany and her allies — Source 1 says Germany accepts the responsibility. (b) A “general association of nations” — a league — to protect the independence of states great and small. (c) Any one of: the United States stayed out; the League could not stop new wars.

Q7–Q10. There is no single right answer; the checklist is: the four questions each answered with dated evidence from the sources and Figure 10 (7); both sides of the clause stated in their strongest form, neither caricatured (8); the three items correctly boxed with dated facts, plus one more correctly-boxed item of the student's own from chapters 3–4 (9); all six moves present, with a weighing and a continuity-and-change line that are the student's own (10).

Fully-worked solutions

Q7.

Model answer. The treaty's causes run both long and short: long-term, four years of total war and Allied promises during it that Germany would pay; short-term, the fighting ending on 11 November 1918 and the victors meeting at Paris in 1919 to set the terms. Its intended consequences were achieved and dated: Germany accepted responsibility under Article 231, lost land and military power, and had to pay for damage; the League of Nations formed in 1920. Its unintended consequences weighed heavier: bitterness in Germany over the war-guilt clause that outlived the 1920s, and a peace many Germans never accepted. Asked what changed and what kept going, the treaty changed the map of Europe and the balance of its power, while Australia's tie to Britain carried on as before — a change with one foot in continuity, exactly the mix Figure 10 teaches.

Q8.

Model points. “The strongest case for the clause is that Germany's choices turned a local crisis into a world war — backing Austria-Hungary's hard line after Sarajevo, then invading neutral Belgium in August 1914 — and the treaty-makers had a real need to ground the payment of damage in law.” — “But the strongest case against it is that the war grew from a web every great power helped weave — alliances, arms races, empire rivalry, nationalism — and shared causes cannot honestly be loaded onto one defeated power; the clause was the winners' statement, and the bitterness it bred became a cause of the next war.”

Q9.

Model answer. Bitterness in Germany over the Treaty of Versailles goes in a long-term cause box: it grew from 1919 and fed the rise of the dictators who wanted a second war. The League of Nations' failure to stop new wars goes in a

long-term cause box too: a world body that could not act left no brake on the strong. The founding of the United Nations goes in the intended consequence box: the Allies planned a new world body as the war ended, and founded it in 1945. A possible fourth item, from chapter 3: the bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942 — it goes in the unintended consequence box on Australia's side (the Allies never planned for the war to reach the mainland), with a note that from Japan's side the blow was intended: the split always depends on who did the intending.

Q10.

Model answer. World War I's causes sort into one short-term and four long-term: the killing of the heir to Austria-Hungary at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 lit a fuse laid by rival alliances, the arms race, empire rivalry and nationalism (moves 1–2). The peacemakers meant to defeat Germany, to make it pay, and to build a league to stop future wars — and achieved all three, in 1918, 1919 and 1920 (move 3). Nobody meant the rest: an estimated 15–22 million deaths, four empires fallen, a deadly flu carried worldwide, and a bitterness in Germany that helped bring on a second war (move 4). Weighing the causes, the alliances carry the most weight for the spread: every bone made war more likely, but only the two armed camps explain how a killing in the Balkans became a world war within weeks (move 4's reason). Asked what changed and what kept going, the answer is mixed: four empires fell and new nations appeared in their place (change), while Australia stayed part of the British Empire and kept its grief and memory in the same forms — memorials and Anzac Day (continuity). Set out as a drawing, that analysis is Figure 6; the six moves are the map in sentence form (moves 5–6).

Key terms

cause — anything that made an event more likely to happen, or made it happen when and how it did. **consequence** — any result or effect that follows from an event, person, idea or development. **short-term cause** — a cause close in time to the event, often the spark. **long-term cause** — a cause that built up over years or decades before the event. **trigger** — the short-term cause that sets the event off. **intended consequence** — a result that people at the time planned or wanted. **unintended consequence** — a result that nobody planned, even though people's actions caused it. **graphic organiser** — a drawing (concept map, causal spider web, fishbone diagram, ripple effect chart) that makes an analysis visible. **mateship** — the bond of friends and workmates; a reason Australians enlisted (section 3B). **war-guilt clause** — the name given to Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles; a contested claim. **steelman** — to put a position in the strongest form its own supporters would recognise, before you judge it. **continuity / change** — what stayed the same, and what became different, across a period of time (section 8A).

Why some events matter more than others

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10S09

Draws on — VC2HH10S09.E01, VC2HH10S09.E02, VC2HH10S09.E03

Scope note — this section teaches a skill: how historians judge **significance**. The case study is the one the curriculum itself names — the fall of Singapore (1942) — and the wider war story is deferred to Chapter 3 (Australians and the world wars). The machinery of interpretations and debates is owned by section 7F, and sustained interpretation by section 8D; this section uses their tools where needed but does not re-teach them. Because significance is a judgement, two well-reasoned answers can differ; marking rewards the reasoning, not the conclusion.

Builds on — section 8A, section 8B, section 7D and section 7E.

Some events fill the news for a day and then disappear. Others keep shaping lives for decades, and historians call the difference **significance**. This section teaches the test historians use: five criteria — importance, profundity, quantity, durability and relevance — applied to the case study named in the curriculum, the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942. Two worked examples apply the criteria to that event (Worked example 1) and read Prime Minister John Curtin’s article as evidence (Worked example 2).

Before we begin: what do these words mean?

Some words in this section are **contested** — people do not all agree on one fixed meaning. We state the sense used here, so every question can be answered on that sense alone.

- **Significance / significant.** As used here: a judgement about how much an event, individual, group, movement, development or idea matters in history, tested against criteria. It is not a fixed property of the event, and it is not the same as “famous”. Other definitions exist; this is the sense every question here can be answered on.
- **Criterion / criteria.** One test / several tests. The curriculum names five criteria for significance: importance, profundity, quantity, durability and relevance.
- **Importance.** How much it mattered to the people who lived through it at the time.
- **Profundity.** How deep the change went in people’s lives, beliefs or how society worked.
- **Quantity.** How many people it affected.
- **Durability.** How long its effects lasted, and how long it has been remembered.
- **Relevance.** How much it helps us understand the world we live in now.
- **Perspective.** A particular person’s or group’s view of events. A soldier, a politician and a civilian may not agree on what mattered most, and all three views are evidence.
- **Primary source.** Evidence made at the time studied — a speech, an article, a diary, an official record.
- **Secondary source.** Evidence made afterwards, such as a history book or a documentary, using primary sources.

Keep these meanings in mind as you read. When a question asks you to *evaluate significance*, it asks for a judgement built on criteria and evidence — not a feeling.

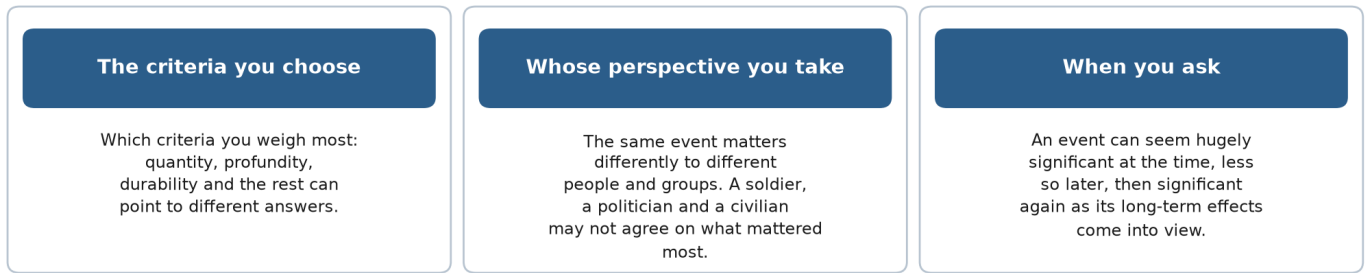
Theory

1. Significance is a judgement, not a fact you find (VC2HH10S09)

Significance is not written into an event. It is a judgement historians make, and three things shape that judgement: the criteria you choose, whose perspective you take, and when you ask. Figure 1 sets out the three.

Significance is a judgement, not a fact you find

Three things shape any judgement of significance.



Because significance is judged this way, two well-reasoned answers can differ. Marking rewards the reasoning, not the conclusion reached.

Labelled diagram with three cards stating what shapes a judgement of significance - the criteria you choose, whose perspective you take, and when you ask - each with a one-sentence explanation, and a caption noting that two well-reasoned answers can differ and marking rewards the reasoning

This is why the section's questions are answered by reasoning. The same event can be judged more significant by one student than another, and both judgements can be strong — if the criteria are named, the evidence is used, and the reasoning holds.

2. The five criteria (VC2HH10S09.E01)

The curriculum names the criteria to test significance against: **importance, profundity, quantity, durability and relevance**. Figure 2 gives each criterion as a question you can ask of any event, person, group, movement, development or idea.

The five criteria for historical significance

Judging significance means testing an event, person, group, movement, development or idea against these five criteria.

Criterion	What it asks	A question to test it
Importance	How much it mattered to the people who lived through it at the time	Did people then see it as a big deal?
Profundity	How deep the change went in people's lives, beliefs or how society worked	How deep did the change go?
Quantity	How many people it affected	How many lives did it touch?
Durability	How long its effects lasted, and how long it has been remembered	Are its effects still felt?
Relevance	How much it helps us understand the world we live in now	Does it help explain the present?

