Using The Framework 'Our History Scaffold' in the Classroom

A Selection of Resources

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UCD School of Education

NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
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Contents

Section I

Introduction

Some key questions answered

A: What is a framework?

Put simply, a framework is a resource that is used in the classroom to help students put some meaningful shape on the immensity of the past and, thereby, help to develop their 'big picture' of the past. Such frameworks are sometimes referred to as 'usable historical frameworks'. Using a framework in the classroom is a way of helping students to 'make connections and comparisons between people, issues and events in different places and historical eras', as Learning Outcome 1.11 of the Junior Cycle specification requires.

B: What is the difference between a framework and a 'big picture'?

A 'big picture' is a mental conception of what the past looks like or consists of. Sometimes, a student's 'big picture' is a series of disconnected events that they can recollect, often rather hazily. A framework such as 'Our History Scaffold' is designed to help strengthen students' 'big pictures', as they gradually acquire more historical knowledge and are helped to locate it in time.

C: Is this framework, 'Our History Scaffold', definitive and authoritative?

No. It is an experimental framework and is not intended to be 'definitive'. There has been much debate about the best way to formulate frameworks. There is also variation in how they are described; for example, the term 'frame of reference' has been used in the Netherlands. To provide some insights into the nature of the debate on frameworks, a selection of relevant articles is available here in pdf form.

With regard to whether it is 'authoritative', all frameworks are open to criticism as there is no agreed format that is universally applied, and all are selective or emphatic in a variety of ways. 'Our History Scaffold' was designed with teachers of Junior Cycle History in mind and, like all frameworks, it needs to be subjected to regular review.

D: Why should I use the framework 'Our History Scaffold' in the Junior Cycle history classroom?

There is some evidence from the 'Big Pictures of the Past' research project (Dredge, Ferris, O'Sullivan, 2023) that its use helps students make greater sense of the historical events and processes that they study.

Learning Outcome 1.10 of the Junior Cycle specification requires that students be able to 'demonstrate chronological awareness by creating and maintaining timelines to locate personalities, issues and events in their appropriate historical eras'. The framework is an effective way of enabling students to fit the timelines they create into an overall whole that helps to 'hold together' the different elements of the students' learning.

The framework can also be helpful in fulfilling the requirements of Learning Outcome 1.11, which requires that students be able to 'make connections and comparisons between people, issues and events in different places and historical eras'. For example, the first era refers to early hunters and farmers. Both hunting and farming are still used today as ways of obtaining food. The industrialisation referred to in the eighth era brought about big changes in how farmers operate, and the process of industrialisation has developed further over time.

The framework can also be used to help to establish potential linkages with the present. For example, computers are changing how we communicate today (a focus of attention in Era 10), but the historical past has seen many changes in means of communication such as those brought about by the invention of alphabets (highlighted in Era 2), the invention of the printing press and the beginning of a postal service.

The framework will also be found useful in helping students to develop the skill set out in Learning Outcome 3.14, that they be enabled to 'illustrate patterns of change across different time periods in a chosen theme relating to life and society'.

Notes:

Section II

The Experimental Framework, ‘Our History Scaffold’

A. Features of the framework

The framework comprises ten **eras**, which are set out in **Table 1**.

In the identifying descriptor for each era, there is an emphasis on **process**. One of the reasons for this is that many students tend to see history as a series of 'stand alone' events and lack an understanding of the kinds of processes at work over time in the different historical eras. There is a need to bring students towards a greater understanding of the role that a range of processes play in historical time and framing 'Our History Scaffold' in this way is intended to facilitate this.

For example, in Era 1 the focus is on the process of invention that saw a range of weapons and tools being developed to meet the demands of hunting and farming. In Era 2 the emphasis is on the processes of invention that led to the development of alphabets in a number of ancient civilisations, as well as the processes of city-building and development of political structures to manage the challenges presented by the congregation of large numbers of people in relatively small areas of land. And so on. In the final era, Era 10, the emphasis is on the processes of technological change that led to the development of television and computers and the myriad societal changes that have resulted from this.

Another important feature of the framework is the use of **images** to help students identify and recall the different eras. This approach is supported by literature on the development of students' understanding of chronology and 'sense of period'. (See, for example, the Dawson, 2004, article available here.) It is also supported by research carried out for the 'Big Pictures of the Past' research project (Dredge, Ferris, O'Sullivan, 2023): for example, one first year History student expressed it in the following terms,

> **You could think back to the picture, and you might remember the picture and maybe if you connect the picture and what it is, you could think of it better and it might help.**

For each era in the framework, two images are used, and these have been selected to reflect key developments in the eras in question. For example, in the case of Era 1, 'Early hunter-gatherers and farmers invent tools and weapons', there is an image of a Mesolithic hunter and an image of a Neolithic farming tool. In the case of Era 10, 'Television and computers change how we communicate', there is an image of the Telstar communications satellite and a logo representing the World Wide Web.

A full list of the images used in **Table 1** is given below.

