

What are interpretations?

An interpretation is a reconstruction or representation of the past, given from the perspective of someone who did not directly experience the event/time period outlined. In history interpretations take many forms; works of historians, murals, films, poems, museum exhibits

What does the research say?

McAlevy (TH72) informs us that an individuals understanding of history is not just dependant on a knowledge of the past but also an insight into the way in which these events are presented

Counsell (TH177) emphasised that students would be unable to think like a historian without being exposed to the fruits of their labour

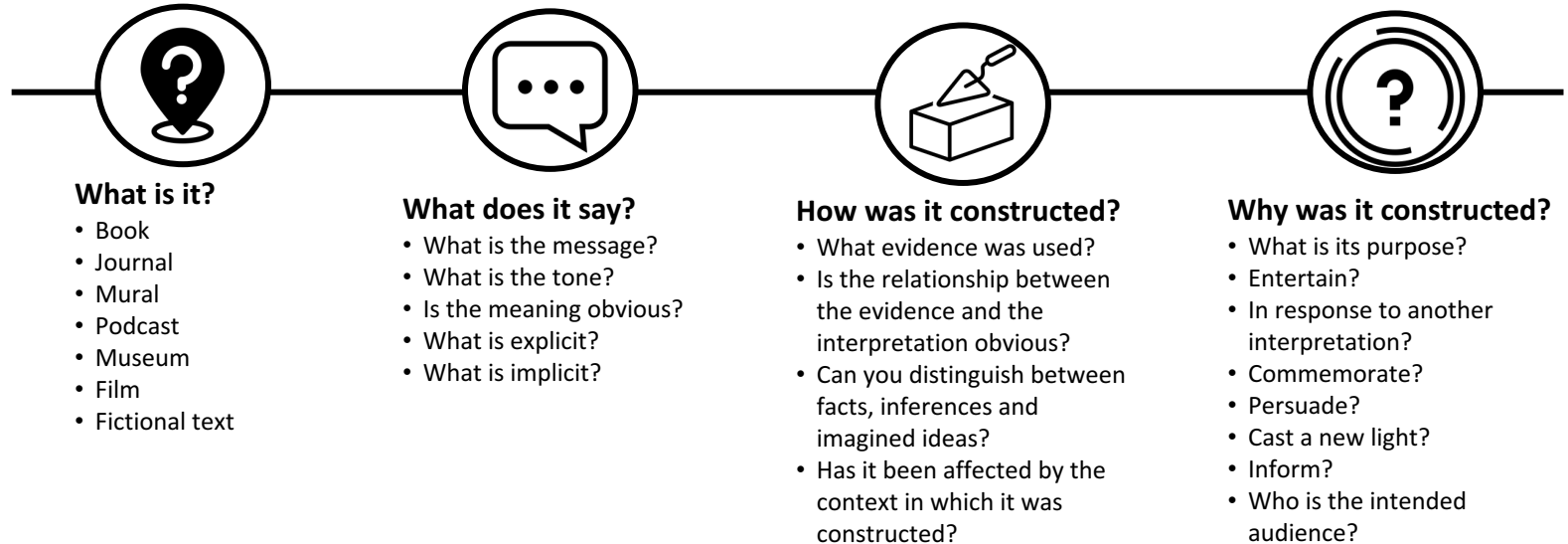
Chapman notes that that histories exist in time and change with time and that histories are authored and shaped by the subjectivities of their authors. Therefore students need to understand the methods through which the past is reconstructed

Further Reading

TH72 - Interpretations of history
TH177 - What's the wisdom on interpretations of the past
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkNv9wQZmbc>

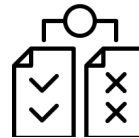
Using interpretations

There are several ways in which you can improve your students' understanding of historical interpretations



Do's and Don'ts

A few do's and don'ts to maximise student understanding of historical interpretations



- Choose scholarship you are familiar with and enthusiastic about to encourage engagement
- Leave wide margins around the outside of student copies for questions annotations
- Allow time for immersion and enjoyment
- Renew with up to date examples as narratives change

- Don't use free floating paragraphs without setting any context
- Don't take for granted understanding of complex words and phrases
- Don't just ask students to summarise the argument – encourage a more nuanced approach to analysis

In the History Classroom

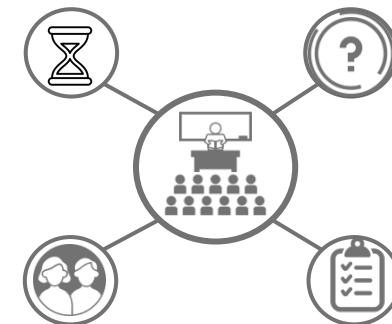
Below are some examples of how you could use interpretations in the history classroom

Change over time

Ask students to consider how and why interpretations change over time e.g.. Current views on Empire

Contrasting views

Give students 2 conflicting interpretations ask them to explain how and why they are different



Questions

Why do X and Y disagree about ...?
Why does statue X differ from statue Y?
How far do Catholic accounts of the Easter Rising differ from Protestant accounts?

Checklists

To encourage rigor (but be careful to avoid generic statements in the longer term)