

AS91438

Analyse the causes and consequences of a significant historical event

From Sally Beccards' Presentation, *Communicating Historical Thinking*, at NZHTA Conference 2012

- our students must be able to engage with the concept of historical causation and understand causal relationships
- a cause is a relationship, not a thing

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

- Identify the causal links in the first sentence of new paragraphs
- Describe the events or actions using detailed supporting evidence
- Clearly describe the causal relationship to the main event

WHAT MUST WE DO?

- Clarify concepts and identify a vocabulary that will enable analysis.
- Create learning activities that will allow students to use the vocabulary
- Investigate and research using non-classroom content to practice conceptual understandings.
- Design open-ended tasks that allows students to model these relationships in concrete ways.
- Focus on consequences as much as on classification and design tasks that require consequences to be explicitly specified.
- Use counterfactual questions to build student understanding of consequences.

What broke Alphonse's back

This activity explores causal links :

1. Introduce the story of Alphonse. Ask students to highlight and annotate potential causes in the article for the death of Alphonse.
2. Encourage students to think beyond simple causes. Examine potential underlying conditions and relationships as part of the examination of causality.
3. Categorize identified causal links.
4. Apply this knowledge to your existing context

Once upon a time there was a camel (called Alphonse). For various reasons (relating to an unfortunate accident during his birth) the camel had severe back problems. This was not the end of his misfortune, however, because he had an evil exploitative owner (called Frank the Camel Killer). Frank had hated camels ever since a nasty incident in his childhood involving a camel's hoof and his rear end. He was very bitter and had never trusted camels since.

Frank regularly overloaded his camels prior to taking them on gruelling and totally unnecessary round trips up and down the mountains on his way to deliver goods to his customers. These customers, shockingly, were completely indifferent to these frequent and gross violations of the rights of camels and found Frank and his antics at least vaguely endearing. On top of it all, Alphonse was sometimes his own worst enemy. Camels are very proud creatures, and he would act tough to his camel friends, and on his rare breaks he would show off how much he could carry.

Plenty of camels had died doing similar work to Alphonse and his friends. After a particularly costly few weeks, when camels were keeling over left, right and centre, the camels decided to form a trade union to defend their rights and protect them from evil owners. However, when it comes down to it, camels are selfish creatures who don't trust each other. They were more worried about looking after themselves than about working together, and trade unions fizzled out.

Well, one Friday, Frank had just finished loading-up Alphonse and his poor exploited fellow creatures for yet another gruelling and totally unnecessary round trip up and down the mountains. He had piled and piled and piled up the goods onto Alphonse's back and was taking a break and reflecting smugly on his handiwork, chewing a straw. On a

whim he decided to add the bedraggled straw he had been chewing to Alphonse's load. Alphonse groaned obligingly. He eyed his owner with disgust and died of radical and irreversible back collapse.

Discuss possible causal links

- The straw
- Alphonse himself
- Failed trade unions
- Birth incident
- Nasty owner
- Camel's lack of physiotherapy

Categories of causation:

Highlight and annotate your text according to these categories

- Direct cause
- Indirect cause
- Economic conditions
- Social conditions
- Political conditions
- Personal characteristics

Source: Sally Beccard, NZHTA Conference 2012 Presentation

Additional Sources:

<http://www.teachersmedia.co.uk/videos/gifted-and-talented-history-causal-reasoning-a-model>

<http://teachinghistory.org/best-practices/teaching-in-action/19567>