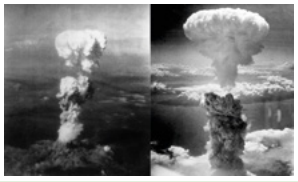
Early hunters and farmers	Mesolithic hunter	Neolithic farming tool
Early civilisations	Greek alphabet letters	Ancient Athens
Europe becomes Christian/feudal	Monastery	Knights
Cities grow, states multiply	Renaissance Florence	Map of later med./Ren. Eur.
Explorers and reformers	Columbus lands	Martin Luther burns bull
Monarchs consolidate power	Louis XIV	William III and Mary II
Revolutionaries challenge kings	George Washington	The guillotine
Industrialisation and democracy	Factory machinery	O'Connell, MP
World Wars	Trench image	Atom bomb image
Television and computers	Telstar	The World Wide Web

See the Appendix 'Images' for a larger format version of each of the images.

B: The framework, 'Our History Scaffold'

The ten eras that comprise the framework are set out in Table 1. This table is available as a poster which can be displayed on classroom walls. See here.

Table 1: 'Our History Scaffold'

	Era	Image 1	Image 2
1.	Early hunter-gatherers and farmers invent tools and weapons		
2.	Early civilisations develop alphabets, cities and politics	Δδ	
3.	Europe becomes Christian; Europe becomes feudal		
4.	Cities grow and states multiply		
5.	Explorers and reformers bring change		
6.	Monarchs consolidate power		
7.	Revolutionaries challenge monarchs		
8.	Industrialisation and democracy advance		
9.	World wars change the face of the Earth		
10.	Television and computers change how we communicate		

Section III

How the Framework Fits with Learning Outcomes from the Junior Cycle Specification

Strand 1 learning outcomes are crucial to the success or otherwise of use of the framework in the classroom, since there is widespread consensus that disciplinary understanding needs to underpin any work on acquiring a 'big picture'. One dimension of such understanding is an ability to apply those disciplinary or 'second-order' concepts that are basic to the practice of history at any level, concepts such as historical empathy, historical evidence, historical time, historical change and historical significance. In this regard, learning outcomes 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4 are crucial to enable Junior Cycle students' learning in history and the latter two have a particular relevance to the achievement of robust 'big picture' understanding.

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to:

1.1 develop a sense of historical empathy by viewing people, issues and events encountered in their study of the past in their historical context

1.3 appreciate their cultural inheritance through recognising historically significant places and buildings and discussing why historical personalities, events and issues are commemorated

1.4 demonstrate awareness of historical concepts such as *source* and *evidence; fact and opinion; viewpoint and objectivity; cause and consequence; change and continuity; time and space*

In terms of the substantive content to be explored, some of the linkages that can be established between the Junior Cycle History learning outcomes and the different eras in the framework are set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Matching learning outcomes to the framework eras

	Era	Relevant learning outcomes	Linkage
1.	Early hunter-gatherers and farmers invent tools and weapons	**1.6** Students should be able to … appreciate the contribution of archaeology … to historical enquiry …	Archaeology is the main means by which evidence is gathered for the prehistoric period.
2.	Early civilisations develop alphabets, cities and politics	**3.1** Students should be able to investigate the lives of people in one ancient … civilisation … explaining how the … achievements of that civilisation contributed to the history of Europe …	An opportunity to highlight the development of alphabets in ancient civilisations and the development of cities such as Athens and Rome, and their forms of rule.
3.	Europe becomes Christian; Europe becomes feudal	**3.6** Students should be able to explore life and death in medieval times. **3.8** Students should be able to consider the historical importance of religion …	Given the importance of religion in everyday life in medieval times, brief reference might be made to the origins of Christianity in the Roman empire. The ways in which the lives of people were influenced by feudal arrangements will also be a focus.
4.	Cities grow and states multiply	**3.7** Students should be able to appreciate change in the fields of the arts and science, with particular reference to the significance of the Renaissance.	The growth of cities – and of city states – in Renaissance Italy is an important backdrop to the changes associated with the Renaissance in Italy and in cities in other European countries.
5.	Explorers and reformers bring change	**3.2** Students should be able to evaluate the impact of conquest and colonisation on people, with particular reference to Portuguese and Spanish exploration. **3.8** Students should be able to consider the historical importance of religion, with particular reference to the Reformation and the actions of one reformer.	Both explorers and reformers are the focus of attention in the learning outcomes and the framework provides an opportunity to show where these developments fit into the broader picture of change in Europe and the wider world.
6.	Monarchs consolidate power	**3.3** Students should be able to examine the causes, course and consequences of one revolution in pre-twentieth Europe …	If students are studying the French Revolution, the framework provides an opportunity to shine some light on the context in which revolutionary ideas took root.
7.	Revolutionaries challenge monarchs	**3.3**, as above.	If studying the French Revolution, students will benefit from some brief outlining of how the American Revolution had an impact in France.

	Era	Relevant learning outcomes	Linkage
8.	Industrialisation and democracy advance	**3.11** Students should be able to explore the contribution of technological developments and innovation to historical change. **2.2** Students should be able to investigate the role and significance of two leaders involved in the parliamentary tradition in Irish politics.	If studying the developments in industrialisation that gathered pace from the late 18th century onwards, the opportunity is there to look back and look forward at the role of technological development in effecting change. There is an opportunity here to highlight the contributions of O'Connell and Parnell to the development of democracy as we know it today.
9.	World wars change the face of the Earth	**3.4** Students should be able to discuss the general causes and course of World War One or World War Two and the immediate and long-term impact of the war on people and nations.	Teasing out the era descriptor's reference to how world war 'changed the face of the Earth' is a good way of helping students to understand the impact of war.
10.	Television and computers change how we communicate	**3.11** Students should be able to explore the contribution of technological developments and innovation to historical change.	This can be linked back to work on the earlier phase of industrialisation and innovation from the late 18th century onwards, as the process of technological innovation has continued to gather pace. It can also be linked back to earlier developments in communications such as the invention of the alphabet – which is highlighted in Era 1 – and the invention of the printing press, a feature of Era 4.