These are the criteria named in the Victorian Curriculum. Something does not need to score highly on all five to be significant; a strong judgement says which criteria matter most, and why.

Table of the five criteria for historical significance - importance, profundity, quantity, durability and relevance - each with what it asks and a question to test it, plus a note that something does not need to score highly on all five and a strong judgement says which criteria matter most and why

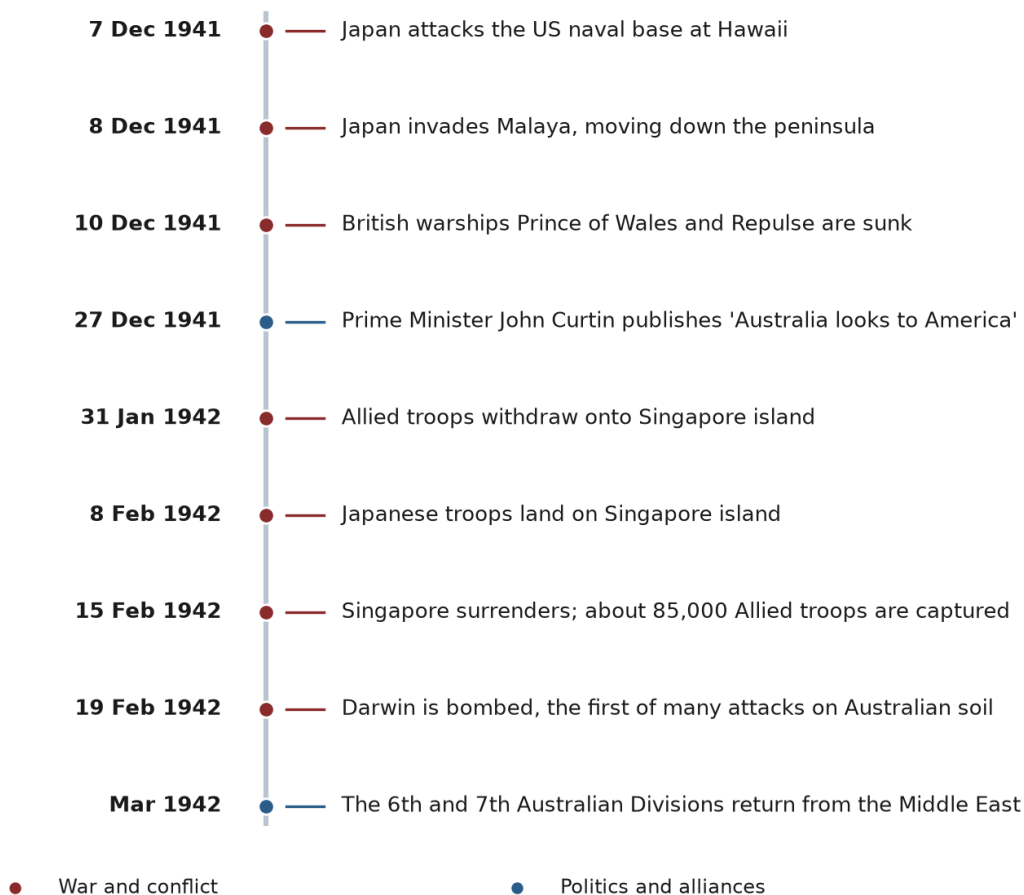
Two habits make the criteria work. First, **score each criterion with evidence**, not with a feeling: “about 85,000 Allied troops were captured” is evidence for quantity; “an alliance still in place today” is evidence for durability. Second, **weigh the criteria**: something does not need to score highly on all five to be significant, and a strong judgement says which criteria matter most in this case, and why.

3. The case study: the road to the fall of Singapore (VC2HH10S09.E03)

The curriculum chooses the case study for this skill: the fall of Singapore in 1942. Figure 3 gives the eight weeks that led to it and the first weeks after it. For the wider war story — the campaigns, the home front, the prisoners of war — see Chapter 3 (Australians and the world wars).

The road to the fall of Singapore, December 1941 to March 1942

Eight weeks that changed Australia's place in the war.



For the wider war story, see Chapter 3 (Australians and the world wars).

Vertical timeline of the road to the fall of Singapore from 7 December 1941 to March 1942, colour-coded into war and conflict and politics and alliances, with nine dated events from the attack on the US naval base at Hawaii to the return of the 6th and 7th Australian Divisions from the Middle East, and a caption pointing to Chapter 3 for the wider war story

The shape of the event in three lines. Britain's "great fortress" of Singapore was thought to be safe from attack; within weeks of Japan's entry into the war it had fallen, and on **15 February 1942** about **85,000 Allied troops were captured**, including around **15,000 Australians of the 8th Division**. For Australians, the war was suddenly close: Darwin was bombed four days later.

4. Applying the criteria to the fall of Singapore (VC2HH10S09.E01, VC2HH10S09.E03)

Figure 4 runs the event through all five criteria, one row per criterion, each row resting on evidence.

Applying the five criteria to the fall of Singapore

Each row tests the event against one criterion, using evidence.

Criterion	Evidence for the fall of Singapore (15 February 1942)
Importance	Seen at once as a huge defeat: Britain's 'great fortress' fell within days of the attack. It mattered immediately to Australians, who began to fear invasion.
Profundity	It shattered trust in Britain's protection and changed how Australia thought about its own safety - a deep change in belief and policy, not just a single battle lost.
Quantity	About 85,000 Allied troops were captured, including around 15,000 Australians of the 8th Division; their families, and the whole nation, felt the loss.
Durability	Its effects lasted decades: the turn toward the United States helped lead to the 1951 security treaty, an alliance still in place today.
Relevance	It helps explain why Australia's closest military ally today is the United States rather than Britain, and why the event is still remembered each year.

Table applying the five criteria to the fall of Singapore of 15 February 1942 - importance seen at once as a huge defeat, profundity a deep change in belief and policy, quantity about 85,000 Allied troops captured including around 15,000 Australians, durability effects lasting decades including the 1951 security treaty with the United States, and relevance explaining Australia's closest military ally today

Read the rows as a model of the move this section teaches: **criterion, then evidence, then a line of reasoning joining them**. The quantity row does not just say “many people”; it gives a number and says who felt it. The durability row does not just say “it lasted”; it names something still in place today. Worked example 1 builds an evaluation from two of these rows.

5. A range of sources about the fall of Singapore (VC2HH10S09.E03)

The curriculum asks you to draw on **many kinds of source** for this event: what prisoners of war recorded; commanders — General Gordon Bennett among them; politicians — Prime Minister John Curtin among them; and sources from the Japanese side and the British side. Figure 5 says what each kind can show, and where each kind is limited.

A range of sources about the fall of Singapore

Each kind of source shows something different, and each has limits.

Source	What it is	What it can show	A limit
Accounts of prisoners of war	Diaries, memoirs and interviews of captured soldiers, such as men of the 8th Division	The lived experience of capture and hardship; the human cost	One person's view; memory can shift over time
Commanders, e.g. General Gordon Bennett	Reports and later statements by military leaders	Decisions made in the battle, and why the defence failed	A commander may defend his own choices
Politicians, e.g. Prime Minister John Curtin	Speeches and articles by the wartime leader	How the government read the event, and what it did next	A leader speaks to win over the public
Japanese sources	Records and accounts of the attacking forces	How Japan planned the campaign and saw its victory	Made by the winning side
British sources	Government and military records of the defending empire	How Britain saw the defeat and explained its causes	May protect the empire's reputation

Table of five kinds of sources about the fall of Singapore - what prisoners of war recorded; commanders, General Gordon Bennett among them; politicians, Prime Minister John Curtin among them; Japanese sources and British sources - each with what it is, what it can show and one limit

The limits matter as much as the uses. A prisoner-of-war account shows the human cost that no dispatch can; but it is one person's view, and memory can shift over time. A commander's report shows the decisions made in the battle; but a commander may defend his own choices. That is why historians **corroborate** — they set one source beside another and check where the accounts agree and where they part.

6. Source 1: Curtin's "Australia looks to America" (VC2HH10S09.E03)

Weeks before Singapore fell, the Prime Minister said in public where Australia must now look for protection. Figure 6 reproduces the key lines of his article as Source 1.

SOURCE 1: 'Australia looks to America'

A primary source from the leader of Australia's wartime government.

"Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom."

John Curtin, Prime Minister of Australia, in an article in The Herald (Melbourne), 27 December 1941.

This is a primary source: a statement made at the time by the head of the Australian government. It shows how Australia's leader wanted the country to turn to the United States for protection, weeks before Singapore fell.

Curtin wrote this on 27 December 1941. Singapore fell on 15 February 1942.

