

**How High Schoolers Account for Different Accounts:
Developing a Practical Classroom Measure of Thinking about Historical
Evidence and Methodology**

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Abstract

This paper reports on the conception, design, piloting and administration of a practical classroom measure of students' thinking about historical evidence and historians' research methods. The Historical Account Differences (HAD) task aims to bring Denis Shemilt's four-stage developmental model of historical thinking into the service of researchers' and practitioners' work in designing curricular innovations to help students advance their understanding of history as a distinctive way of knowing. Administration to 112 10th grade students taking a lengthy curriculum unit involving work with primary sources and consultations with volunteer history mentors showed advances for 49% of respondents on the 4-point scale. Detailed analysis of these data are provided, along with the instrument, and advice on adapting it for use in different curricular contexts where similar goals are being pursued.

Objectives and Context

Over the past decade, researchers have become increasingly disenchanted with the experimental methods inherited from Psychology as a way to build knowledge about educational innovations. There are several reasons for this. For one, believable controls are difficult to establish when an innovation requires teachers and students to work with quite different resources, spend their time differently, or invest more time in an academic task than might otherwise be the case. Further, when the issue in question is *how* an innovation works (rather than simply whether it works), experimental methods often fall short.

For these and other reasons, researchers concerned with the design and appropriation of educational innovations have been carrying out more of their research in authentic classroom settings (Bruer, 1993). Many of these researchers (among whom we count ourselves) have adopted the concept of "design experiments" (Brown, 1992; Cobb, Confrey, diSessa, Lehrer, & Schauble, 2003), an emerging style of research whose intent is to carefully scrutinize a design in action, and to develop the knowledge that both researchers and educational practitioners need in order to understand its potential.

In the work reported here, we aimed to develop a practical classroom measure of students' thinking about the nature of historical accounts — specifically about the nature of historical evidence and the methods historians use when they read and process sources. This effort was part of a larger research and development project called Tracking Canada's Past (O'Neill et al., 2003, April) whose aim is to advance high school students' abilities to think historically through extended work with primary sources, under the guidance of history graduate students and preservationists who are made available as online mentors. In the course of the project, 10th grade students develop their own unique research questions around the central theme of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The construction of the railway was a vitally important event in Canadian history, whose coverage is mandated in most provinces. To date the project has been implemented in 7 schools.

In the context of this effort, we wanted to know whether the design was having its intended effect in the variety of school settings that played host to it, and how any measurable effects were related to local variations in the implementation of the program, student background and participation. The Historical Account Differences (HAD) task was developed to examine students' views about the nature of historical sources and the methods used by historians when they work with sources to produce accounts. Below we discuss the design, piloting and refinement of the instrument, as well as our analysis of responses from 112 students participating in Tracking Canada's Past in 2003. Respondents came from four very different school environments, including one in a small industrial town in which few students continue on to postsecondary studies, and another in a selective public school program involving a competitive entry system.

Theoretical Framework

The design of Tracking Canada's Past is based on two foundational ideas. One is a new form of voluntarism called "telementoring" (Harris & Jones, 1999; O'Neill, Wagner, & Gomez, 1996; Wighton, 1993) in which practitioners of a discipline are recruited to provide ongoing guidance and advice to particular students over an extended period of time, developing ideas together. In Tracking Canada's Past these relationships were carried out using a computer "groupware" tool

called Knowledge Forum[®] (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1994), in a mode we call “mentoring in the open” (O'Neill, in press).

Providing an online community is crucial, we believe, in realizing our second foundational idea: students’ productive engagement with primary sources – the “raw stuff” of history. Our reading of the literature suggested that to make progress in the development of their conceptions of history as a way of knowing (as opposed to just a body of content), students must encounter some of these materials in the context of investigations of their own making. There is nothing quite like having to put on white gloves to handle the old newspapers, or pulling someone else’s family photographs out of a storage box in a temperature-controlled room to challenge one’s sense of how historical accounts are made. Scaffolded work with primary sources and multiple, conflicting accounts may, in fact, be essential to students overcoming the simplifying influence of textbook accounts, which often present oversimplified, homogenized accounts of historical events in a depersonalized voice (Beck & McKeown, 1994; McKeown & Beck, 1994; Wineburg, 1991).