Section IV

Using the Framework in the Classroom

A: Getting the process underway with students

We are recommending that teachers consider the use of the 'History of the World in 7 minutes' video with students to show the immensity and complexity of the past, before introducing the proposed framework as a working model to start highlighting significant developments over time and giving students a 'scaffold' (NOT a 'cage') on which to locate the different people and events studied in the classroom.

The video is currently available at the following location:
https://www.teachertube.com/videos/history-of-the-world-in-7-minutes-123544

B: Teacher preparation

In order to get the process underway with students, it will be necessary for teachers to have a good grasp of the significant features of the different eras identified. Exhaustive knowledge of each era is neither feasible nor required. Some notes on each era are provided in Table 3, which also contains suggestions for questions and strategies to prompt student thinking. (These questions, in some cases, may pre-empt questions that students themselves raise.)

C: The PowerPoint presentation

A PowerPoint is provided here, to assist teachers in getting work on the framework underway with their students. It will be best if the framework is first used with first year students and referred to and used at regular intervals.

Table 3: key points and questions.

	Era	Key points	Key questions
1.	Early hunter-gatherers and farmers invent tools and weapons	• All early humans hunted. • First farming societies were in Middle East (in 'Fertile Crescent') from around 8,000 BC. • Farming spread to other parts of the world over a long period of time. • Farming led to many technological and social changes.	• Why did early hunters invent spears? (See image.) • Why has farming been described as the first great change in human history? • Look at the image of the 'cultivation tool'. What do you think it was used for? How was it made? Do you think it was made by the person who used it?

	Era	Key points	Key questions
2.	Early civilisations develop alphabets, cities and politics	• Features of civilisations: cities, laws, governments, public buildings • Earliest: Sumerian, c.3,500 BC (Also, earliest writing system, which was pictographic.) • Beginnings of democracy in ancient Athens c.500 BC. (In same century, beginnings of Greek science and theatre.) • Classical civilisation of 5th and 4th century BC one of most inventive & influential in world history (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Herodotus) • Rise of Rome, 3rd century BC	• How many of these ancient civilisations have you heard of: Sumerian/Egyptian/Greek/Roman? • Why did civilisations need writing/ alphabets? • See image of letters. Do you recognise the alphabet these letters come from? • Do you recognise the ancient city in the second image? What political idea began in that city that is still important today?
3.	Europe becomes Christian; Europe becomes feudal	• 4th century AD, Emperor Constantine supported spread of Christianity. (Later, in 391, became official religion, under Theodosius I) • 5th century: Christianity spread to Ireland. • Feudal arrangements originated in Carolingian Europe, (Charlemagne, emperor 800), and spread to much of Europe. • Features of feudalism: heavy cavalry, vassals and fiefs, castles, chivalry.	• Look at the image of Glendalough. What are some of the ways in which the landscape changed when Ireland became Christian? • Do you know of any other sites like this? • Look at the Bayeux Tapestry image. The type of men you see brought feudal arrangements to Britain and Ireland: what can you tell me about them? • Do any traces of feudal arrangements remain in the landscape today?
4.	Cities grow and states multiply	• Frequent wars led to frequent border changes. • Fall of Byzantine Empire and resulting instability created new states. • Increasing trade and development of banking led to growth of cities. • Competition between Italian city states acted as spur to artists and architects.	• Look at the map of Europe in 1328. Which of the following no longer exist today as empires or independent states? Byzantine Empire, Holy Roman Empire, Bohemia, Poland, Aragon, Venice, France. Of the ones that do still exist, are their borders the same or different? • Can you name any famous Renaissance artists or architects? • Look at the image of Florence cathedral. Do you know why it's famous and much visited?

	Era	Key points	Key questions
5.	Explorers and reformers bring change	• 1492: European discovery of Americas by Columbus is one of the major turning points in world history. • Spanish and Portuguese and, later, others such as the English and the Dutch, became wealthy from new trade and overseas possessions. • The setting up of Reformed Churches following the ideas of Martin Luther and others led to division in Europe.	• What do you know about the voyage Columbus made in 1492? • Look at the image of Columbus landing (on what was given the name 'San Salvador'). Is the depiction of the native people realistic or imagined, would you say? • Which European countries introduced their language to Cuba? Brazil? Argentina? • Look at the image of Martin Luther burning the papal bull. What sort of person was Martin Luther? What sort of thing was the papal bull? • Can you name one country that became Protestant at the time of the Reformation and one country (other than Ireland) that remained (mainly) Catholic?
6.	Monarchs consolidate power	• Louis XIV of France is seen as the epitome of an 'absolute' monarch. • William of Orange, was a Dutch prince (whose mother was English royalty) and he became king of Great Britain in 1688 with the support of the English parliament. • In 17th–18th century Europe, most rulers were absolute monarchs.	• Look at the image of Louis XIV. What details suggest wealth and power? • This man had a huge palace built just outside of Paris. Do you know its name? • Look at the image of William of Orange and his wife, Mary. Is there any detail that suggests they were joint monarchs? • Why is William important in Irish history?
7.	Revolutionaries challenge monarchs	• The American Revolution led by George Washington and others ended British rule in New England and adjoining colonies. • Rule of Louis XVI in France was challenged by the Estates General and, subsequently, by the National Convention which ordered his execution. • Modern idea of 'republic' originated with these revolutions.	• Look at the image of George Washington. How is he portrayed? • How is George Washington remembered in the USA today? • Look at the image of the execution of Marie Antoinette. Do you know why she was executed? • How were she and Louis executed? • Can you make any connection between the French Revolution and Ireland?