Reproduction of Source 1, the article by Prime Minister John Curtin published in The Herald, Melbourne, on 27 December 1941, quoting his words that Australia looks to America free of any pangs as to traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom, with a note that it is a primary source showing the turn to the United States weeks before Singapore fell

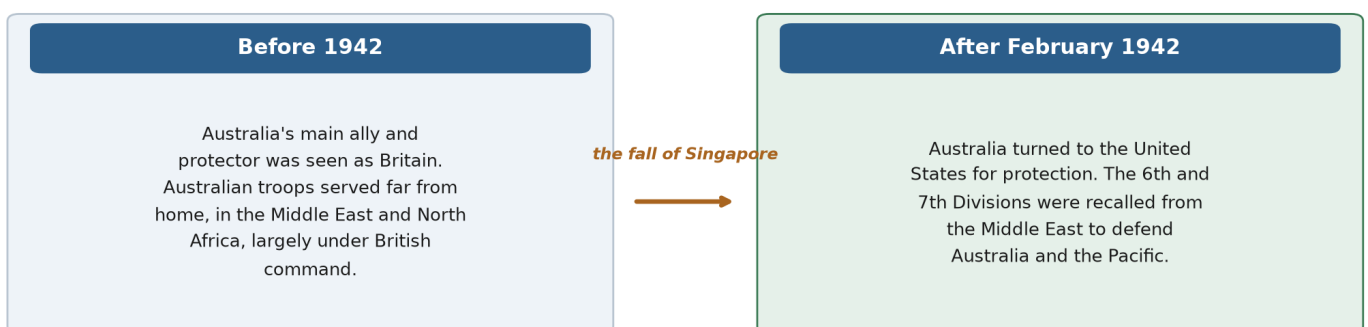
Read it as a primary source with a perspective. It is the head of the Australian government telling the public, in wartime, that protection must now come from the United States rather than from Britain. It is evidence of a turn **at the top**, in policy and public words — which is also its limit: it shows what the leader wanted the country to do, not what every Australian felt. Worked example 2 reads this source with care.

7. Who Australia stood with, and where its troops went (VC2HH10S09.E03)

The significance named in the curriculum is specific: the fall of Singapore changed **who Australia stood with, and where its troops were sent**. Figure 7 sets the change out before and after.

The change in who Australia stood with, and where its troops were sent

The fall of Singapore turned Australia's defence in a new direction.



What this shows: the fall of Singapore moved Australia's security from relying on Britain to relying on the United States, and moved its troops from distant fronts to home defence.

Labelled before-and-after diagram of the change in who Australia stood with, and where its troops were sent - before 1942 Britain was seen as the main ally and protector and Australian troops served far from home largely under British command; after February 1942 Australia turned to the United States for protection and the 6th and 7th Divisions were recalled from the Middle East - joined by an arrow labelled the fall of Singapore

Before 1942, Australia's defence rested on Britain, and Australian troops served far from home — in the Middle East and North Africa — largely under British command. After February 1942, Australia turned to the United States for protection, and the **6th and 7th Divisions were recalled** from the Middle East to defend Australia and the Pacific.

The change outlasted the war: the turn toward the United States helped lead to the **1951 security treaty**, an alliance still in place today. That long tail is the durability criterion doing its work.

8. Constructing the explanation (VC2HH10S09.E02)

Evaluating significance is only half the skill; the other half is **constructing an explanation** that uses sources of evidence, references them consistently, and uses historical terms and concepts. Figure 8 shows a model paragraph answering “why was the fall of Singapore significant?”, with a checklist of what makes it work.

Model: an explanation built from sources of evidence

One paragraph answering: why was the fall of Singapore significant?

Model paragraph	Why it works
The fall of Singapore was significant because it changed Australia's military alliances. On 15 February 1942 the British stronghold of Singapore fell to Japan, and about 85,000 Allied troops, including around 15,000 Australians, were captured. Weeks earlier, Prime Minister John Curtin had already said that Australia must 'look to America' rather than rely on Britain (Source 1). The fall of Singapore proved his warning right. As a result, Australia recalled the 6th and 7th Divisions from the Middle East to defend its own soil, and drew closer to the United States. Accounts of prisoners of war from the 8th Division show the human cost behind this change. The event was significant not just in 1942 but for decades: it helped lead to the 1951 security treaty with the United States.	✓ Names the event and its date ✓ Uses figures drawn from evidence ✓ Cites a source (Source 1) ✓ Explains the change in alliances and in the use of troops ✓ Uses the language of cause and consequence ✓ Connects the event to the present (durability)

The explanation uses sources to support a claim about significance, and uses historical terms and consistent referencing.

Model paragraph explaining why the fall of Singapore was significant - it changed Australia's military alliances, with the date, the figures of about 85,000 Allied troops and around 15,000 Australians captured, a citation of Source 1, the recall of the 6th and 7th Divisions and the 1951 security treaty - beside a checklist of why it works, including citing a source, using cause and consequence language and connecting the event to the present

Notice the referencing. The paragraph cites **Source 1** where it uses Curtin's warning, and it draws its figures from the evidence of the event. Notice the terms: *cause, consequence, alliance, recalled, significant*. And notice the criteria language: the last sentence is the durability criterion, used by name in the checklist. Question 11 asks you to construct a paragraph of your own on this model.

9. Your turn: a scaffold for evaluating significance (VC2HH10S09)

Figure 9 pulls the section together into six steps you can apply to **any** event, individual, group, movement, development or idea — in this book and beyond it.

A scaffold for evaluating historical significance

Follow the steps top to bottom.

1. CHOOSE

Pick an event, individual, group, movement, development or idea to evaluate.

4. WEIGH

Decide which criteria matter most here, and say why.

2. DESCRIBE

Say what it was, where and when it happened, and who was involved.

5. USE SOURCES

Support your claims with sources of evidence, and reference them.

3. APPLY THE CRITERIA

Test it against importance, profundity, quantity, durability and relevance; find evidence for each.

6. JUDGE

State your judgement of its significance, and say whose perspective you used.

Marking rewards the quality of the reasoning, not the conclusion reached. Two students can judge differently and both be marked highly if both reason well.

Labelled diagram of a six-step scaffold for evaluating historical significance - choose, describe, apply the criteria, weigh, use sources, judge - each step with a one-sentence instruction, and a caption noting that marking rewards the quality of the reasoning, not the conclusion reached

The last step carries the section's promise: state your judgement, and say whose perspective you used. Two students can judge differently and both be marked highly, if both reason well.

Sources for this section

Retrieval date for all online sources: **26 August 2026.**

1. John Curtin, article in *The Herald* (Melbourne), 27 December 1941 — the statement known as “Australia looks to America”; consulted via Trove (National Library of Australia).
2. National Archives of Australia: records of Australians captured as prisoners of war of the Japanese after the fall of Singapore, including men of the 8th Division.
3. Australian War Memorial: records on the 8th Division and the fall of Singapore.
4. General Gordon Bennett, reports and later statements on the Malayan campaign and the defence of Singapore, including the book he later wrote on the campaign.
5. British sources: official dispatches on the Malaya and Singapore campaigns and British government records of the time.
6. Japanese sources: post-war Japanese accounts of the campaign, in the translated records prepared for the Allies.
7. Wikipedia: “Fall of Singapore”, “John Curtin”, “Gordon Bennett (general)”. All retrieved 26 August 2026.
8. *Security Treaty Between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America*, Australian Treaty Series 1952 No. 2 (the treaty named in this section as the 1951 security treaty).

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — evaluating significance with the criteria, with help

Question. Using Figure 4, judge how significant the fall of Singapore was, against the criteria of **quantity** and **durability**.

Working	Comment
Step 1: Name the event and its date. On 15 February 1942 the British stronghold of Singapore fell to Japan, and about 85,000 Allied troops were captured.	An evaluation starts from a named event, not a general one.
Step 2: Apply quantity. About 85,000 Allied troops were captured, including around 15,000 Australians of the 8th Division; their families, and the whole nation, felt the loss.	Quantity is scored with a number, and with who felt it.
Step 3: Apply durability. The effects lasted decades: the turn toward the United States helped lead to the 1951 security treaty, an alliance still in place today; the event is still remembered each year.	Durability is scored with something still felt or remembered, not with “a long time”.
Step 4: Weigh the two criteria. Quantity shows the size of the loss at the time; durability shows the length of its effects. Together they answer both halves of significance — how much it mattered then, and how much it still matters.	A strong evaluation says why the chosen criteria matter most here.
Step 5: State the judgement. On these two criteria the fall of Singapore was highly significant: it touched tens of thousands of lives at the time and shaped Australia’s alliances for decades after.	The judgement repeats the criteria by name, so the reasoning can be checked.

Answer: on quantity and durability the fall of Singapore was highly significant — about 85,000 troops captured, including around 15,000 Australians, and effects that ran for decades, helping lead to an alliance (the 1951 security treaty with the United States) still in place today.

Worked example 2 — reading Source 1 with care, with help

Question. Read Source 1 (Curtin’s article, 27 December 1941). A student says: “This source proves that Australia had already given up on Britain before Singapore fell.” Is that a fair reading? Use the source to answer.

