If We Live in the Present, Why Should We Care About the Past?

Supporting Questions

1. What’s the difference between a cause and an effect?
2. How have events from the past changed our lives in the present?
3. How do people today solve problems created in the past?
# 2nd Grade Community History Inquiry

## If We Live in the Present, Why Should We Care About the Past?

**New York State Social Studies Framework Key Ideas & Practices**

- **2.6**: Identifying continuities and changes over time can help us understand historical developments.
- **2.7**: Cause-and-effect relationships help us recount events and understand historical development.
- **Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence**
- **Chronological Reasoning and Causation**
- **Civic Participation**

### Staging the Question

Describe a disagreement in terms of cause and effect.

### Supporting Question 1

What’s the difference between a cause and an effect?

**Formative Performance Task**

Create a T-chart listing causes on the left side and their effects on the right.

**Featured Source**

- **Source A**: Teacher-generated example of cause and effect

### Supporting Question 2

How have events from the past changed our lives in the present?

**Formative Performance Task**

Identify and discuss causes and effects of a current situation.

**Featured Source**

- **Source A**: Source packet: Pollution of Lake Ronkonkoma

### Supporting Question 3

How do people today solve problems created in the past?

**Formative Performance Task**

Write an explanation that answers the supporting question with proof or evidence.

**Featured Sources**

- **Source A**: “From Eyesore to Sunset Stunner”
- **Source B**: “Voices from the Region” video

### Summative Performance Task

**ARGUMENT** If we live in the present, why should we care about the past? Construct an argument supported with evidence that answers the compelling question.

**EXTENSION** Choose two inventions from a teacher-supplied list (e.g., telephone, video game, car, or pencil) and write a sentence about how each helped to solve a problem.

### Taking Informed Action

**UNDERSTAND** Explore the causes and effects of a major event that has transformed the local community.

**ASSESS** Investigate what people in the community are doing to confront and/or address the event.

**ACT** Invite a local politician or community leader to class to discuss the event.
**Overview**

**Inquiry Description**

This inquiry is an exploration into the concepts of time, continuity, and change in a community with the dual purpose of establishing students’ understandings of the passage of time and explaining why the past matters today. The inquiry taps into a common student assumption about the authority of the present and its existence independent of past events and contexts. One way to explore present circumstances is through an examination of the short- and long-term effects of the past. The constructs of cause and effect are complex, chiefly because multiple causes may be associated with one event, just as multiple effects can be tied to a single cause. Through identifying the relationship of cause and effect, students learn to recognize how continuity and change over time help us understand historical developments in our present communities.

In addition to the Key Ideas expressed earlier, this inquiry covers the following Conceptual Understandings:

- (2.6b) Continuities and changes over time in communities can be examined by interpreting evidence such as maps, population charts, photographs, newspapers, biographies, artifacts, and other historical materials.
- (2.7a) Cause-and-effect relationships help us understand the changes in communities.

**NOTE:** This inquiry is expected to take three to five 30-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame might expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries to meet the requirements and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education plans (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students receiving special education services.

**Structure of the Inquiry**

In addressing the compelling question “If we live in the present, why should we care about the past?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument with evidence and counterevidence from a variety of sources.

**Staging the Compelling Question**

To stage this inquiry, teachers might begin by highlighting the seemingly simple constructs of cause and effect by asking students, with a partner, to describe a disagreement they had with a friend, sibling, or parent. Students should try to identify and articulate the cause of the disagreement and the attendant effect, noting that both causes and effects may be multiple.
Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“What’s the difference between a cause and an effect?”—suggests that students can use cause and effect as a lens to view historical events in their communities over time. The featured source for this question is a teacher-generated example of cause and effect from the local community (examples are also provided). After listening to the example, students create a T-chart with a list of cause(s) on the left side and the corresponding effect(s) on the right.

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question—“How have events from the past changed our lives in the present?”—continues the study of cause and effect by examining a case in which the effects of a situation are not all positive. Using the social and environmental issues around Lake Ronkonkoma on Long Island as an example, the formative performance task asks students to identify causes on sticky notes of one color and effects on sticky notes of a different color and then to discuss their findings with a partner. The featured sources are a collection of written, visual, and audio documents that provide evidence of present-day effects caused by past actions, such as littering, polluting, and contaminating runoff water.

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question—“How do people today solve problems created in the past?”—has students consider the ways in which people today are working to confront and reduce problems of the past in order to make their communities better in the present. After working with the featured sources, students should write an explanation with evidence that answers the question about how people can address problems created in the past. Featured Source A is an article about how the Long Island community of Patchogue renovated a beach over the course of 30 years. Featured Source B is a video that highlights how town mayors have addressed problems and brought about change in the present day.

Summative Performance Task

In the Summative Performance Task, students address the issue of whether or not they should care about the past, supporting their answers with evidence. After learning what the past is, contextualizing it through the lenses of cause and effect, and examining the positive and negative results of past actions, students should be able to draw on a range of examples to use as evidence in answering the compelling question “If we live in the present, why should we care about the past?” in the form of a paragraph.

Student arguments will likely vary but could include any of the following:
• We should care about the past because we are connected to it through cause and effect.
• We should care about the past because it helps to explain why things are the way they are today.
• The present is more important than the past because we have to fix the problems that have already happened.
• The past and present are equally important to understand so that we know what happened, why it happened, and how it can help us make a better future.

