

# THRESHOLD NAME GAME

## Preparation

- Print the Threshold Name Game cards (one set for each group of eight students)

## Purpose

The Big History narrative progresses through a series of eight thresholds of increasing complexity, starting with the Big Bang and ending with the Modern Revolution. Thresholds are guideposts along the way – major plot points in the Big History narrative. It turns out – and Big History Project research has shown this year after year – the better students grasp this narrative, the better they can connect with the course content in a way that encourages deep and lasting learning. It just takes some practice. This activity is all about learning the thresholds through a simple memory exercise.

## Process

Explain to students that history is often easier to remember if we have a good grasp on the narrative or story that is being told when describing different events or processes in history. As they're probably starting to pick up on, the major turning points in David Christian's Big History story are the eight thresholds of increasing complexity. These thresholds are really like the main plot points in the Big History story. As a way to get a head start on remembering this story, your students will try to memorize the thresholds of increasingly complexity by playing what some people call the "name game."

Tell your students that in this quick activity, they're going to try their best to commit to memory the thresholds in chronological order – a sort of timeline that will support their learning throughout the course.

First, organize students into groups of eight and distribute one set of threshold cards per group. Instruct students to pass out the cards so each of them has one card. If a group has fewer than eight students, they can each take on more than one threshold; if a group has more than eight, they can pair up.

Within their respective groups, students begin the game: The student who holds the Threshold 1 card starts by saying, "My name is the Big Bang and I am Threshold 1." The person holding the Threshold 2 card follows, saying, "His/her name is the Big Bang and they are Threshold 1. My name is Stars Light Up and I am Threshold 2." Then, the student with the Threshold 3 card would say, "His/her name is the Big Bang and he/she is Threshold 1. His/her name is the Stars Light Up and he/she is Threshold 2. My name is New Chemical Elements and I am Threshold 3." Have students continue this pattern in their groups until all have had a chance to recite all eight thresholds.

At the end of the activity, small groups can reflect on what they understand about the eight thresholds by responding to these discussion questions:

- What was the purpose of this activity?
- How will knowing the thresholds allow you to see the larger narrative of Big History?

You can revisit this activity throughout the Big History course if you feel that your students need more practice with the thresholds. Feel free to make this activity more complex when you use it later in the course. One way you might do this is by having students summarize the thresholds.

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## Process

History is often easier to remember if we have a good grasp on the narrative or story that is being told when describing different events or processes in history. As you're probably starting to pick up on, the major turning points in David Christian's Big History story are the eight thresholds of increasing complexity. These thresholds are really like the main plot points in the Big History story. As a way to get a head start on remembering this story, you're going to try to memorize the thresholds of increasingly complexity by playing what some people call the "name game."

In this quick activity, you're going to try your best to memorize the thresholds in chronological order – a sort of timeline that will support your learning throughout the course.

First, your teacher will organize you into groups of eight and distribute one set of threshold cards per group. Pass out the cards so each of the students in your group has one card. If your group has fewer than eight students, you can each take on more than one threshold; if your group has more than eight, pair up with each other.

Now, you'll play the "name game" with your group:

1. Whoever has the Threshold 1 card starts by saying, "My name is the Big Bang and I am Threshold 1."
2. The person holding the Threshold 2 card follows, saying, "[the name of the person in your group who had the Threshold 1 card] is the Big Bang and they are Threshold 1. My name is Stars Light Up and I am Threshold 2."
3. Then, the student with the Threshold 3 card would say, "[the name of the person in your group who had the Threshold 1 card] is the Big Bang and they're Threshold 1. [The name of the person in your group who had the Threshold 2 card] is the Stars Light Up and they're Threshold 2. My name is New Chemical Elements and I am Threshold 3.

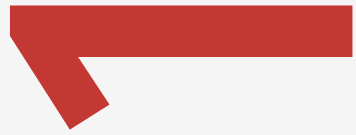
Continue doing this until everyone in your group has had a chance to name all eight thresholds.

At the end of the activity, discuss the following questions with your group:

- What was the purpose of this activity?
- How will knowing the thresholds allow you to see the larger narrative of Big History?

Any time during this course, if you think you're starting to forget the thresholds, tell your teacher and see if you can play a quick round of the name game as a refresher!

THRESHOLD NAME GAME



1

**Threshold**

The Big Bang



5

**Threshold**

Life



2

**Threshold**

Stars Light Up



6

**Threshold**

Collective  
Learning



3

**Threshold**

New Chemical  
Elements



7

**Threshold**

Agriculture



4

**Threshold**

Earth & The  
Solar System



8

**Threshold**

The Modern  
Revolution