	Era	Key points	Key questions
8.	Industrialisation and democracy advance	• Beginning in Britain, the Industrial Revolution saw a new source of power (steam engine) and other new machinery • Bigger machines were housed in factories and cities grew. • People campaigned for the right to vote. • Parliament passed reform acts, increasing the numbers who were allowed to vote.	• Look at the image of a 19th century factory. What sort of machinery is in use? What sort of power made such machines work? What sort of fuel did those machines use? • Why did new factories cause cities to grow? • Look at the image of Daniel O'Connell. By refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, he helped to win the right for what sort of people to vote in elections? How is he remembered in Ireland today? • In the UK, what group of people only got the right to vote in elections for parliament in 1918?
9.	World wars change the face of the Earth	• World War I (1914–1918) led to the collapse of empires, new countries on the map, 20 million dead, changed roles for women and more. • Fascism and communism clashed between the wars; both clashed with democracy. • World War II (1939–1945) led to mass destruction due to bombing, 60 million dead, mass genocide (the Holocaust), collapse of Third Reich, bigger role for USA in Europe, the beginning of the nuclear age, and more.	• Look at the image of World War I trenches. Why did they fight like that? Do any of these trenches survive today? • Can you name three empires that collapsed as a result of World War I? • Can you name one fascist country and one communist country that came into conflict with one another in Europe of the 1930s/1940s? • Look at the image of the atomic bombing of Japan. Who dropped the bombs? What cities were bombed? How did these bombings change the world?
10.	Television and computers change how we communicate	• BBC began television transmission in 1936; (R)TÉ at end of 1961. • 1962: Telstar (USA), 1st communications satellite; 1989: Sky began first satellite TV service. • 1969: computers used to guide Apollo 11 to Moon landing. • 1971: 1st microprocessor ('computer on a chip') made by Intel. • 1989: Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web.	• What do you know about the ways in which television changed the lives of people? • Look at the image of Telstar. Why are satellites such as this sometimes said to have made the world smaller? • What do you know about computers of the 1940s/50s/60s? • Why is the silicon chip important in the history of the computer? • Can you name some of the ways in the World Wide Web has changed people's lives?
?			

D: A possible classroom approach to use of the framework (1–3 lessons, depending on duration of lesson and other factors)

1. Ask students, in pairs/groups, to note on placemats the most significant people that they know about in the history of the last 2000 years or so.

2. When students have completed the task, get a sense of the types of people that they have identified and follow up with questions to generate further discussion, such as:
   - *Why did you pick this person? Why do you think this person is significant?*
   - *Is there anything that some/many of the people chosen have in common?*
   - *Can you identify patterns in what the people you have chosen did that makes them stand out?*

3. The suggestions made by students should allow for an initial exploration of the vastness and diversity of the past, in terms of the time and space to which the figures chosen relate. Follow-up questions might include:
   - *Which figures chosen are from Ireland? Which are from Europe or the wider world? What parts?*
   - *Which figures are from the recent past? Which are from the more distant past?*
   - *Can you say how many years/ centuries cover the range of people you have chosen?*

4. This should lead to an opportunity to look at the challenges historians face in trying to make sense of vast periods of time across vast spaces. In leading this discussion, students might brainstorm the idea of eras and be invited to name some eras they have heard of, e.g Stone Age, Dark Ages, Medieval times, Victorian times etc.

5. Show the 'History of the World in Seven Minutes' video from *World History For Us*, available at https://www.teachertube.com/videos/history-of-the-world-in-7-minutes-123544

6. Invite students to comment on it. Tease out their understanding of the challenges in making sense of a vast range of time and space.

7. Using the presentation, introduce the framework, and take students through each era one by one. Try to elicit what students know already about each era, no matter how tenuous their understanding may be. Explore each image and discuss with students why each was chosen. Draw on the 'key points' and 'key questions' provided, as appropriate.

   In drawing on key points and key questions, it will be prudent to draw on only one or two in the initial teaching of the framework.

8. Introduce the concept of an historical framework as a way in which we can try to make some sense of the past by linking all these eras together. Extend students' thinking further by asking them to explore reasons for the use of the term 'scaffold' and to speculate on how future historians may view the present.

Section V

Developing Students' Ability to Think Critically Through use of The Framework

A: Questions that can be used to generate critical discussion of the framework

Use of the framework will be more supportive of students' learning needs if it is presented in ways that are activity-focused and that seek to develop critical thinking in students. Here, we focus on some questions that can be used to generate critical discussion of the framework.

Is this framework helpful to us as students: Why?/How?/Why not?

