

# REASONABLE DOUBT meets THE BIG SIX HISTORICAL THINKING CONCEPTS

## ① HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

How do we decide what is important to learn about the past?

### GUIDEPOST

1

Events, people, or developments have historical significance **if they resulted in change**. That is, they had deep consequences, for many people, over a long period of time.

- What historical events, people, and developments created the racial divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the play?
- What do we learn about the deep consequences of this divide from the play?
- Do you think that the killing of Colten Boushie and the trial of Gerald Stanley are/will be considered an historical event (based on the guidepost criteria for historical significance)?

### GUIDEPOST

2

Events, people, or developments have historical significance if they are **revealing**. That is, they shed light on enduring and emerging issues in history or contemporary life.

- What enduring and emerging issues in history and contemporary life does Reasonable Doubt shed light on?
- How does the play broaden and deepen your understanding of these issues?

### GUIDEPOST

3

Historical significance is **constructed**. That is, events, people, and developments meet the criteria for historical significance only when they are shown to occupy a **meaningful place in a narrative**.

### GUIDEPOST

4

Historical significance **varies** over time and from group to group.

- In Reasonable Doubt, what narratives do Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples construct/believe about themselves? one another? their relationships?
- What meaning does each narrative assign to the killing of Colten Boushie and the trial of Gerald Stanley?
- How do these narratives change through the course of the play?
- What causes these shifts in peoples' understandings and intentions?

## 2 EVIDENCE

How do we know what we know about the past?

### GUIDEPOST

1

History is an **interpretation** based on **inferences** made from primary sources. Primary sources can be accounts, but they can also be traces, relics, or records.

- What primary sources of evidence does the play contain?
- Is the play itself a primary source for historians today and in the future?

### GUIDEPOST

2

**Asking good questions** about a source can turn it into evidence.

- What questions would an historian ask about this play as a potential source of historical evidence?

### GUIDEPOST

3

Sourcing often begins before a source is read, with questions about who created it and **when** it was created. It involves inferring from the source the author's or creator's **purposes, values, and worldview**, either conscious or unconscious.

- Who created this play? When was it created?
- What are the play's creators' purposes for the play?
- What values guided the creation of the play?
- There are 3 playwrights. They bring 3 related yet distinct histories and worldviews to their collaboration. What worldview do they express together through the play?

### GUIDEPOST

4

A source should be analyzed in relation to the **context of its historical setting**: the conditions and worldviews prevalent at the time in question.

- In what historical context was this play written?
- What conditions and worldviews were prevalent in Saskatchewan (and Canada?) at the time of the killing of Colten Boushie and the trial of Gerald Stanley?

### GUIDEPOST

5

Inferences from a source can never stand alone. They should always be **corroborated** --checked against other sources (primary or secondary).

- How did the playwrights invite Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members to corroborate interviewees' statements in the draft of the script of Reasonable Doubt?
- What did they do when a community member alerted them to an inaccuracy in the script (such as an omission or distortion)?
- How did interviewees serve both as sources of knowledge and corroborators of that same knowledge?
- What significant conclusions does the play suggest about race relations in Saskatchewan? What other primary and secondary sources can you consult to evaluate the validity of (one of the) play's conclusions?

# 3 CONTINUITY & CHANGE

How can we make sense of the complex flows of history?

## GUIDEPOST

1

Continuity and change are **interwoven**: both can exist together.

**Chronologies** – the sequencing of events – can be a good starting point.

- What historical events does the play implicitly and explicitly acknowledge as critical in the ‘interwoven’ relationship among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples?
- How useful is it to think of these events chronologically? cyclically? symbolically?
- How effectively does this play support viewers to “make sense of the complex flows of history” together?
- Reasonable Doubt suggests that First Nations people continued to practice and protect their culture throughout this history of racism.
- Which speakers in the play share this knowledge with you? What do you learn from them?
- What changes do Indigenous voices in the play ask settlers and immigrants to make? What will settlers need to change? continue?
- What will be the implications – for themselves and for the Indigenous peoples with whom they share this land?

## GUIDEPOST

2

Change is a **process**, with varying paces and patterns. **Turning points** are moments when the process of change shifts in direction or pace.

- (How) Does the play suggest that the Gerald Stanley trial is/may be a turning point in the history of race relations in Saskatchewan?
- Identify the turning points in the play itself – “moments when the process of change [within & among communities] shifts in direction and pace”?
- Perhaps you’ve heard the expression, “Art imitates life and life imitates art.” To what extent does our society show evidence of its willingness and capacity to imitate the turning points in this work of art in our own near future?

## GUIDEPOST

3

**Progress and decline** are broad evaluations of change over time.

Depending on the impacts of change, progress for one people may be decline for another.