One of the chief objectives of our curriculum design for *Tracking Canada’s Past*, then, is to confront students with conflicting historical evidence and accounts, in a supportive community of inquiry that can help them understand why and how historical accounts may differ. This is a pressing objective in an age in which the effects of globalization and a flourishing variety of “new histories” are making their presence felt. As Peter Seixas has written:

[Today] a plethora of competing narratives assert...claims to nationhood...or make regional, ethnic, gender, class or other identity groupings more central to the story. Canadians [and others] confront this multiplicity of pasts, more or less consciously, as enriching, enabling and fragmenting. How we reconcile these accounts will frame the way we can imagine our futures. And how we convey to the next generation not only a sense of the past, but also ways to deal with conflicting pasts, will determine in large measure the quality of...citizenship. (Seixas, 2001)

Other researchers have suggested that it is largely because students do not encounter multiple perspectives on historical events in school that they do not develop the ability to reconcile and think maturely about conflicting accounts (Barton, 1997). Consequently, when confronted with

these, they must either ignore some arbitrarily, or ignore evidence altogether and provide an account of how they believe things “must have happened.”

Adolescents’ Historical Reasoning

Our main inspiration in developing HAD was Shemilt’s (1987) research on the development of adolescents’ thinking about evidence and methodology in History. His work, based on many hours of interviews with British adolescents, presents a rich and nuanced description of students’ thinking about historical sources and methods. It describes adolescents as falling into one of four stages of development. At the lowest level of understanding, Stage 1 of Shemilt’s model, knowledge of the past is taken as given. The only difficulty students associate with history is reading it and remembering it. In other words, students believe that the historian’s use of historical sources is merely to learn and remember the objective facts about what happened. These two dimensions together, that historical knowledge is a given, and that historians’ methods consists of simply reading and remembering, describe students’ understanding of the nature of historians’ sources and methods at Stage 1.

At Stage 2, students recognize that the past does not speak with a single voice; but history is viewed as problematic only because the evidence may not be reliable (e.g. some people saw the events in question and others did not) or because some reporters may be biased. At this stage, historians are thought of as people who, like detectives, sift through the evidence and can sniff out false or biased facts or stories.

Stage 3 students are distinguished by their understanding that historical knowledge can never be absolutely certain. Sources may contradict each other for legitimate reasons, and may represent only partial traces of the past. Historical scholarship is understood to involve using evidence (only *some* of which is other peoples' stories) to reduce the uncertainty of knowledge about the past and determine the most likely possibility. The historian uses logic and makes inferences to come up with a justifiable account.

In the 4th and most advanced stage of Shemilt’s model, historical knowledge is viewed as kaleidoscopic. Students recognize that it is possible to have several equally defensible stories

about the past, even if they draw upon the same evidence. Like a kaleidoscope, history's "patterns are ordered and determinate, but do not yield a single stable picture." (Shemilt, 2000).

Our work attempts to bring Shemilt's prior findings into the service of the design experiments agenda, by enabling the developers of classroom innovations to assess which of these stages participating students are at, and closely examine how curriculum innovations may influence the development of their thinking. As the title of this paper implies, we were strongly influenced by a desire to make HAD practical for use in classroom settings; which means that it should take only a few minutes to complete, and require little explanation. The demographic items and historical reasoning measures discussed here were administered together with other items in a single 40-minute class period, and for the most part, even students who spoke English as a second language were able to complete the survey with minimal explanation.

The Design of HAD

The central problem that HAD poses for students is to explain why historical accounts may differ, both in terms of the sources they draw upon and the ways in which historians use sources. In designing HAD, we were mindful that for many students, given their experiences with history texts in school, the idea of "real" historical narratives differing might be no more than a bizarre hypothetical. For this reason, the first part of the task involves reading and summarizing the central claims of three brief narratives written by published historians. These carefully selected narratives are meant to provide a meaningful context for the explanation task.