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the source. It is a primary source: an article by John Curtin, Prime Minister of Australia, in <i>The Herald</i> (Melbourne), 27 December 1941 — weeks before Singapore fell on 15 February 1942.	Start with what the source <i>is</i> , and where it sits in time.
Step 2: Describe the content. Curtin makes it clear that Australia looks to America, “free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom”.	Quote the words the claim rests on.
Step 3: Explain the context. Britain’s warships Prince of Wales and Repulse had been sunk on 10 December, Japan was moving down Malaya, and Britain could not send the help Australia had counted on.	Context explains why the leader spoke this way in this week.
Step 4: Read the perspective. It is the head of the government telling the public where protection must now come from — a turn at the top, in policy and public words. A leader also speaks to win over the public.	A source is always someone’s view from somewhere.
Step 5: Judge the student’s claim and state the limit. The	“Proves” and “given up” are the tells: the source shows

Working	Comment
source shows the turn toward the United States had already begun before Singapore fell; but one leader's public article does not <i>prove</i> that Australia as a nation had "given up" on Britain — many Australians still felt the old links. The limit: it shows intent at the top, not the feelings of the whole country.	a turn, not a finished break.
Answer: fair in part, but it goes too far. The source shows that, weeks before Singapore fell, Australia's leader was already turning the country toward the United States — but a prime minister's article is evidence of a turn at the top, not proof that the nation had given up on Britain.	

Practice questions

With help

- Q1.** Figure 2 names the five criteria for historical significance. List them.
- Q2.** Figure 1 says three things shape any judgement of significance. Name them.
- Q3.** Using Figure 3, place these in order: Darwin is bombed; Japan invades Malaya; Singapore surrenders; Curtin publishes "Australia looks to America".
- Q4.** In Figure 4, which criterion is tested by the row that uses the figure of about 85,000 captured, and who does that row say felt the loss?
- Q5.** Figure 5 gives one limit for each kind of source. Name the limit for accounts of prisoners of war, and the limit for commanders' reports.
- Q6.** Using Figure 7, name one change in Australia's alliances and one change in the use of troops after February 1942.

On your own

- Q7.** Using the importance row of Figure 4, explain why the fall of Singapore mattered to people at the time. Use one piece of evidence from the row and the language of cause and consequence.
- Q8.** "The fall of Singapore mattered because of how many lives it touched." Name the criterion that sentence uses, then name one *other* criterion the event also scores highly on, with evidence from Figure 4.
- Q9.** Read Source 1. What does it show about the change in Australia's alliances? Give one limit of the source.
- Q10.** A prisoner-of-war account and a commander's report disagree about why the defence of Singapore failed. Using one idea from Figure 5, explain why a historian would use both sources rather than pick one.
- Q11.** Using Figure 8 as your model, write one paragraph judging how significant the fall of Singapore was. Reference at least one source (Source 1, or a prisoner-of-war account), and use at least two criteria by name.
- Q12.** Significance. "The fall of Singapore was more significant for Australia than for Britain." State your view, name the criteria you used, and defend your choice in two or three sentences. Marking rewards the quality of the reasoning, not the conclusion.

Answers

Q1. Importance, profundity, quantity, durability, relevance.

Q2. The criteria you choose; whose perspective you take; when you ask.

Q3. Japan invades Malaya (8 December 1941); Curtin publishes “Australia looks to America” (27 December 1941); Singapore surrenders (15 February 1942); Darwin is bombed (19 February 1942).

Q4. Quantity; their families, and the whole nation.

Q5. Prisoner-of-war accounts: one person’s view, and memory can shift over time. Commanders’ reports: a commander may defend his own choices.

Q6. Alliances: Australia turned to the United States for protection (later sealed in the 1951 security treaty). Use of troops: the 6th and 7th Divisions were recalled from the Middle East to defend Australia and the Pacific.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. The importance row says the fall was seen at once as a huge defeat: Britain’s “great fortress” fell within days of the attack, and Australians began to fear invasion. In the language of cause and consequence: the cause — the fall of a base thought safe — produced an immediate consequence in Australia, fear of invasion, which is evidence that people then saw the event as a big deal. That is what the importance criterion asks.

Q8. The sentence uses **quantity** — how many lives it touched. Another criterion it scores highly on is **durability**: the turn toward the United States helped lead to the 1951 security treaty, an alliance still in place today, and the event is still remembered each year — effects felt for decades, not just in 1942. (Profundity or relevance, defended with a row of Figure 4, are also acceptable.)

Q9. It shows the change in alliances had begun before Singapore fell: on 27 December 1941 the Prime Minister said in public that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom — evidence of a turn from Britain to the United States at the top of government. One limit: it is one leader’s public article, written to win over the public; it shows intent at the top, not the feelings of the whole nation, and not what Britain or the United States did in response.

Q10. Each source sees the battle from a different place, and each has a different limit: the prisoner-of-war account shows the lived experience and the human cost, but is one person’s view, and memory can shift over time; the commander’s report shows the decisions made in the battle, but a commander may defend his own choices. Using both, and checking where they agree and where they part, lets the historian corroborate the parts that agree and explain the parts that differ — the disagreement itself is evidence about perspectives, not just noise to be removed.

Q11. Model shape (criterion-evidence-explanation, as in Figure 8). *Example:* The fall of Singapore was significant because of its quantity and its durability. On 15 February 1942 about 85,000 Allied troops were captured, including around 15,000 Australians of the 8th Division (prisoner-of-war accounts show the human cost behind that number), so tens of thousands of lives were touched at once and the whole nation felt the loss. The event was also durable: it helped turn Australia toward the United States, a turn sealed in the 1951 security treaty and still felt today. Weeks before the fall, Prime Minister John Curtin had already said that Australia looks to America (Source 1), and the fall proved his warning right. *Explanation of the shape:* the paragraph names two criteria, scores each with evidence, cites a source where it is used, and ends by linking the event to the present.

Q12. A strong answer names criteria and applies them to both sides. For example: “Using quantity and relevance, the fall was more significant for Australia: it lost around 15,000 of its own troops in one day’s fighting, and the event still explains why Australia’s closest military ally today is the United States — a change in Australia’s whole defence position.” A student judging the other way can score full marks on different criteria: “Using importance and profundity at the time, the fall was more significant for Britain: it lost the base that held its empire in the East, a blow to its whole war position far larger than one division.” Both are well reasoned; the criteria do the work. Marking rewards the quality of the reasoning, not the conclusion.

Key terms

Term	Meaning used in this section
Significance / significant	A judgement about how much an event, individual, group, movement, development or idea matters in history, tested against criteria (sense stated in “Before we begin”)
Criterion / criteria	One test / several tests for significance; the curriculum names five
Importance	How much it mattered to the people who lived through it at the time
Profundity	How deep the change went in people’s lives, beliefs or how society worked
Quantity	How many people it affected
Durability	How long its effects lasted, and how long it has been remembered
Relevance	How much it helps us understand the world we live in now
Perspective	A particular person’s or group’s view of events
Primary source	Evidence made at the time studied (an article, a diary, an official record)
Secondary source	Evidence made afterwards, using primary sources (a history book, a documentary)
Corroborate	Set one source beside another and check where the accounts agree and where they part
Cause / consequence	Why something happened / what flowed from it
Judgement	A reasoned conclusion built on criteria and evidence; two well-reasoned judgements can differ

Making the case: building an argument about the past

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10S10

Draws on — VC2HH10S10.E01, VC2HH10S10.E02, VC2HH10S10.E03, VC2HH10S10.E04, VC2HH10S10.E05

Builds on — the whole skills spine of this book: questions (7A), chronological narratives (7B), source purpose, features, content and context (7C), evaluating sources as evidence (7D), perspectives (7E), interpretations and debates (7F), continuity and change (8A), causes and consequences (8B), and significance (8C). **Leads to** — the band's exit achievement standard, and VCE History, where sustained argument is the assessed core (TOC §5).

Every skills section in this book has been building towards this one. Section 7A taught you to formulate sharp historical questions; 7B to order narratives chronologically; 7C and 7D to analyse sources and evaluate them as evidence; 7E to read perspectives; 7F to identify and evaluate interpretations and debates; 8A and 8B to analyse continuity, change, causes and consequences; and 8C to judge significance. This section puts those skills to work in the finished product of historical writing: your own **sustained historical interpretation** — an account of the past, built from evidence, argued across a whole text, and defended against rival readings.

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- define *interpretation*, *sustained*, *argument* and *contested*, and name the four features that make an interpretation sustained;
- use the historical and conceptual terms of this band exactly, defining each one at first use in your own writing (VC2HH10S10.E01);
- construct a historical argument that identifies rival interpretations, states them at their strongest, evaluates the available evidence and presents your point of view (VC2HH10S10.E02);
- write an extended piece that gives a reasoned judgement on one historical event, development or movement (VC2HH10S10.E03);
- present the argument in the format that suits it — for example an essay, a talk, a debate, a display (digital or not) or a post on an online forum — keeping that format's conventions (VC2HH10S10.E04);
- cite sources as you write and prepare a reference list that distinguishes primary from secondary sources (VC2HH10S10.E05).