As an extension, students should choose two inventions from a teacher-supplied list (e.g., telephone, video game, car, or pencil) and write a sentence about how each helped to solve a past problem.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by becoming aware of a community's history in order to better understand that community's future. They demonstrate their capacity to understand by exploring the causes and effects of a major event that has transformed their local community. They show their ability to assess by investigating what people in the community are doing to confront or address the event. And they act by inviting a local politician or community leader to class to discuss the event.
Supporting Question 1

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<tr>
<th>Featured Source</th>
<th>Source A: Teacher-generated example of cause and effect</th>
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Teacher-generated example of cause and effect from the local community, such as the following:

- Building a new playground (causes: recreation opportunities for youth, opportunities for families to gather; effects: healthier children, increased littering around the park)

- Razing a local mall (causes: decrease in customers, competition from newer shopping areas in other neighborhoods; effects: an empty lot, loss of jobs in the neighborhood)

- Banning the sale of nonrecyclable juice containers (causes: concern about environmental waste, increased understanding of the importance of recycling; effects: reduced choice for consumers, fewer sales for stores)

- Building new houses (causes: people moving for work, people having families; effects: more children will be attending school. classes will get bigger)
Supporting Question 2

| Featured Source | Source A: Source packet: Pollution of Lake Ronkonkoma |

**Potentially Deadly Algae Cyanobacteria Invades Lake Ronkonkoma**

*NOTE: The screen shot below is the opening image from a video on Lake Ronkonkoma. The free access to the video is limited to five views per 30-day period. Teachers should note that the video begins with an advertisement.*

A news photograph shows the development of algae in Lake Ronkonkoma, August 7, 2013. 
Screenshot used with permission of News 12 Long Island.

Blue-Green Algae Bloom Found in Lake Ronkonkoma
(Annotated & Excerpted)

A blue-green algae bloom triggered [started] by a type of bacteria that last year killed a Jack Russell Terrier [kind of small dog] has been found in Lake Ronkonkoma, Long Island’s largest freshwater lake and a popular swimming spot.

The algae was found last week in two spots along the south shore of the lake, which straddles [covers] the borders of Islip, Smithtown, and Brookhaven towns…. Signs warning about the algae were posted near the water at Lt. Michael P. Murphy Memorial Park in Brookhaven, advising people not to swim, wade, or fish near blooms or surface scum [layer of dirt]. They also suggested people report to local health departments and seek medical attention “if you have symptoms of nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea; skin, eye or throat irritation, allergic reactions or breathing difficulties...”

Emergency medical technician Darryl Smith, 40, turned around after reading the sign. “I’m not going in the water again, I’ll tell you that much,” he said.


Former New York State Senator Brian Foley Speaks about Cleaning Up Lake Ronkonkoma

“It is critical [important] that we clean up Lake Ronkonkoma and remove the pollutants that have been building up in the lake for years. …This legislation [law] will not only facilitate [help] the cleanup process, it will also clear the way for lakefront revitalization [making something new again]. … In recent years, the overall condition of the lake has been threatened [put in danger], as portions of it have begun to deteriorate [get worse] as a result of pollution, stormwater runoff, and littering.”

Supporting Question 3

| Feature Source | Source A: Linda Leuzzi, article on the clean-up of Miramar Beach, “From Eyesore to Sunset Stunner,” Long Island Advance, November 25, 2014 |

**From Eyesore to Sunset Stunner**

Thirty years ago, Miramar Beach attracted drag racing, drug dealing and drinking gatherings when Jackie Schwicke and her husband Steve first moved to the East Patchogue neighborhood.

It calmed down a bit, especially over the last two years, when the Miramar Beach Civic Association was formed, but still the beach area had an eroded asphalt circle worn down by waves. Sometimes, senior citizens lost their bearings driving around it and their cars wound up in the water.

But no more. On a breezy afternoon as the sun was winding down, the vista included an area with beach grasses, bayberry and other native plants. The circle is gone and a fence will stop any cars from slipping into the water. There’s a path to the beach and a new pier. Proper drainage was installed. Rocks have been placed beyond the fence, creating a beach area that’s enticing. The small parking lot has been repaved and is free of broken glass and there’s a small playground with picnic benches.

“‘They did this about a month ago,’” said Jackie Schwicke, president of the Miramar Beach Civic Association, who helped invigorate the area with the help of willing residents. “Hopefully, the sand placed there will build a berm. We had to get DEC approval. The town did all of this.”

Brookhaven's commissioner of parks and chief of staff Ed Morris said town renovation costs were $60,000.

Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine joined Schwicke last week to view the transformation. “This summer, I put Jackie and two others in the car and drove around with them,” Romaine said. “She laid out what should be done. It’s a pocket park and now you can lay on the beach.”

“We saw people catching snappers here and we hadn’t seen that before,” Schwicke said.

Neighbors like Lillaiana Randazzo, who is vice president of the association, patrol the area with others. The civic spirit is catching; there are now 400 households who are members.

Supporting Question 3

| Featured Source | Source B: Long Island Index, video of Long Island mayors talking about creating successful community redevelopment projects, “Voices from the Region,” 2010 |

Note: Teachers should focus on the “Steering Our Future” segment, which begins at 5:08.

“Voices from the Region” video

Video created for the Long Island Index 2010 report includes interviews with three Long Island Mayors – Jean Celender of Great Neck Plaza, Dave Kapell of Greenport, Paul Pontieri of Patchogue and Steve Bellone, Town Supervisor of Babylon. Each describes their experiences in creating successful community redevelopment projects.

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http://www.longislandindex.org/explore/4e39aa68777be809c5412f860224eaf9.