In the version of HAD discussed here (see Appendix A), the competing narratives concern the building of Canada's first transcontinental railway, the Canadian Pacific. Each narrative passage included in the survey addressed the question, "who benefited most from the construction of the railway?" and was edited down or directly quoted from published sources spanning 65 years. These included a 1905 school text, a "promotional" history written by a railway executive, and a popular history of the 1970s. Each account was clearly marked with the year in which it was written.

After reading each passage, students were asked to summarize its key conclusions, and compare it to the other passages. Students are asked which passage they found the most believable, which two passages they found most similar, and more generally why historians would write about the same events over and over again (as these historians clearly did). This portion of the task is intended to help students elaborate their thinking about the specific accounts provided in the survey, and lead them to think about the general task of writing history. Finally, students complete two selected-response items that ask them to choose the best explanation for the differences observed among the accounts. The selected responses are the main focus for our analysis here.

Each of the two selected-response items addresses a different dimension of why historians might write different accounts of the same events. One item focuses on differences due to the nature of historical sources (e.g. bias, different authorial perspectives, etc), while the other focuses on the interpretive activities performed by historians when they reason with sources (e.g. remember what they read, compare conflicting evidence, apply deductive reasoning, etc).

In order to complete each of the two selected-response items, students were directed to: “Read the following four statements and check the one reason you think best explains why the historians above might have come up with different stories.” Four statements then follow, each of which has been designed to appeal to thinkers at one of Shemilt’s four stages.

The first item provides four statements that focus on students’ thinking about the historian’s methodology. These assert that historical accounts differ because the historian’s purpose is:

- to remember the correct story, otherwise the historical account would be wrong (stage 1)
- to sift through the evidence to separate true evidence from false evidence, otherwise the account would be wrong (stage 2)
- to interpret the evidence and find the most likely possibility (stage 3)
- take a distance from the ideas and values of the past and ask new questions. As a result, different stories answer different questions and can be equally valid (stage 4)

The second item focuses on historical sources:

- the right facts or the correct books may not be available, therefore some of the historical accounts are wrong (stage 1)
- evidence may be wrong or biased. As a result some accounts are wrong (stage 2)
- sources can be contradictory and some evidence might be missing. The most likely possibility has to be figured out and therefore some accounts are wrong (stage 3)
- Evidence from the past is often produced with a particular purpose in mind. When these sources are considered differently, equally valid accounts can be written. (stage 4)

Two versions of HAD were administered in each class, with the explanatory statements in different randomized orders. One version is given in Appendix A.

In his 1987 study, Shemilt identified distinctive ideas about historical evidence and methodology that typify thinking at each of the four stages. However, in his reports Shemilt speaks as if students' ideas about sources and methodology are always at the same stage. Naturally, ideas about historical evidence and methodology are intertwined; however, we suspected that at a given time a student's ideas may also be inconsistent — particularly if he or she has not had occasion to think hard about the relationships between historical evidence and methodology. For purposes of measurement, we separated these two facets of historical thinking in HAD. As we will see below, our data suggest that students' ideas about evidence and methodology may not advance in parallel.

Piloting and Validity Checking

In most respects, the design of HAD assumes the construct validity of Shemilt's stage model. Face validity of the two sets of selected-response items was verified between two of the researchers after 20 hours of in-depth discussions about Shemilt's research, followed by the evaluation of a third researcher. Convergent validity of the two variables was tested by conducting pilot data analysis. A pilot version of HAD was administered in three 10th Grade social studies classes which were not involved in our curriculum development project.