Theory

1. What a sustained historical interpretation is (VC2HH10S10)

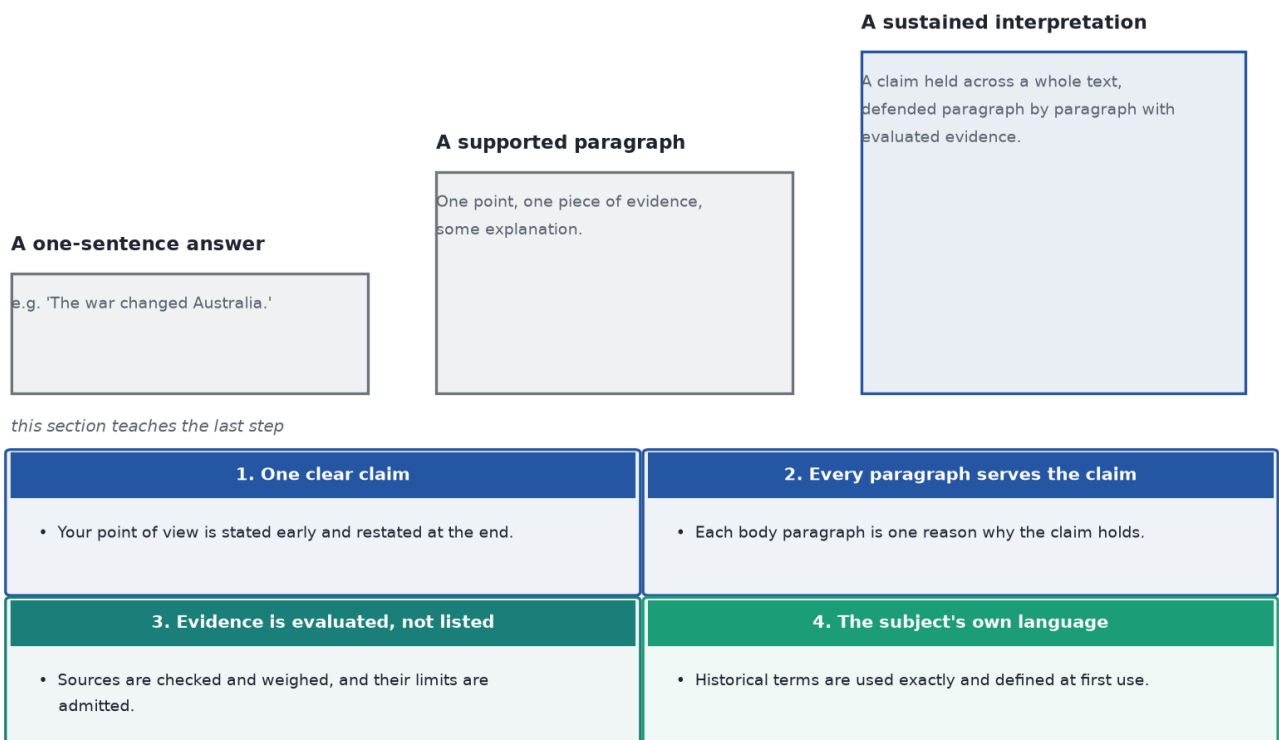
Defining the terms. The Victorian Curriculum asks students to build sustained historical interpretations but does not define the phrase. This section therefore treats an **interpretation** as *an account of the past, built from selected and evaluated evidence, that answers a historical question*, and **sustained** as *held together across a whole text*. Other definitions exist — some writers count any claim about the past as an interpretation — and they do not mean the same thing as these. Every question in this section is answerable on the definitions above alone.

An interpretation is not the same as an opinion. An opinion can rest on a feeling; an interpretation must rest on evaluated evidence — sources checked for purpose, perspective and limits (skills 7C–7D) and weighed against each other (7F, 8C). And the word **contested** matters here: a question is contested when it is open to more than one defensible reading, because historians weigh the same evidence differently. Historical questions worth arguing — “Did the fall of Singapore change Australia’s place in the world?” — are contested in exactly this sense. That is not a flaw to smooth over. It is the reason your writing must state its claim, give its reasons, and answer the best rival reading.

Figure 1 shows the climb: from a one-sentence answer, to a supported paragraph, to a sustained interpretation — and the four features that hold the whole text together.

What makes an interpretation sustained?

From a short answer to an argument that holds together across a whole text.



this section teaches the last step

Diagram of three rising steps, from a one-sentence answer to a supported paragraph to a sustained interpretation, above four boxes naming the features that hold a sustained interpretation together

Figure 1. From a short answer to an argument that holds together across a whole text.

Notice the kind of word you are using as you write. Some words measure things everyone can check — a date, a distance, a population count. Others carry a frame: *significance*, *interpretation* and *contested* itself are open to reasonable disagreement about what they mean and how to apply them (sections 7F and 8C). A sustained interpretation states its frames plainly, so the reader always knows which definition is doing the work.

2. The historian's vocabulary (VC2HH10S10.E01)

Elaboration E01 names the terms that belong in a sustained interpretation at this level. Use the subject's own words exactly — and define every term at first use in your own writing, exactly as this section does. Figures 2 and 3 are the section's two glossaries: the knowledge terms (the big movements and events of the period 1750 to now) and the conceptual terms (the tools of historical thinking).

Knowledge terms used in sustained historical interpretations

The terms named in VC2HH10S10.E01, each with a short meaning. Define any term at first use in your own writing.

Term	What it means in this book	Where you met it
imperialism	One country extending its rule or control over other peoples and lands.	Overview, 1A; Asia, 5B
colonisation	The process by which one country settles in and takes control of another land.	Australia 1750-1914, 2A-2B
settler society	A colony in which the arrivals stayed, built towns and farms, and set up their own society.	Australia 1750-1914, 2C-2D
invasion	An organised armed entry into another country or land in order to take control of it.	Asia, 5B; Australians and the world wars, 3A
Agricultural Revolution	The big changes in British farming from the 1700s - new crops, enclosed fields, better stock - that fed the growing cities.	Overview, 1A
Industrial Revolution	The shift from hand work to machine work, starting in Britain in the 1700s, that changed how people made things, moved and lived.	Overview, 1A
migration	The movement of people from one place to another to live.	Overview, 1A; The globalising world, 6C-6E
immigration	Migration into a country, seen from the country the people arrive in.	Australia 1750-1914, 2C; The globalising world, 6C-6E
urbanisation	The growth of cities and the share of people living in them.	Overview, 1A; Asia, 5E
conflict	A serious clash between groups or states, from protest to war.	Australians and the world wars, 3A-3F; Asia, 5C
genocide	The deliberate destruction, in whole or in part, of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.	The Holocaust, 4A-4C
nationalism	Strong pride in and loyalty to one's own nation or people.	Overview, 1B; Australians and the world wars, 3A-3B
Cold War	The long rivalry of the USA and the USSR after 1945 - no direct war between them.	Overview, 1C; The globalising world, 6C
human rights	The rights held by every person, set out after 1945 in the Universal Declaration.	The globalising world, 6B; Overview, 1D
popular culture	The music, film, fashion, sport and media enjoyed by ordinary people in large numbers.	Overview, 1C; The globalising world, 6A
environmentalism	Organised action to protect the natural world from damage.	Overview, 1D; The globalising world, 6A

Table of the sixteen knowledge terms named in VC2HH10S10.E01, from imperialism to environmentalism, each with a short meaning and the part of the book where it is taught

Figure 2. The knowledge terms named in E01, each given a short meaning and linked to where this book teaches it. Define any term you use at first use.

Conceptual terms used in sustained historical interpretations

These are the tools of historical thinking. Each one is taught in the skills chapters of this book.

Term	What it means in this book	Taught in
source	Anything left from the past that a historian can use as evidence - a document, photo, object, recording or building.	7C, 7D
perspective	The point of view of a person or group, shaped by their beliefs, values and attitudes at the time.	7E
interpretation	An account of the past built from selected and evaluated evidence to answer a historical question.	7F; this section
contested	Open to more than one defensible reading, because historians weigh the same evidence differently.	7F; 2E; 4D
continuity	What stayed the same across a period, even while other things changed.	8A
change	What was different by the end of a period, and what caused the difference.	8A
cause	What made an event or development happen - short-term and long-term.	8B
consequence	What followed from an event or development - intended and unintended.	8B
significance	How important something was, judged by criteria such as importance, depth, quantity, durability and relevance.	8C

Table of the nine conceptual terms — source, perspective, interpretation, contested, continuity, change, cause, consequence, significance — with meanings and the section that teaches each

Figure 3. The conceptual terms. Each one is taught in the skills chapters of this book.