Based on the experience of the researcher/student encounters in the 'Big Pictures of the Past' project, students are likely to see the value of having access to some sort of 'frame' on which to 'hang' the disparate items of study encountered in their schoolwork. The perceived value may not be confined to History; students of other subjects such as Music and Science may also see it as a useful reference point.

Some students may see potential shortcomings in the framework e.g that it is unduly Eurocentric; that it does not adequately reflect the lives of women; that it fails to provide historical context for their particular sense of identity. Hopefully, this could lead on to agreement that no such framework can encompass all the diverse strands of human development; that all frameworks are selective in their focus; and that on-going appraisal of frameworks is essential if they are to continue to be an effective learning tool. Students may wish to comment on ways in which they think "Our History Scaffold' could be improved as a framework.

Are there any ways in which we think this framework could be improved?

Depending on the social, gender, religious and ethno-racial make-up of the class, teachers may anticipate a range of responses, of which the following may be a not untypical sample: *Why is there so little mention of women's roles? Why do I see no reflection of my LGBTQ+ identity? Where is the world of Islam in this? Why is there no mention at all of Africa? Why is there no mention of South America? Why is there no mention of Poland/Ukraine/Russia/India/China etc?*

Whatever responses are made, the opportunity can be taken to re-state a guiding principle in the devising of the framework, that it match closely the junior cycle specification so that students are starting from where they are – in terms of their classroom work – and can build outwards from there. How might the various suggestions made by students be incorporated into the framework (which, after all, is intended to be a dynamic instrument that grows and adapts as students learn more history and learn to fit their own family and community origins into it)? Such discussion may generate insightful observations, such as the opportunity to highlight the roles of women within

the framework as it stands (See Table 4) – and, by extension, within related subject material in the wider junior cycle course – as well as identifying ways in which this framework and others could be made more gender-sensitive. The discussion may also lead to realisation that no framework can 'fit everything in', that, as in historical writing generally, we need to focus on certain specifics in order to see clearly. How best to choose those specifics is a question teachers may be better equipped to consider if they have given some thought to the issue of what constitutes a good framework.

What do we as teachers know about the different approaches to devising frameworks or frames of reference? What do we consider makes a good framework?

A pioneer of the framework approach was Denis Shemilt, one-time leader of the hugely influential Schools History Project, based in the University of Leeds. Shemilt (2009) proposed four possible synoptic frameworks that would anchor all work on history in the classroom: these would focus on modes of production, political and social organisation, growth and movement of peoples, and culture and mind. The application of this framework in a Leeds school was described in Rogers (2010). To help students' orientation, the four strands were divided into five epochs, each one named after the largest social grouping impacting life at the time: thus, the epoch of bands was followed by the epoch of tribes; then the epoch of kingdoms, followed by the epoch of empires; and, most recently, the epoch of multi-national organisations. The approach was used as the basis for teaching all history students between the ages of 11 and 14, with regular reference to it as students studied different elements of the curriculum. Welcomed by other researchers such as Howson (2009) and Counsell (2011), the approach has not been incorporated into the various iterations of the English national curriculum in the way that researchers such as Howson favoured.

Further afield, in the United States, the collaborative project *World History for Us All* – spearheaded by the Department of History in UCLA – identifies nine 'big eras', where each successive era is shorter than the previous one due, largely, to the quickening pace of change. Big Era Three, 'Farming and the emergence of complex societies' encompasses the period from 10,000 to 1000 BCE, while Big Era Eight, 'A Half Century of Crisis', ranges over the fifty-year period from1900 to 1950 CE. Another US project, the *Big History Project*, endorsed by Bill Gates among others, encompasses the known history of the universe and identifies eight 'thresholds' which have seen significant 'forward' movement from Threshold 1, 'The Big Bang' to Threshold 8, 'The Modern Revolution (why change accelerates faster and faster)'. The approach draws on evidence and insights from many disciplines, including science. While both projects are hugely imaginative and comprehensive, data on their use in schools is somewhat limited at present.

The *Big History Project* is not unique in drawing on evidence from science. The term 'Anthropocene' was devised to identify a new geological era, one where human activity plays the major role in shaping our environment: the issue is still a matter of debate among geologists. The Swedish historian and educationalist , Kenneth Nordgren, has argued that human activities have re-shaped the world so much that history as it is currently conceived is not giving students the full picture;

indeed, he argues that 'narratives that separate human experiences from their environment (nature, climate, animals)' are 'becoming obsolete'. Nearer home, the British educationalist, Kate Hawkey, has argued the case for 'Introducing more planet-wide environmental perspectives into the history curriculum.' Nordgren and Hawkey – and others – favour the adoption of a broader conception of what constitutes 'historical evidence', one that includes natural phenomena and processes. As climate change accelerates and the issue of human impact on the natural environment assumes ever-greater importance, the implications for the classroom teaching of history may become a focus of increasing, and urgent, debate.

In developing 'Our History Scaffold', a significant influence was the approach adopted by the Dutch de Rooy Commission in 2001, with its ten eras of developmental significance, from the 'Era of hunters and farmers' to the 'Era of television and computers'. The use of images to identify the different eras was also influential. The approach adopted in 'Our History Scaffold' puts greater emphasis on process: all of the era titles use verbs to identify processes that characterise the era in question and underlie significant developments or events of the era in question. The reasons for this are linked in part to the finding from various research studies that students have a tendency to view change as event and this can 'skew' their understanding of how change happens. Grasping the idea of change as process helps students to better understand how change works and that rates and pace of change vary from era to era. The use of two images to help identify the different eras shows signs of being helpful to students distinguishing between eras.