Considering that the two selected response items aimed to measure dimensions of thinking which Shemilt describes as co-occurring within a conceptually coherent stage, we expected that students would most often appeal to within-stage explanations of account differences, or that there would be a maximum of one stage difference between the explanations students chose on the two dimensions. In the first pilot administration, a substantial proportion of responses were found to be more than one stage apart, leading to re-examination of some of the explanatory statements to reduce ambiguity. After revisions were made, cross tabulation between the two HAD variables showed 87% of respondents in a subsequent pilot producing explanations which were either within-stage, or no more than one stage apart. Further, the distribution of the remaining 13% (8/60) was roughly equivalent among the different combinations of cells.

The HAD task (see Appendix A) was administered to 112 students participating in Tracking Canada's Past in 2003. The convergent validity of the HAD instrument based on the data in this study was comparable to the values we had seen in the pilot study: 86% of respondents answered within-stage on the two HAD variables, or there was a maximum of one stage difference across the two variables. This value was 82% in a separate project we have done since, in five 12th grade American History Classes in the state of Virginia.

Data Analysis

A total of 112 Grade 10 students from Social Studies classrooms in four Canadian public high schools participated in this study. The schools were located in neighborhoods with very different socio-economic backgrounds and immigrant populations. Eighty two percent of the students had completed all of their education in Canada (N=109). The remaining 18% had attended school in other countries: 13% in Asia and 1% each from the Middle East, Western Europe, South Africa, the United States, and Australia.

Roughly half of the students reported that their parents had not completed a college degree (N=110): 22% of the mothers had attained a "college degree" and 27% a "graduate degree", a total of 49%. Similarly, 19% of the fathers had a "college degree" and 34.5% a "graduate degree", a total of 53.5%. Nonetheless, 73% of the students were themselves planning to attend university after graduation, and 14.5% planned to attend college or vocational school. Nine

percent of the students wanted to work full time, and 3.5% wished to join the army, travel, or play sports.

With respect to their own educational achievement, on average, students participating in the study reported earning “half B’s and half C’s”. Distribution of students’ grades has a positive skew, with a mode of 36% “mostly A’s”.

Distribution of Students’ Historical Reasoning Stages

Table 1 summarizes the percentage of students at each stage of thinking about sources and methodology, before and after the project.

Table 1: Students’ Historical Reasoning Stages

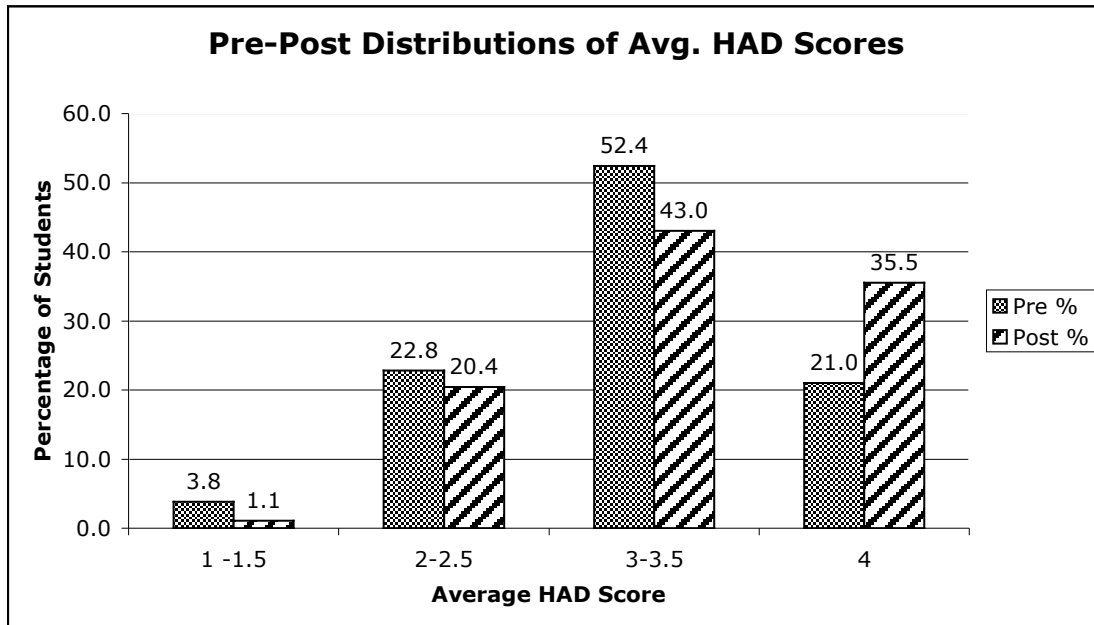
	Pre-Project HAD Methods Percent Score	Pre-project HAD Source Percent Score	Post-Project HAD Methods Percent Score	Post-project HAD Source Percent Score
Stage 1	3	3	3	5.3
Stage 2	14	26	12	15
Stage 3	51	16	41	22.3
Stage 4	32	55	44	57.4