- What are different ways that a people and community can experience progress and decline? (ex: economic, political . . . )
- Does the play affirm the statement that “progress for one people may be decline for another?”
- What ideology or belief system justifies the progress of settlers at the expense of Indigenous peoples? What are moments in the play that powerfully endorse and challenge this ideology?
- What are its roots in this country?

## GUIDEPOST

4

**Periodization** helps us organize our thinking about continuity and change.

It is a process of interpretation, by which we decide which events or developments constitute a period of history.

- If this play predicts a possible future, what periods of race relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples await us?

## ④ CAUSE & CONSEQUENCE

Why do events happen, and what are their impacts?

### GUIDEPOST

1

Change is driven by **multiple causes**, and results in **multiple consequences**. These create a complex web of interrelated short-term and long-term causes and consequences.

### GUIDEPOST

2

The **causes** that lead to a particular historical event **vary in their influence**, with some being more important than others.

### GUIDEPOST

3

Events result from the interplay of two types of factors: (1) **historical actors**, who are people (individuals or groups) who take actions that cause historical events, and (2) the social, political, economic, and cultural **conditions** within which the actors operate.

### GUIDEPOST

4

Historical actors cannot always predict the effect of conditions, opposing actions, and unforeseen reactions. These have the effect of generating **unintended consequences**.

### GUIDEPOST

5

The events of history were **not inevitable**, any more than those of the future are. Alter a single action or condition, and an event might have turned out differently.

Reasonable Doubt dis-covers “a complex web of interrelated short-term and long-term causes and consequences” of the current state of race relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan and Canada.

As you read the play, in small groups, create and continuously update & revise a web which represents the following:

- A. Short-term and long-term **causes**, including **historical actors** and **societal conditions**;
- B. Short-term and long-term **consequences**, including **intended & unintended**;
- C. **Varied impacts** of causes on individuals and groups;
- D. When you are done, apply Guidepost 5 to your representation: Which actions or conditions, **if altered**, may have produced very **different results**?

# 5 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

How can we better understand the people of the past?

## GUIDEPOST

1

An ocean of **difference** can lie between current **worldviews** (beliefs, values, and motivations) and those of earlier periods of history.

## GUIDEPOST

2

It is important to avoid **presentism** – the imposition of present ideas on actors in the past. Nonetheless, cautious reference to universal human experiences can help us relate to the experiences of historical actors.

## GUIDEPOST

3

The perspectives of historical actors are best understood by considering their **historical context**.

## GUIDEPOST

4

**Taking the perspective of historical actors** means inferring how people felt and thought in the past. It **does not mean identifying with** those actors. Valid **inferences** are those based on **evidence**.

## GUIDEPOST

5

Different historical actors have **diverse perspectives** on the events in which they are involved. Exploring these is key to understanding historical events.

### Viewing Alex Wilson's documentary, *The Pass System*.

Consider teaching/practicing these historical guideposts by viewing/analyzing/responding to Alex William's documentary, ***The Pass System***.

**This teacher guide contains a lesson to accompany the documentary.**

# 6 THE ETHICAL DIMENSION

How can history help us to live in the present?

## GUIDEPOST

1

Authors make implicit or explicit ethical judgements in writing historical narratives.

What are the co-creators of the script for and against? What do they implicitly and/or explicitly affirm/advocate for & reject/discourage/condemn? How do you know?

## GUIDEPOST

2

Reasoned ethical judgements of past actions are made by taking into account the **historical context** of the actors in question.

To what extent does the play educate audiences about the historical context of current race relations between Indigenous & non-Indigenous people in Saskatchewan? What do you want and need to learn more about this historical context? How could you find out?

## GUIDEPOST

3

When making ethical judgements, it is important to be cautious about **imposing contemporary standards** of right and wrong on the past.

Compare and contrast the contemporary and historical standards of right and wrong held by:

- Indigenous peoples/historical actors;
- non- Indigenous peoples/historical actors.

What do you notice?

## GUIDEPOST

4

A fair assessment of ethical implications of history can inform us of our **responsibilities to remember and respond** to contributions, sacrifices, and injustices of the past.

**The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action** are the result of a nation-wide "assessment of the ethical implications of history" on this land. The Calls explicitly state the responsibilities all Canadians must all meet in order to respond ethically to the "injustices of the past."

Consider the Calls to Action document. Find a Call to Action that is meaningful for you. Create a visual to represent who must act to meet the call, and how. Include yourself in the visual/among the historical actors using the **Citizenship Engagement Planning Process** (see link in this guide). Share & compare with peers.

## GUIDEPOST

5

Our understanding of history can help us make **informed judgements** about contemporary issues, but only when we **recognize the limitations** of any "direct lessons" from the past.

Select a current issue related to race relations in Saskatchewan. How does the knowledge you have gained by studying **Reasonable Doubt** "help [you] to make [more] informed judgements about [this] contemporary issue?"