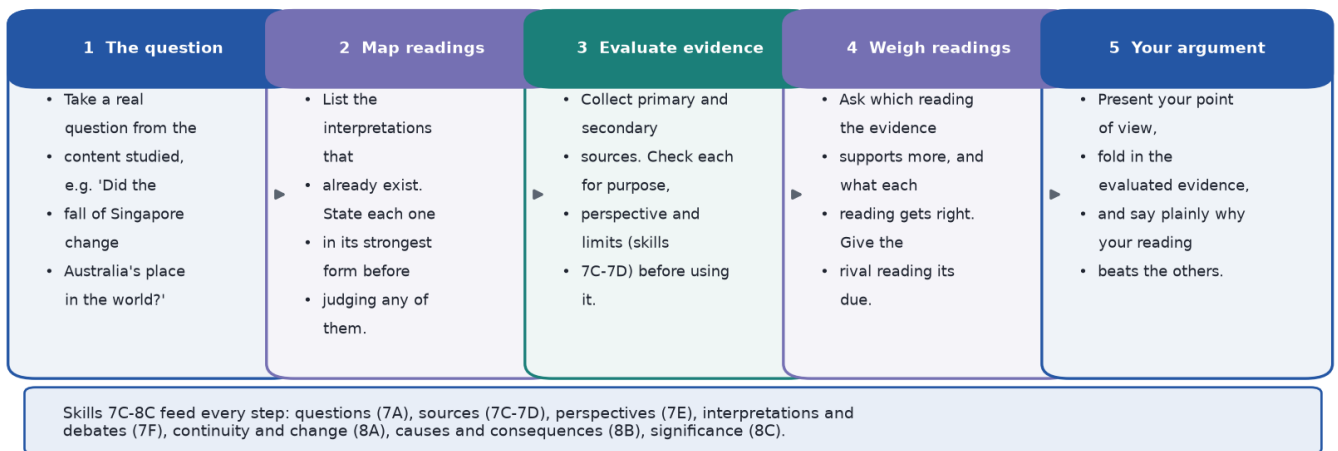
Contested terms — define before you use. Two of E01's terms are themselves contested: *imperialism* and *nationalism*. The curriculum names them but does not define them. This section therefore treats **imperialism** as *one country extending its rule or control over other peoples and lands*, and **nationalism** as *strong pride in and loyalty to one's own nation or people* — the senses in which this book uses them (sections 1A–1B, 3A–3B, 5B). Other definitions exist and do not mean the same thing as these; if you use a different sense in your writing, state it.

3. Building the argument (VC2HH10S10.E02)

Figure 4 sets out the five steps that carry you from a question to a defended point of view. Each step uses a skill this book has already taught; the band at the bottom shows where each skill came from.

Building a historical argument (VC2HH10S10.E02)

Five steps from question to defended point of view.



Five linked panels showing the steps of building a historical argument — the question, map readings, evaluate evidence, weigh readings, your argument — above a note on the skills that feed each step

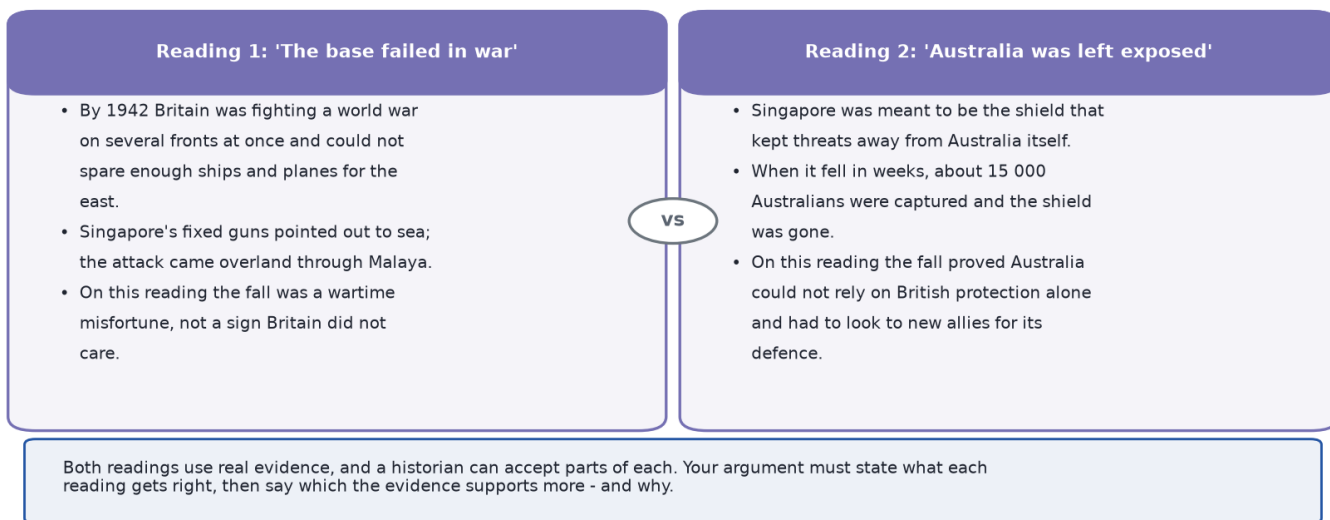
Figure 4. Five steps from question to defended point of view. Every step draws on a skill from sections 7A–8C.

Step 1 — The question. Take a real question from content you have studied. This section's worked question is: *Did the fall of Singapore change Australia's place in the world?* You met the event itself in sections 3A and 3C, and you weighed its significance in section 8C.

Step 2 — Map the readings. List the interpretations that already exist, and state each one in its strongest form before you judge any of them. For this question there are two rival readings. Reading 1: *the base failed in war* — the fall was a wartime misfortune, not a sign that Britain did not care about Australia. Reading 2: *Australia was left exposed* — the fall ended Australia's trust in British protection and pushed it to look to new allies. Figure 5 states both readings at full strength — the house rule from section 7F: **steelman** a position before you evaluate it, giving it the form its own supporters would recognise.

Steelman both readings before you evaluate

Two rival interpretations of the fall of Singapore in 1942, each in its strongest form.



Two panels stating the strongest form of two rival readings of the fall of Singapore — the base failed in war, and Australia was left exposed — above a note that both use real evidence

Figure 5. Both readings of the fall of Singapore, steelmanned. Both use real evidence — that is what makes the question worth arguing.

Step 3 — Evaluate the evidence. To **evaluate** a source is to judge how far it deserves trust for your question: its purpose, its perspective, its limits (skills 7C–7D). For this question the set includes primary sources — John Curtin's own words in a newspaper article (27 December 1941) and his statement to the House of Representatives (16 February 1942) — and secondary sources — Lionel Wigmore's official history *The Japanese Thrust* (1957) and the National Museum of Australia's Defining Moments page.

Step 4 — Weigh the readings. Ask which reading the evidence supports more — and what each reading gets right. Give the rival reading its due before you argue against it; an argument that pretends the other side has no evidence is not an argument.

Step 5 — Your argument. Present your point of view. Fold in the evaluated evidence, and say plainly why your reading beats the others.

4. The extended text (VC2HH10S10.E03)

An extended text has a skeleton, and every part of it has a job. Figure 6 shows the shape this section uses.

The skeleton of an extended historical text (VC2HH10S10.E03)

What each part of the text must do.

Introduction	State the question. State your claim. Preview your reasons in a phrase - the reader should never have to guess where you are going.
Body paragraph 1	One reason the claim holds: point -> evidence -> explanation. Cite the evidence where you use it.
Body paragraph 2	A second reason, carried the same way. One reason per paragraph keeps the argument easy to follow.
The rival reading	State the rival interpretation in its strongest form, then show why your evidence still carries more weight.
Conclusion	Restate the claim in the light of the evidence and say why it matters. No new evidence goes here.
Reference list	Every source you cited, in order, split into primary and secondary sources.

Diagram of the skeleton of an extended historical text — introduction, two body paragraphs, the rival reading, conclusion and reference list — with the job of each part

Figure 6. The skeleton of an extended historical text. One reason per body paragraph keeps the argument easy to follow.

Signpost words carry the reader from block to block: “The first reason ...”, “A second reason ...”, “On the other hand ...”, “For this reason ...”. The reader should never have to guess where the argument is going.

Here is the skeleton filled in. Figure 7 is a short model essay, written for this section, with each part named in the margin. Watch how it does what Figure 1 asks of a sustained interpretation: the claim appears in the introduction and returns in the conclusion; each body paragraph gives the claim one reason; the rival reading is stated at full strength before it is weighed; and Curtin’s words are cited where they appear.

Model sustained interpretation

A short original essay on the fall of Singapore - with labels to show how the argument holds together.

The fall of Singapore and Australia's place in the world	
INTRODUCTION <i>States the claim and previews the reasons</i>	The fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 was more than a lost battle. This essay argues that the fall changed Australia's place in the world: it ended Australia's trust that Britain alone could defend it, and pushed Australia to look to the United States for protection.
BODY PARAGRAPH 1 <i>One reason, carried by evaluated evidence</i>	Before 1942, Australia's defence rested on the British Empire. Singapore was Britain's strongest base in the region, and Australians were told it would keep any threat far away. In December 1941 Japanese forces landed in Malaya and moved south with speed. On 15 February 1942 the base fell: Lieutenant General Arthur Percival surrendered, and around 80 000 Allied troops, including about 15 000 Australians of the 8th Division, became prisoners of war. The base Australia had relied on did not hold.
BODY PARAGRAPH 2 <i>The rival reading, at its strongest, then weighed</i>	Some historians argue the change began before Singapore fell. In December 1941 Prime Minister John Curtin wrote that 'Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.' [1] This is a strong reading: it shows Curtin had already begun the turn to America. Even so, it was the fall of the base, with so many Australians captured, that made the turn one most Australians could support.
CONCLUSION <i>Restates the claim and says why it matters</i>	The fall of Singapore did not cut Australia's ties with Britain. But it ended the trust that Britain alone would keep Australia safe. On the evidence, the fall was the turning point: it changed who Australia looked to, and so it changed Australia's place in the world.
[1] John Curtin, article in the Australian Worker, 27 December 1941. Every borrowed word or fact is cited where it appears.	

