

USING TIMELINES

AO L1 Understand how the past is important to people.

AO L2 Understand how time and change affect people's lives.

This sits alongside the guideline Te Takanga o te Wā with the connected themes Te Hekenga Nui, Mana Whenua and Whakapapa.

Notes for teachers

Thinking historically not only requires students to interpret an historical event but also means that they need to be able to place that event in time and context. Sometimes students, especially younger ones, can struggle to understand the order of events. This can affect their thinking around continuity and change, and cause and effect. So you may have to teach them the skills of using timelines and understanding chronology before the main history is explored.

You may choose to look at a certain time period with your class, or choose an event that affected your local community. Constructing a timeline in the classroom with the students gives them a visual prompt. You may choose to have something on the wall, or a hanging string, where events are pegged on. Break down one event into a timeline of smaller events. Or make a timeline after a speaker has visited, or the class has seen a local landmark, to track the story.

Defining chronology

Ordering historical events means being able to understand:

- Descriptive vocabulary – words like before, after, a long time ago, a very long time ago, ancient, old, new, decade, century, modern, during, in between, recent.
- Conceptual vocabulary – words like change, continuity, sequence, duration, period.
- How people and things change.
- The way to order events:
 - sequencing time
 - measuring in months and years
 - ordering numbers up to four digits
 - knowing that the numbers get bigger the closer we get to the present day.

Learning Outcomes

Time machine game

Tell the students that your classroom is a time machine and that you can go anywhere in time. Tell them you are going back to a recent date e.g. Christmas last year. Ask students what they can see/hear/smell.

Then ask, "Where else could we go?" See if they are able to choose a different historical time and ask the same questions. This can be repeated as often as you like. The students could choose the time period or you could guide them towards something you are planning for them to find out more about. Once you have taught more content about that event, get back into your time machine and go back. "What do you now see/hear/smell?"

This is an excellent way of being able to assess the students' existing knowledge of events, vocabulary and understanding of chronology.

Keep it physical

When younger students are first learning about timelines, it is worthwhile letting them sequence events or objects physically. Here are some ideas for doing this:

- Categorise objects into old and new or put them in a line from oldest to newest.
- Get class to stand in a timeline of their birthdays.
- Walk along a physical timeline made from a bench to stand on, or masking tape on classroom floor:
 - As the teacher or students walk along it, verbalise what they are doing, for example: “See me going back in time” “This is the beginning of the timeline so this is now”.
 - Write some events from the life of your classroom or school on paper that the students can arrange them in order.
 - Once the pieces of paper have been ordered, get the students to put themselves on the timeline, hold the papers and read their events aloud.
 - Get the rest of the class to check their ordering to make sure it is correct, and then the students read aloud again.
 - Keep purposefully commenting as they read, to reinforce the language and concepts of chronology.
- Sort photos of the local area into past and present and discuss why they are sorted that way.
- Give small groups of students a picture of an historical event. Ask each group to put their picture in order on a timeline. See if they can work out as a class which order of events is correct and what were the clues that led them there.

Use the lives of the students

Start small. Show the students how to sequence the events of a day onto a timeline, and then the year.

- Compare the lives of the students to a timeline of Māori history – “You’d have been alive then wouldn’t you? Why not?”
- Compare the teacher’s or parents’ timelines with the students.
- Get students to bring in photographs of themselves as a baby and a recent photograph.
 - The class can discuss differences between them as babies and the age they are now.
 - Get them to look at the things they did as babies – crawling, walking, etc and how they have changed over time.
 - Ask, “How have your toys, books, interests and skills changed over time?”

A useful link for creating electronic timelines is

<http://www.searchfindknow.com/timeline--chronology-creation-sites.html>