- Do we as teachers see the potential benefits of emphasising 'process' in the history classroom?
- Do we see the potential value of using images to distinguish between the features of different eras?

Twenty years ago, the history educationalist Peter Lee set out a list of criteria that he considered essential if frameworks were to be fit for purpose. These included the following:

- Any framework must be taught within a metahistorical framework.
- A framework must be an overview, composed of revisited patterns, not a mere outline story. It must be something that can be taught rapidly.

The first of these is signalling that a framework approach needs to be located within the context of a focus on the nature of history, what history is based on, how it operates as a discipline, what its values are. Within the western democratic mode, there is substantial agreement on these matters and this is reflected in the junior cycle specification with its formulation of The Nature of History as Strand 1 for the purpose of identifying appropriate learning outcomes that help move student learning forward. The second criterion above is also reflected in the specification's advice that a 'big picture' should be taught rapidly early on and revisited at regular intervals, so that students can better understand emerging patterns and make connections with topics previously studied.

- Do we as teachers see the potential value in setting students' study within a metahistorical context, where students learn about what history is and how it operates, as well as learning about important episodes in the history of their country and the wider world?
- Do we see the potential value in teaching a framework rapidly early on and returning to it at regular intervals?

An important consideration in developing the framework was to ensure that it was closely matched to the classroom needs of teachers who are teaching courses based on the junior cycle specification. A majority of the eras are ones which include subject matter identified in Strand Two or Strand Three learning outcomes. Having the framework to hand makes it easier to help students locate particular episodes in time, in terms of their sequencing. It should also facilitate students in making connections between eras as learning outcome 1.11 requires.

- Keeping the preceding summary of approaches to framework formulation in mind, what features of the framework 'Our History Scaffold' do we think will be of assistance to us in the classroom?
- Are there any insights offered by other authorities quoted that we would like to see built into frameworks as they develop and change?

What opportunities are there within the framework 'Our History Scaffold' to highlight the roles of women in the past?

Table 4: identifies some opportunities in the framework to highlight the roles of women.

Era	Associated Images	Opportunities To Highlight Roles Of Women
Early hunters and farmers invent tools and weapons	Mesolithic hunter, Neolithic farming tool	There is evidence that Mesolithic women hunted (it would be helpful to visualise this) See, for example, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2020/nov/analysis-did-prehistoric-women-hunt-new-research-suggests-so There is evidence that the invention of farming led to gendered roles where, for example, men looked after the butchering of animals and women looked after the production of leather; so, women played an essential role in the transformation. See https://www.sciencetimes.com/articles/30673/20210414/stone-tools-found-graves-showed-different-roles-men-women-neolithic.htm
Early civilisations develop alphabets, cities and politics	Greek alphabet letters, ancient Athens	Greek civilisation: Sappho is the first known woman poet in world literature. In politics, Gorgo, Queen of Sparta, is an important figure. Roman civilisation: Despite official exclusion from public roles, some women, such as Livia, mother of Augustus, and Agrippina the Younger, mother of Nero, managed to play significant roles – especially in promoting their son's interests.
Europe becomes Christian; Europe becomes feudal	Monastery, knights	Nunneries: Monastic institutes for women developed at the same time (5th/6th centuries) as those for men and were, at least, equally numerous. They played a variety of roles. Women who occupied positions of political power in the middle ages include Matilda, daughter of Henry I of England who married the Holy Roman Emperor; and Eleanor of Acquitaine. Other significant women from the period include the mystics and writers, Hildegard of Bingham, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe. See https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology-south-east/news/2021/mar/eight-medieval-women-international-womens-day

Era	Associated Images	Opportunities To Highlight Roles Of Women
Cities grow and states multiply	Renaissance Florence, map of Europe	Aretemisia Gentelleschi, Lavinia Fontana: women artists who produced important work. Politics: women such as Lucrezia Borgia and Catherine de'Medici wielded political power.
Explorers and reformers bring change	Columbus and Luther	Queen Isabella's key role in supporting Columbus and sponsoring his voyage. Luther's wife, Katherina von Bora and the important role she played in assisting Luther's reformation work.
Monarchs consolidate power	Louis XIV, William III and Mary II	Another absolute monarch in place of Louis: Catherine the Great, Emperor of Russia. Stress Mary's role as joint monarch with William.
Revolutionaries challenge monarchs	George Washington, the guillotine	In the American Revolution, the roles played by Martha Washington and the 'Daughters of Liberty' and Abigail Adams are amongst those worthy of note. In the French Revolution, Olympe de Gouges and her *Declaration of the Rights of Women*, 1791, is worth a mention. Other relevant aspects include the symbolic power of the figure of 'Liberty' and the role of Charlotte Corday.
Industrialisation and democracy advance	Factory machinery, O'Connell MP	Roles of women in textile factories In any consideration of 'democracy', Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) deserves a mention. 19th century suffrage movements: Millicent Fawcett (England) and Isabella Tod and Anna Haslam (Ireland) played important roles.
World Wars change the face of the earth	Trench image, Atom bomb image	Women in ambulance corps and armaments factories Women worked on the Manhattan Project that developed the Atomic Bomb. One, Lilli Hornig, featured in the 2023 film *Oppenheimer*.
Television and computers change how we communicate	Telstar, the World Wide Web	Telstar: one of its first uses was to broadcast to France a 20-minute programme on the death of Marilyn Monroe. The inventor of the World Wide Web argued in 2020 that it is 'not working for women and girls' (primarily due to online harassment). The Women's World Wide Web (W4), founded in 2010, promotes girls' and women's empowerment worldwide.