Model essay on the fall of Singapore and Australia's place in the world, with margin labels showing the introduction, body paragraphs, rival reading, conclusion and footnote

Figure 7. A model sustained interpretation — a short original essay written for this section, with its parts named in the margin.

5. Choosing a format (VC2HH10S10.E04)

The argument stays the same; the format changes the conventions you must keep. E04 lists a range of formats, from a written essay to a post on an online forum. Figure 8 sets out six of them, what each one looks like and the conventions that keep it a sustained interpretation.

Choosing a format for your argument (VC2HH10S10.E04)

The argument stays the same; the format changes the conventions you must keep.

Format	What it looks like	Conventions to keep
Essay	An extended piece of writing that argues one claim.	Claim early; body paragraphs as reasons; rival reading answered; conclusion that answers the question.
Oral presentation	A spoken argument, with or without slides.	Claim in the first minute; signpost each move; cite sources out loud; close by restating the claim.
Debate	Two teams argue for and against the one claim.	Define the question's terms; one reason per speaker; reply to the other side's evidence, not to the person.
Interactive digital display	A web page, timeline or slideshow the reader moves through.	Headings that carry the claim; images with captions and sources; every screen must earn its place.
Non-digital display	A poster, board or exhibition.	Title that states the claim; a layout that guides the eye; short labels; a source note under every item.
Online conference or forum post	A written argument posted for discussion.	Clear claim; short paragraphs; expect replies and answer them; cite sources so others can check them.

Table of six formats for presenting a historical argument — essay, oral presentation, debate, interactive digital display, non-digital display and online forum post — with the conventions to keep in each

Figure 8. Six formats for your argument, and the conventions to keep in each.

6. Citing and referencing (VC2HH10S10.E05)

A **citation** is a short pointer to a source, placed where you use it. **Conventions** are the agreed rules for setting citations and lists out, so that any reader can find every source you used. A **bibliography** — in this section, a reference list — is the full list of sources at the end of the text.

Figure 9 shows two ways to cite the same four sources used in the model essay: in-text references in the body of your writing, or numbered footnotes at the bottom of the page. Both are correct; pick one and keep to it all the way through.

Citing as you write (VC2HH10S10.E05)

In-text references and footnotes for the same sources used in the model essay. All four sources are real.

In the body of your text	At the bottom of the page (footnotes)
• Use Curtin's own words in the body of your text, then point to the source at once: • ... wrote that 'Australia looks to America' (Curtin, Australian Worker, 27 December 1941). • Use a historian's claim the same way: • ... the base fell within ten weeks of the first landings (Wigmore, 1957).	1. John Curtin, article in the Australian Worker, 27 December 1941. 2. John Curtin, statement to the House of Representatives, 16 February 1942, House of Representatives debates (Hansard). 3. Lionel Wigmore, The Japanese Thrust (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957). 4. National Museum of Australia, 'Fall of Singapore', Defining Moments, nma.gov.au (accessed 26 August 2026).

The rules: cite every borrowed word or fact where it appears; give web sources the site and the date you accessed them; list everything cited in your reference list at the end.

Worked citation examples showing in-text references and footnotes for the same four sources used in the model essay

Figure 9. Citing as you write — in-text references and footnotes for the model essay's four sources, all of them real.

Three rules sit under every citation:

- Cite every borrowed word or fact where it appears — not only direct quotes.
- Give web sources the site and the date you accessed them, so a reader can follow you.
- Never invent a page number or a web address. If you cannot find a detail, do not cite it.

A reference list has its own rules. Figure 10 shows the worked list for the model essay: sources split into primary and secondary, in order by author — and the test for telling the two kinds apart.

A worked reference list (VC2HH10S10.E05)

The model essay's sources, split into primary and secondary, in order by author.

Reference list

Primary sources

Curtin, John, article in the *Australian Worker*, 27 December 1941.

Curtin, John, statement to the House of Representatives, 16 February 1942, House of Representatives debates (Hansard), National Archives of Australia.

Secondary sources

National Museum of Australia, 'Fall of Singapore', Defining Moments, nma.gov.au (accessed 26 August 2026).

Wigmore, Lionel, *The Japanese Thrust*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957).

Primary source	Secondary source
Made at the time studied, by someone who was there or had first-hand knowledge: speeches, letters, photos, official records, newspapers of the day.	Made later by someone working from primary sources: historians' books, articles, encyclopedia entries, museum pages.

A worked reference list for the model essay, split into primary and secondary sources, above the test for telling the two kinds apart

Figure 10. A worked reference list, split into primary and secondary sources. The test at the bottom sorts any source you meet.

Sources for this section

- Victorian Curriculum 2.0, History, Levels 9 and 10: VC2HH10S10 with elaborations .E01–.E05 (VCAA export, 29 July 2026).
- John Curtin, article in the *Australian Worker*, 27 December 1941; the sentence quoted in Figure 7 and Worked example 1 — “Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom” — is reproduced exactly.
- John Curtin, statement to the House of Representatives, 16 February 1942, House of Representatives debates (Hansard), held by the National Archives of Australia.
- Lionel Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust*, Australia in the War of 1939–1945 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957) — the official history of the Malaya and Singapore campaign; no page numbers are cited in this section, because none were verified at the time of writing.
- National Museum of Australia, “Fall of Singapore”, Defining Moments, nma.gov.au (accessed 26 August 2026).
- Wikipedia, “Fall of Singapore”: Singapore fell on 15 February 1942; about 80,000 British, Indian, Australian and local troops became prisoners of war; retrieved 2026-08-26.

Worked examples

Worked source analysis 1 — with help

Question. Read Source A — this sentence from an article by Prime Minister John Curtin in the *Australian Worker*, 27 December 1941: “Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.” What kind of source is it, and how far does it support Reading 2 of Figure 5?

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the source. Words written by John Curtin, Australia's Prime Minister, and published in a newspaper on 27 December 1941 — while the war was being fought. Made at the time, by the person at the centre of events: a primary source .	Start with what the source <i>is</i> — who made it, when, in what form. That shapes what it can tell us.
Step 2: Describe the content. Curtin says Australia will look to the United States for help in the Pacific war. He says this openly and without apology — “free of any pangs” — even though it means turning away from the traditional tie to Britain.	Use the source's own words where you can.
Step 3: Read the perspective and purpose. Curtin wrote as a wartime leader. His purpose was to prepare Australians for a change of direction, and to send a signal to Washington and London at once. A source like this takes a side on purpose — it is meant to move people, not to sit on the fence.	Expect a leader's public words to argue a position. That does not disqualify them; it tells you how to read them.
Step 4: State its value and its limits. The article is strong direct evidence that Australia's government had already begun the turn to America in December 1941 — weeks before Singapore fell. That is exactly what makes Reading 2 of Figure 5 strong. Its limit: one leader's public words do not show how <i>all</i> Australians felt, so it is evidence of government policy rather than of the whole nation's mood.	A good evaluation names what a source can prove <i>and</i> what it cannot.
Step 5: Use it in the argument. Cite it where you use it — footnote 1 of Figure 7 is this very source — and weigh it against the fall itself: the event that turned a government's policy into a change most Australians could support.	Evidence enters an argument with a citation and a job.

Answer: Source A is a primary source — Curtin's own words, published in December 1941. It strongly supports Reading 2 of Figure 5, because it shows the turn to America had already begun before Singapore fell; but it records a leader's position, not the mood of every Australian, so the argument must weigh it beside the fall itself.

Worked source analysis 2 — with help

Question. The model essay (Figure 7) draws on four sources: Curtin's newspaper article; Curtin's statement to the House of Representatives, 16 February 1942; Lionel Wigmore's *The Japanese Thrust* (1957); and the National Museum of Australia's Defining Moments page on the fall of Singapore. Classify each as primary or secondary, then build the reference list.

Working	Comment
Step 1: Apply the test to each source (Figure 10, bottom). Curtin's article — made at the time, by the man himself: primary . Curtin's statement to parliament — made at the time, recorded in the official debates: primary . Wigmore's book — written in 1957, years after the events, by a historian working from records: secondary . The museum page — written today, from earlier sources: secondary .	The test is always the same: was it made at the time studied, by someone with first-hand knowledge?
Step 2: Split the list. Primary sources first, then secondary sources — the split E05 requires.	The split shows the reader what kind of evidence your argument stands on.
Step 3: Order the entries. Within each group, order by	One ordering rule keeps the list predictable.

author; a source with no personal author (the museum page) is ordered by its corporate author — here, National Museum of Australia.

Step 4: Add the access date for the web source. The museum page is on the open web, so the list gives the site and the date accessed: “(accessed 26 August 2026)”.

Web sources move; the access date tells a reader when you saw what you saw.