It is worth noting that a higher percentage of students selected stage 4 explanations on the sources dimension, as compared to the methodology dimension, both prior to and after the curriculum unit. It is unclear what this may mean. It is possible either that the wording of the stage 4 sources statement is appealing to students at lower stages, or that the students in our sample are actually more advanced in their thinking about sources than their thinking about methodology. Both possibilities seem plausible at this point. Some recently completed work by a colleague of ours, who interviewed students immediately after completing HAD, may shed some light on this issue.

Figure 1 shows both the pre and post distributions of average HAD scores. Seventy three percent of participating students produced stage 3 or higher explanations before the start of the

curriculum unit (N=106) (See Figure A). This number increased to 78% by the completion of the project (N=93).

Figure 1: Pre and Post-unit distributions of HAD scores



When students’ pre-post responses were matched, we found that 48% advanced on the scale from pre to post (N=89), 21% regressed, and 30% remained the same. This means there was an overall increase of 27% in students’ average HAD scores. Since there is no reason to believe that scores on HAD would be normally distributed in the population (indeed, Shemilt suggests that Stage 4 thinkers are rare), we used the Paired Sign Test to determine whether the pre-post differences were statistically significant, which they appear to be ($Z= 2.9210$, $P =.0035$).

As Table 2 details, the advances shown from pre to post were generally small (see Table 2). Among those students who advanced, 88% did so by one stage or less. This means, for example, that a student who was at stage 3 when thinking about the nature of historians’ methods and at stage 3 or 4 when thinking about how historians work with historical sources, had moved to stage 4 on both historians’ methods and historical source thinking by the end of the 10-week unit.

In one sense the changes reported here may seem very modest; but from another perspective it would seem implausible for students to undergo much greater change in as short a time as 10 weeks. Some of the 2.5 and 3-stage leaps shown in Table 2 may in fact represent noise in the data – students checking items randomly, for instance, or misinterpreting the choices available to them.

Table 2: Breakdown of pre-post HAD change by number of stages

Pre-post Changes in students' HAD score (N=89)	Percentage of Students Whose HAD scores increased N=43	Percentage of Students Whose HAD scores decreased N=16
By 0.5 stage	33% (29)	7 % (6)
By 1.0 stage	10% (9)	8 % (7)
By 1.5 stages	3% (3)	4.5% (4)
By 2.0 stages	1% (1)	1 % (1)
By 2.5 stages	1% (1)	0
By 3.0 stages	0	1% (1)
No Pre-Post Changes in Students' HAD Score: 30% (27)		

As Table 2 shows however, many students did not advance. Thirty percent of students' HAD scores did not change from pre to post, and 21% actually showed a *lower* stage of thinking in the post survey as compared to their pre-project responses. While this may seem surprising to some, such reversals are not inconsistent with current theories of cognitive development. As Fischer et al. explain:

[children] do not linearly build knowledge like moving up the steps of a ladder, but repeatedly fall back to lower levels as they build up skills that can generalize across tasks and contexts. Especially when a challenging concept relies on an embedded simpler concept, students must revisit the earlier, simpler concept repeatedly to reconstruct a more complex understanding. (Fischer & Immordino-Yang, 2002)

Here, the ideas available for explaining account differences at each stage clearly embed those available at earlier stages. For this reason, students falling back to earlier, simpler concepts is quite possibly an indication of their readiness to advance in the future.