B: Some activity-focused approaches to developing students' critical thinking through use of the framework

Timelines and wall charts

Learning Outcome 1.10 of the junior cycle specification specifies that students should be able to

> **Demonstrate chronological awareness by creating and maintaining timelines to locate personalities, issues and events in their appropriate historical eras.**

History teachers have traditionally used timelines with their classes to help 'anchor' units of study and to enhance student understanding of chronological issues. Wall charts have enlivened many a classroom with colourful visual representation of historical episodes and eras. A good example is outlined in *Stair 2021* where Ellen J. Ward describes her own use of a large timeline on the classroom wall. Since the timeline remained on the classroom wall throughout the year, it was a constant reference point in classes and, as Ellen notes, 'Time and change were no longer abstract concepts but something physical that existed in the learning environment.' Students' 'ownership' of the timeline was enhanced by the posting of examples of student work under the appropriate period. The benefits of this are manifold: one is that current work is not produced in a vacuum but, surrounded by examples of previous work, it is easier to generate reflection and discussion. A resource such as this may be time consuming to produce but it is one that can be used over and over again, with the examples of student work from different classes giving it a different 'flavour' each time. It also makes concrete the notion of the classroom as a 'learning hub', where students are actively involved in creating their own learning.

Building interactive timelines

Given the pervasiveness of information technology (IT), another option – where student access to computer technology is available – is to make use of online software to set student tasks around the building of interactive timelines. In his *Stair 2023* article on 'Teaching the Big Picture, Part 3: Learning Methodologies', Seán Ó Riain acknowledges the need to familiarise students with the various ways in which they can contribute to the integrative timeline. For those students who are comfortable in an online environment, the interactive nature of tasks can be a great spur to curiosity and the desire to learn, and the wish to share that learning with others. Ó Riain mentions his use of 'Tiki-Toki'; other packages are available, including the critically-approved 'Timeline JS', an open-source tool, and Visme, also available free. Dynamic timeline creation, however, is not dependent on computer technology: creating a 'human' timeline in the classroom is another way in which students' understanding of chronology can be enhanced.

Using ‘human’ timelines

Many teachers have used ‘human’ timelines in the classroom and found them useful, especially in helping students to correctly sequence events. Their use in acquainting students with the eras included in the framework has the potential to sharpen student learning through articulation of existing understanding and response to feedback from classmates. One way in which this might work is to give each of ten individuals or pairs an A4 sheet with the two images associated with each of the ten eras. A series of tasks can be given to each individual or pair, beginning with an invitation to say a few words on their era based on the two images on the sheet that they are holding. Since familiarity with the different eras will vary, where knowledge offered is a little ‘thin’, classmates can be invited to offer more detail. To facilitate sharing of knowledge, it is best if students are standing or seated: one good option is to have them seated in a U-shaped line where they can see each other clearly. They can then be invited to arrange themselves in the correct chronological order and be ready to explain why they are located there. While ‘duration’ is more difficult to represent visually than ‘sequence’, students could be invited to leave gaps from the next era represented where the era endured over a period longer than eras represented in the later reaches of the framework. Thus, Eras 1, 2 and 3 are longer than the other seven eras (with Era 1, of course, longest of all) and the gaps implemented by the students should show awareness of this, as well as generating questions and comments from classmates. Another task might be to locate episodes of history studied to date in the appropriate era. Following the physical representation of the timeline through this ‘human’ timeline activity, a written exercise might be given in which all students are invited to say what they have learned from the activity.

Multi-modal pair work

Other tasks can be set that are more demanding but, ultimately, more empowering. In an Irish context, evaluation of student knowledge and understanding tends to prioritise textual responses, especially at Leaving Certificate level (with a ‘backwash’ effect influencing junior cycle), although this is changing as second assessment items are prioritised and new approaches introduced. One Dutch initiative involved giving a series of history tasks to pairs of students aged 12–13 years, with some pairs responding via text alone, others using text and visuals and a third cohort using text, visuals and timetables: the mode of representation that showed the best results was where visual-textual representation was integrated in a timeline. This may be because, where the three modes of representation are used, discussion must take place about how visuals can improve understanding of the text (and vice versa) and whereabouts on a timeline the episode in question is most accurately located – and its timetable placement relative to other pairs who have been given other episodes to work on.