Answer: Primary: the two Curtin sources. Secondary: Wigmore’s history and the museum page. The finished list is exactly Figure 10 — split, ordered by author, with the web source dated.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Figure 1 shows three steps and four features. (a) Name the four features of a sustained interpretation. (b) Give one difference between a supported paragraph and a sustained interpretation. (*Hint: look at how tall each step is, and how many reasons each one carries.*)

Q2. From the knowledge-terms table (Figure 2), give the term that means: (a) the growth of cities and the share of people living in them; (b) the deliberate destruction, in whole or in part, of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group; (c) strong pride in and loyalty to one’s own nation or people. (*Hint: all three definitions are quoted from Figure 2.*)

Q3. The conceptual-terms table (Figure 3) links each term to the section that teaches it. Which section teaches (a) significance? (b) perspective? (c) continuity and change? (*Hint: read the last column of Figure 3.*)

Q4. Figure 4 gives five steps for building a historical argument. Put these in order: weigh the readings; your argument; the question; map the readings; evaluate the evidence. (*Hint: the arrows in Figure 4 show the order.*)

Q5. From Figure 5, give one piece of evidence that each reading leans on. Then say what the bottom band asks you to do with the two readings before you judge between them. (*Hint: one reading leans on the fixed guns and the overland attack; the other leans on the captured troops.*)

Q6. Look at Figure 9. (a) Which source would you cite to use Curtin’s own words? (b) Which source is the historian’s secondary account? (c) What two extra details must a web source always give? (*Hint: Figure 10’s right-hand side shows the web source’s entry.*)

On your own

Q7. One claim, two reasons (E02, E03). Take the claim “The fall of Singapore changed Australia’s place in the world.” Write two topic sentences for two body paragraphs, each giving the claim a different reason.

Q8. Steelman the rival (E02). A classmate writes: “Singapore fell because Britain did not care about Australia.” Using Figure 5, state what this reading gets right, what it leaves out, and how you would answer it with evidence from this section.

Q9. Find the three mistakes (E05). The reference list below breaks three of the rules shown in Figure 10. Find all three.

Wigmore, Lionel, *The Japanese Thrust*, Australia in the War of 1939–1945 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957). Curtin, John, article in the *Australian Worker*, 27 December 1941. National Museum of Australia, “Fall of Singapore”, Defining Moments, nma.gov.au. Curtin, John, statement to the House of Representatives, 16 February 1942, House of Representatives debates (Hansard).

Q10. The full method (E02–E05). In one paragraph (5–7 sentences), construct the core of your own sustained interpretation of this question: *How far did the fall of Singapore change Australia?* Use the moves of Figure 4 — question, map readings, evaluate evidence, weigh readings, your argument — with at least one dated fact and one cited source from this section.

Inquiry task

Your turn to construct: a sustained interpretation of your own

This is the chapter's inquiry task: a small investigation you carry from question to finished, cited argument, using the method of Figures 4 and 6.

Your brief. Choose one contested question from this book's content chapters — for example: *Did the factory system of the Industrial Revolution change life for the better?* (section 1A); *How significant was the fall of Singapore for Australia?* (sections 3A–3C, 8C); or *Did migration after 1945 change Australia?* (sections 6C–6E). Then construct a sustained interpretation of 400–600 words that answers it.

Steps (Figure 4 maps them; Figure 11 checks them at the end).

1. **Fix the question.** State it exactly, and define any contested term in it before you start.
2. **Map the readings.** Set out two rival interpretations, each stated in its strongest form — Figure 5 shows how.
3. **Collect and evaluate evidence.** At least one primary source and one secondary source, each real and named. Evaluate each for purpose, perspective and limits (skills 7C–7D).
4. **Weigh.** Say which reading the evidence supports more — and what the other reading gets right.
5. **Write.** Use the skeleton of Figure 6: introduction with the claim, body paragraphs as reasons, the rival reading answered, conclusion. Signpost each move.
6. **Cite and present.** Cite as you write (Figure 9), and finish with a reference list split into primary and secondary sources (Figure 10). Choose your format from Figure 8 and keep its conventions.

Criteria for a strong answer: a clear claim stated early; every body paragraph serving the claim; at least one primary and one secondary source, each evaluated; the rival reading stated in its strongest form before it is answered; every borrowed word or fact cited; a reference list split into primary and secondary; and every term defined at first use.

The final check (VC2HH10S10)

Eight questions to ask before your sustained interpretation is handed in.

☐	Claim	Is your point of view stated plainly, and does the reader meet it early?
☐	Paragraphs	Does every body paragraph give one reason the claim holds?
☐	Rival reading	Is the rival interpretation stated in its strongest form, then answered with evidence?
☐	Evidence	Is every claim backed by evidence, and have you admitted the limits of that evidence?
☐	Terms	Are historical terms used exactly, and defined at first use?
☐	Citation	Is every borrowed word or fact cited, with a reference list split into primary and secondary?
☐	Format	Did you keep the conventions of your chosen format - essay, speech, debate, display or post?
☐	Re-read	Read it through once more: does the argument hold together from first line to last?

Checklist of eight checks — claim, paragraphs, rival reading, evidence, terms, citation, format and re-read — to run before handing in a sustained interpretation

Figure 11. The final check. Run all eight questions over your work before you hand it in.

Answers

Q1. (a) One clear claim; every paragraph serving the claim; evidence evaluated, not listed; the subject's own language, used exactly. (b) A supported paragraph gives one reason with one piece of evidence; a sustained interpretation holds one claim across a whole text, with every paragraph giving the claim a reason.

Q2. (a) Urbanisation. (b) Genocide. (c) Nationalism.

Q3. (a) Section 8C. (b) Section 7E. (c) Section 8A.

Q4. The question → map the readings → evaluate the evidence → weigh the readings → your argument.

Q5. Reading 1 leans on Britain fighting on several fronts at once, on the fixed guns pointing out to sea, and on the attack coming overland through Malaya. Reading 2 leans on about 15 000 Australians being captured when the base fell in weeks. The bottom band asks you to state what each reading gets right, then say which the evidence supports more — and why.

Q6. (a) The article in the *Australian Worker*, 27 December 1941 (or the statement to parliament, for his official words). (b) Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust*. (c) The site, and the date you accessed it.

Q7–Q10. There is no single right answer; the checklist is: two topic sentences, each giving the claim a different reason (7); the rival reading stated in its strongest form before it is answered, with evidence from the section (8); three mistakes found (9); and a paragraph with a claim, dated evidence, both readings weighed, a judgement that answers “how far”, and a cited source (10).

Q9 has a definite answer: (1) the list is not split into primary and secondary sources; (2) the entries are not in order by author — the Curtin entries should sit together before Wigmore; (3) the web source is missing its access date.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7.

Model answer (one of several possible). First, the fall ended the trust Australia had placed in British protection: Singapore was the strongest British base in the region, and when it fell in weeks, the shield Australians had been promised was gone. Second, the fall pushed Australia to turn to the United States for defence: Curtin had begun that turn in December 1941, and the loss of the base — with about 15 000 Australians captured — made it a turn most Australians could support. Any two topic sentences are accepted, provided each gives the claim a *different* reason and could carry a body paragraph of evidence.

Q8.

Model points. What it gets right: Britain did put other fronts first in 1942 — it was fighting a world war on several fronts at once, and could not spare enough ships and planes for the east — so Australia's defence was not the only thing on Britain's mind. What it leaves out: the fall was a failure in war, not proof of indifference; Singapore's fixed guns pointed out to sea and the attack came overland through Malaya, and about 80 000 Allied troops were captured when the base fell. A strong answer steelmans the classmate's reading first, then answers it with that evidence — and ends by saying which reading of Figure 5 the evidence supports more.

Q10.

Model answer. The question is how far the fall of Singapore changed Australia, and two readings are on the table: that the fall was a wartime misfortune, and that it left Australia exposed and changed who it looked to for protection (Figure 5). The evidence supports the second reading more. Curtin's own words of 27 December 1941 — "Australia looks to America" — show the turn had begun before the fall (Curtin, *Australian Worker*, 27 December 1941), and when the base fell on 15 February 1942, with about 15 000 Australians captured, the turn became one most Australians could support. The first reading gets this right: Britain was stretched across several fronts at once, so the fall was also a plain fact of war. Judgement: the fall changed Australia's place in the world a long way — it ended the trust that Britain alone would keep Australia safe — but it did not cut Australia's ties with Britain, so the change ran deep in defence and trust, less deep in everything else.

Looking back. You can now define a sustained historical interpretation and construct one: fix the question, map the rival readings, evaluate the evidence, weigh the readings, and present your point of view in a chosen format, with every source cited. That is the exit clause of the Levels 9–10 achievement standard, and it is the assessed core of VCE History, where this book's skills spine carries straight on (TOC §5).

Key terms

sustained historical interpretation — an account of the past, built from evaluated evidence to answer a historical question, held together across a whole text. **interpretation** — an account of the past built from selected and evaluated evidence to answer a historical question. **argument** — a claim backed by reasons and evidence. **claim** — the point of view your text defends, stated plainly. **reading** — one interpretation of an event, stated as its supporters would recognise it. **steelman** — to state a position in the strongest form its own supporters would recognise, before you judge it. **contested** — open to more than one defensible reading. **evaluate** — to judge how far a source deserves trust for your question. **citation** — a short pointer to a source, placed where you use it. **footnote** — a numbered note at the bottom of the page, giving the source of a claim. **bibliography** — the full list of sources at the end of a text; in this section, a reference list. **conventions** — the agreed rules for setting writing out — here, for citing and referencing. **primary source** — made at the time studied, by someone who was there or had first-hand knowledge. **secondary source** — made later, by someone working from primary sources. **access date** — the date you viewed a web source, always given with it.