

CAUSATION – NATURAL DISASTERS

Purpose

Central to the work of a historian is determining cause and effect of historical events and processes. In this first activity in the causation progression, students engage in historical analysis by trying to identify the causes of a recent natural disaster. Making causal claims is a major part of what we do in history, so students will practice determining causation throughout the course.

Practices

Scale

Use the language of spatial scale in this lesson when introducing students to the natural disaster you've selected. Discuss whether the natural disaster you've chosen happened personally, locally, regionally, nationally, or globally.

Process

In this quick activity, students are introduced to the idea of historical causation by considering what caused a recent natural disaster. In the past few years, there have been a multitude of worldwide natural disasters including tsunamis, floods, landslides, wildfires, and volcanic eruptions, just to name a few. It's up to you to choose the natural disaster, but we recommend you find one that is familiar to most of your students.

Present the chosen natural disaster to your class and ask: What caused this to happen?

Ask students to list as many causes as they can think of. As they list causes, record them on the board. It's most likely that students will list causes related to things like the climate and environment, but encourage them to go deeper. Ask students if a massive hurricane whipped through a deserted forest and downed trees and killed wildlife, would it be considered a disaster? Most people will say no – the disasters we hear about most often are the ones that impact people and the lives, homes, and communities they've lost due to these disasters. If time permits, have a discussion with your class about those people that are most often impacted by disasters. Often, they are people with less means, the ones who, due to social circumstances, already live in areas that cannot withstand a big disaster, such as low-lying areas or those that don't have buildings constructed to withstand disasters such as earthquakes.

After you have 10-20 causes on the board, ask students to examine the timeframes within which these causes happened. Did they occur recently in time or might they have happened long ago? Or, maybe they took place somewhere in the middle. See if you and your students can divide the causes into short term, intermediate term, and long term. You can also give them the following definitions for each:

- Short term – from one instant to a lifetime
- Medium term – from a few years to a few hundred years
- Long term – from a hundred years to all time

Once you've done this as a class, hand out the Causation Tool and review it with the class. Students will use this tool again as part of the Alphonse the Camel causation activity. Before that, students will practice analyzing different parts of causation as preparation for the full causal analysis they'll do in the Alphonse activity.

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Purpose

Central to the work of a historian is determining cause and effect of historical events and processes. In this first activity in the causation progression, you'll take part in some light historical analysis by trying to identify the causes of a recent natural disaster. Making causal claims is major part of what we do in history, so you'll work on this skill throughout the course.

Practices

Scale

Use the language of spatial scale in this lesson when thinking about your natural disaster. Discuss whether the disaster happened personally, locally, regionally, nationally, or globally.

Process

In this quick activity, you're introduced to the idea of historical causation by considering what caused a recent natural disaster. In the past few years, there have been a multitude of worldwide natural disasters including tsunamis, floods, landslides, wildfires, and volcanic eruptions, just to name a few.

After your teacher presents the natural disaster you'll be looking at to the class, ask yourself: What caused this to happen?

List as many causes you can think of. Once your class is done, check out the list of causes that you all came up with. Did they occur recently in time or might they have happened long ago? Or, maybe somewhere in the middle? See if you can divide the causes into short term, intermediate term, and long term. Here are some definitions that might help you divide them.

- Short term – from one instant to a lifetime
- Medium term – from a few years to a few hundred years
- Long term – from a hundred years to all time

Now, review the Causation Tool with your class. You will use this again in an activity named Alphonse the Camel, which shows up later in the course. Until then, you'll practice analyzing different aspects of causation. By the time you get to the Alphonse activity, you'll be able to put together everything you've learned about causation.

CAUSATION TOOL

Name:

Date:

Directions: List your causes. Then, divide them up by short term, intermediate term, and long term and place them in the appropriate boxes. After that, use the key to help you label Role, Significance, and Type. If your teacher asks you to create a causal map, use your answers here to help construct that causal representation.

Explain the causes of:

Short term - *From one instant to a lifetime*

Intermediate term - *From a few years to a few hundred years*

Long term - *From a hundred years to all time*

Legend

<p>Role: (1) Primary/Contributing (2) Secondary/Underlying (*) Triggering Event</p>	<p>Significance: Necessary Important</p>	<p>Type: (\$) Economic (Ψ) Psychological (P) Political (E) Environmental (C) Cultural (B) Biological (T) Technological (I) Ideas/Beliefs</p>
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