What influences HAD scores?

In keeping with the design experiments agenda, we did not consider it enough to simply provide evidence of change in HAD scores over time. We attempted to go one step further, and explain the reasons for the observed change using other data collected for Tracking Canada's Past.

In addition to HAD responses, extensive demographic data and measures of engagement in our curriculum unit were collected for this study. These included basic demographic data (discussed above), a 9-question quiz of students' prior knowledge about the CPR, an assessment of writing apprehension (which we felt might influence on-line participation), and a test of student's beliefs about the nature of intelligence (fixed or improvable), which have been shown to influence how students address learning opportunities (Dweck, 2000). Post-project data included questions about the perceived helpfulness of the Knowledge Forum software, the affective character of students' relationships with their mentors, the overall success of their mentoring relationships, and 13 questions about specific helpful actions taken by mentors. All items were structured on a seven-point Likert-type scale. We also included in our analysis counts of the number of notes (computer messages) written and read by each student over the course of the unit, using automated traces from the Knowledge Forum software.

In the spirit of design experiments, the purpose of this all this data was, in part, to help explain the observed pre-post differences on HAD. We wanted to know not only whether the project appeared to bring about change, but whether its benefits were equitably distributed. For example, did the project work better for students who were traditionally high-achieving, who enjoyed writing more, or who had a level of technology access that enabled them to read and write more notes?

To address these questions, Pearson correlations were computed between HAD change and all of the variables listed above. To our surprise, despite the large array of variables in our dataset, very few significant correlations emerged. Interestingly, *none* of the variables representing students' background, educational accomplishment, or psychological orientation correlated significantly. Neither did any measures of the raw number of notes students posted or read in Knowledge

Forum. In fact, *all* of the significant correlates related to the nature of the mentoring students reported receiving from our online volunteers. Table 3 summarizes the significant correlates.

Table 3: Significant correlates with pre-post HAD change

Statement Respondents Rated their Agreement With (7-point Likert scale, 1=disagree strongly and 7=agree strongly)	Correlation with Change in HAD Avg.
“My mentor helped me to understand what historians do each day”	.30 (p=.006) (N=87)
“My mentor helped me to understand material I read about my topic”	.27 (p=.013) (N=86)
“My mentor gave me background information about my topic”	.24 (p=.026) (N=86)
“My mentor answered questions I had about specific people, events or ideas in history”	.21 (p=.057) (N=86)

Furthermore, when asked to rate their agreement with the statement “*overall*, the mentoring was helpful for me”, students’ responses significantly correlated with HAD at a Pearson R value of .24 (p= .025, N=88).

Since the design of Tracking Canada’s Past was very much based on the idea of high school students “doing the discipline” with the support of *bona fide* members of communities of history scholars and preservationists, it was rewarding to see these results. Interestingly, despite the influence that affective variables had on students’ judgments of the success of their mentoring relationships (for instance, their rated agreement with statements such as “my mentor was friendly”, “my mentor showed respect for me”, and “I trust my mentor”) (Asgari & O'Neill, 2004), these did not correlate with change in HAD scores. Apparently, mere friendly support is not enough to help students advance in their historical reasoning.

We were also pleased to see that students’ satisfaction with the use of Knowledge Forum was significantly correlated with HAD change. A one-item scale was written as follows: “Doing my work in Knowledge Forum, where other students could see it and I could see their work, was helpful to me.” Students responded on a seven-point likert type scale, ranging from “1=Disagree Strongly” to “7-Agree Strongly”. The correlation value was .21 at a significance level of .05 (N=89).