Matching and sorting exercises

Where simpler tasks are appropriate, matching and sorting exercises are proven ways of encouraging student thinking as cards need to be placed in the correct spot and explanations must be given. One example involves the use of the images connected to each era, all 20 cut out to comprise individual cards. Another set of cards is formed using one of the points from the 'Key points' table. Students are asked to match the visual with the appropriate 'Key point' and to explain the reasons for their choice. This generally works best as a 'pair' activity. The same sets of cards can also be used for a sorting activity where students are required to work out the correct chronological order of the cards (a) using the 'Key points' cards only and (b), where students are struggling, introducing the 'visuals' cards to see if it helps the students complete the task. A 'Connect Four' game is another possibility. Again using the same cards, students are invited to find four connections between eras. Some connections that might be mentioned include:

Farming in Eras 1 and 3 (first farming societies formed; feudal arrangements for land use developed); Communication in Eras 2 and 10 (development of alphabet; TV and computers); Wars in Eras 4 and 9 (frequent wars, frequent border changes; world wars changing the face of the earth); Religion in Eras 3 and 5 (Europe becomes Christian; Reformed Churches set up); and Politics in Eras 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (Athenian democracy; Renaissance city states; absolute monarchs; republican legacy of French Revolution; nineteenth century advances in democracy; twentieth century clashes between dictatorships – both fascist and communist – and democracies).

Appendix: Images

https://www.flickr.com/photos/vintage_illustration/29510262138

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Neolithic_cultivation_tool_reconstitution_Bali.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Delta_uc_lc.svg

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_temple#/media/File:Attica_06-13_Athens_50_View_from_Philopappos_-_Acropolis_Hill.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Glendalough_monastery.jpg

https://tr.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dosya:Bayeux_Tapestry_scene57_Harold_death.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EuropeMap1328.png

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f7/The_dome_of_Florence_Cathedral.jpg

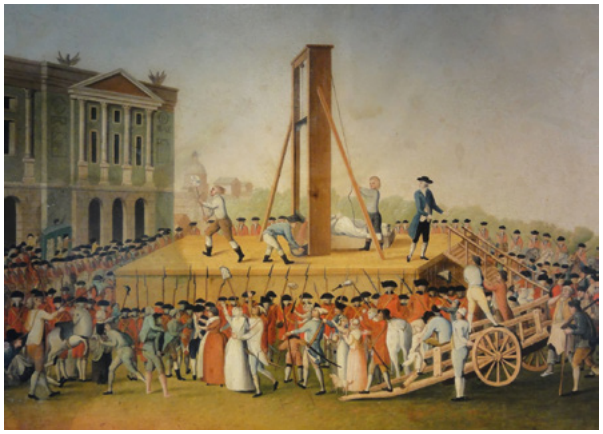
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Columbus_landing_on_Hispaniola.JPG

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karl_Aspelin-Luther_uppbränner_den_påfliga_bullan.jpg

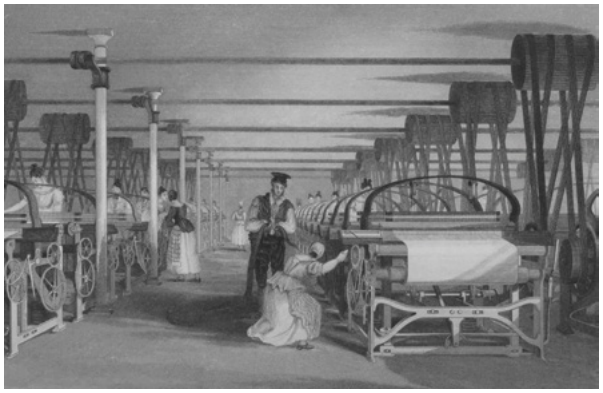
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hyacinthe_Rigaud_-_Louis_XIV,_roi_de_France_(1638–1715)_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_of_Orange,_and_Mary,_his_English_wife_are_presented_Wellcome_V0048279.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:George_Washington_After_the_Battle_of_Princeton_-_Charles_Willson_Peale_-_Cleveland_Museum_of_Art_(29746887513).jpg

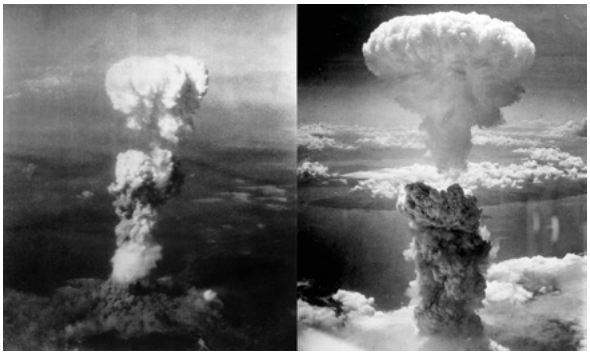


https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Exécution_de_Marie_Antoinette_le_16_octobre_1793.jpg



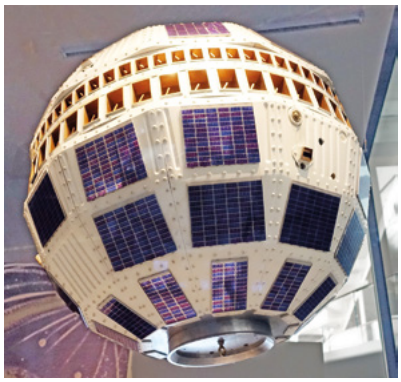
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Powerloom_weaving_in_1835.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daniel_O%27Connell,_refusing_ot_take_oath_of_supremacy.jpg



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Atomic_bombing_of_Japan.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:German_trenches_on_the_aisne.jpg



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Telstar_satellite.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:World_Wide_Web_logo.png

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