Using HAD elsewhere

Our analysis here has focused on just the two selected-response items from the HAD task. These items follow others relating to carefully selected historical narratives about the Canadian Pacific Railway, taken from published sources spanning nearly a century. To adapt HAD for use in other settings, context-appropriate narratives should be substituted for the ones used here. These could conceivably be made up for the purpose; though unless they are very artfully written, fabricated history may weaken the message that “real historians disagree.” The guidelines we followed to select narratives were, first, to try to provide one narrative containing numerous direct quotes and dates (which appeal to Stage 1 and Stage 2 thinkers). We then chose a second narrative that provided multiple perspectives (which appeals to Stage 3 and Stage 4 students). Finally, we presented a third account from a modern perspective, distinguishable from the purposes of those who wrote their accounts close to when the event first occurred (appealing mostly to Stage 4 thinkers).

Significance

Understanding the nature of historical knowledge means, in part, that students are capable of assessing the differences between historical accounts, and generating theories about how these differences may have arisen. This requires an understanding of the nature of the evidence that historians work with, and how they work with it in order to produce accounts. While a number of researchers have advocated teaching practices that would advance students’ thinking along these fronts, teachers and researchers have not had practical measures to evaluate their success with these practices. Through the development of HAD, we hope to contribute to the development of teaching innovations which aim to deepen students’ understanding of history as a way of knowing.

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Appendix A: The Historical Account Differences (HAD) Instrument

The next set of questions is designed to help us understand how you think about History and historians. *There are no wrong answers. We are interested in your ideas.*

Q: Below are several stories about the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Each was written by a different historian at a different time. Read each story carefully, and think about how they differ from each other. Along the way, summarize what each story says about who benefited from the railway and in what way.

Story A: Written in 1905

The building of a transcontinental railway to connect the seaboard of British Columbia with Canada within ten years of British Columbia entering confederation is detailed in Article II, Order in Council respecting the Province of British Columbia Statutes of Canada 1982, p. lxxxviii. The plan was introduced in parliament in 1872 by Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. However, the start of the construction was delayed when the government was accused of taking a bribe to give the construction job to a specific company. Due to this scandal, Macdonald's conservative government was defeated in the next election. When the new government, under Alexander Mackenzie, proposed to build the railway line more slowly than the previous government promised, British Columbia protested, and sent a delegation to England to prevent any further delay. Lord Carnarvon, the colonial secretary in England, acted as arbitrator between Canada and British Columbia. According to the terms he negotiated, the Canadian government agreed to construct a wagon road and telegraph line along the route of the projected railway immediately, and by the year 1890 to complete the railway itself from the Pacific to Lake Superior. Before they could complete their plans, however, Sir John A Macdonald and his Conservative party came back to power. Prime Minister Macdonald entrusted the work to a group of businessmen under the name of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Construction began at both ends, meeting in the Rockies, where the last spike was driven by Lord Strathcona in 1885: five years earlier than the projected completion date. The importance to the Dominion of completing the railway was very great. Without a transcontinental railway, the union of the East and West could never have been permanent.

Who benefited?: _____

In what way? _____

Story B: Written in 1937

The construction of a transcontinental railway through Canada as part of a highway to the Orient gave Canadians confidence in their own country, and brought investment, industries, and population which have enabled Canadians to realize and develop their own now apparently unlimited resources. There is no question now of investment opportunities in Canada, provided the credit of the country is not endangered by tinkering with state socialism or continued extravagance in government expenditure. By its untiring enterprise, and paying its own way, the Canadian Pacific is in the forefront of Canadian development. Through careful spending, efficiency in operation, and conservative financing, it has enabled Canada to enjoy lower freight rates on export products than in any other country. The railway's organization is recognized in the world of transportation as second to none — efficient, honest and based on sound business principles. Its directorate is recruited from the leaders of Canadian industry and commerce. Its statesman-like and forceful chairman and president is a Canadian of Canadians, whom many consider Canada's outstanding citizen, and whose reputation as head of the world's greatest transportation system is justly international.

Who benefited?: _____

In what way? _____

Story C: Written in 1970

“I have an awful swallow for land,” said General Cass of the US-based Northern Pacific Railroad. In 1869 - during the Red River uprising - the Governor of Vermont, John Gregory Smith (who was also the president of the Northern Pacific Railroad), decided to build his rail line so close to the Canadian Border that it would ruin any plans for an all-Canadian railway. In a conversation with Charles Brydges, a leading Canadian railway man, he explained the US government was willing to take advantage of the uprising, and help pay for the line in order to get possession of the North West for the United States. On one side of the mountains, the American railway would siphon of the products of the rich prairie farmlands; on the other side it would “drain” the British Columbia mining settlements. “Drain” was actually the word a US Senate committee had used. In Minnesota, newspaper editorials claimed that it was “the irresistible doctrine of nature” for that state to take over the entire Red River Valley, north of the Canadian Border.

In the Canada of 1871, “nationalism” was a strange, new word. the provinces were savagely competitive and the idea of unity was fleeting. The six scattered provinces had yet to unite in a great national endeavor, or to glimpse anything resembling a Canadian dream; but both were taking shape. The endeavor would be the building of the Pacific railway, and the dream would be the filling up of the empty spaces and the dawn of a new Canada.

Who benefited?: _____

In what way? _____

Q: Which story do you think is the most believable one (A, B, C...)? _____

Q: What about the story makes it the most believable one?

Q: Which two stories do you think are the most similar? ____ and ____

Q: What about these two stories makes them the most similar?

Q: Why do you think new history books continue to be written about people and events that were written about before (for example, the stories given above)?

Q: Read the following four statements and check **the one reason you think best explains** why the historians above might have come up with different stories:

- Historians have to separate the true evidence from the false evidence. If they don't do this well the story they write will be wrong.
- Historians can ask new questions about past events, if they distance themselves from the ideas and values of the past. As a result, different stories can be equally valid.
- Historians may not completely remember what they have learned. As a result when they write a historical narrative, some of the stories are wrong.
- Historians start with several ideas about what might have happened, and interpret the evidence to determine the most likely possibility.

Q: Among the following four statements, check **the one reason you think best explains** why you think the historians above might have come up with different stories:

- When historians write their stories, some evidence supports them, some contradicts them, and some evidence is missing. They try to figure out the most realistic story, but some of them figure it out incorrectly.
- Some of the historians didn't have all the right books available when they wrote their stories or didn't remember the facts correctly. Therefore some of their stories are wrong.
- Evidence from the past was often produced with a particular perspective or purpose in mind. Historians consider these differently when interpreting the evidence, and therefore write different stories.
- Sometimes the evidence that historians use are wrong or biased. If historians' stories differ, it is because some of them used incorrect or biased evidence.

Coding Key for HAD statements

Statements regarding how historians interpret evidence

- Historians start with several ideas about what might have happened, and interpret the evidence to determine the most likely possibility. **(Stage 3)**
- Historians may not completely remember what they have learned. As a result when they write a historical narrative, some of the stories are wrong. **(Stage 1)**
- Historians can ask new questions about past events, if they distance themselves from the ideas and values of the past. Stories that answer different questions can be equally valid. **(Stage 4)**
- Historians have to separate the true evidence from the false evidence. If they don't do this well the story they write will be wrong. **(Stage 2)**

Statements regarding the nature of historical sources

- Sometimes the evidence that historians use is wrong or biased. If historians' stories differ, it is because some of them used incorrect or biased evidence. **(Stage 2)**
- Evidence from the past was often produced with a particular perspective or purpose in mind. Historians consider these differently when interpreting the evidence, and therefore write different stories. **(Stage 4)**
- Some of the historians didn't have all the right books available when they wrote their stories or didn't remember the facts correctly. Therefore some of their stories are wrong. **(Stage 1)**
- When historians write their stories, some evidence supports them, some contradicts them, and some evidence is missing. They try to figure out the most realistic story, but some of them figure it out incorrectly. **(Stage 3)**