Words Across Time

Trace how context changes a text's meaning and design.

10.T.C.2.c "Explain how multiple contexts (including historical and disciplinary) influence perspectives across time and the associated implications on text creation. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each clue about a historical, political, or disciplinary context. Circle the text-making choice it influences, such as a voice, evidence, form, or detail, then draw a line between each pair.

A Poem in Changing Contexts

1. In 1883, poet Emma Lazarus wrote "The New Colossus" to help raise money for a pedestal for the Statue of Liberty. Her perspective grew from her work aiding Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe. Rather than describe a military monument, she imagined the statue as a "Mother of Exiles" welcoming tired migrants. The historical setting, rising immigration and antisemitic violence abroad, shaped her poem's compassionate voice. Her literary choices, including personification and a speaking statue, turned a fundraising sonnet into an argument about refuge. The poem was not placed on the statue's pedestal until 1903, after Lazarus's death.

2. Decades later, the poem acquired new meanings because readers met it in different historical moments. In 1924, the United States adopted a quota law that sharply limited immigration from many countries. At a time when federal policy narrowed entry, the plaque's welcome could sound like a challenge to the nation's actions. A historian studying that period might place the poem beside the law to show a conflict between ideals and policy. A literary critic, however, might focus on Lazarus's metaphor and sound patterns. Each discipline selects different evidence, so its written interpretation emphasizes a different purpose for the same text.

3. The poem continues to be reused when immigration is debated. In 2017, after President Donald Trump issued an executive order restricting travel from several majority-Muslim countries, protesters displayed signs quoting its welcome to migrants. Their political context led them to select a brief line that criticized exclusion. A museum curator creating an exhibit, by contrast, may add dates, photographs, and the quota law so visitors can trace changing interpretations. An activist's sign must be immediate and memorable, while a curator's label must document sources and complexity. Thus, audience, purpose, and discipline affect not only a perspective but also the form and details of a new text.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What experiences and historical conditions shaped Lazarus's perspective, and how did they affect her poem?

2. Why could the plaque's message have sounded like a challenge to the nation's actions in 1924?

3. How would a historian's interpretation of the poem differ from a literary critic's interpretation?

4. How do the purposes of protesters and museum curators lead them to create different kinds of texts?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a public text, such as a speech, song, poster, or article. Write exactly three sentences explaining how one historical context and one disciplinary context could shape a creator's perspective and at least two choices in a new version of the text.

ANSWER KEY

Words Across Time

GRADE 10 · 10.T.C.2.c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each clue about a historical, political, or disciplinary context. Circle the text-making choice it influences, such as a voice, evidence, form, or detail, then draw a line between each pair. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What experiences and historical conditions shaped Lazarus's perspective, and how did they affect her poem?	**Her work with Jewish refugees and awareness of persecution and immigration shaped a compassionate perspective. She made the statue a welcoming "Mother of Exiles" and used a speaking statue to argue for refuge.**
2	Why could the plaque's message have sounded like a challenge to the nation's actions in 1924?	**The 1924 quota law sharply limited immigration, while the poem welcomed migrants. The contrast exposed a conflict between the nation's stated ideals and its policy.**
3	How would a historian's interpretation of the poem differ from a literary critic's interpretation?	**A historian might compare the poem with the quota law to examine ideals and policy. A literary critic might analyze metaphor and sound patterns to explain how the poem creates meaning.**
4	How do the purposes of protesters and museum curators lead them to create different kinds of texts?	**Protesters may use a short, memorable quotation to criticize exclusion immediately. Curators may use dates, photographs, laws, and documented sources to provide a complex historical interpretation.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A public health writer revising a poster about the 1918 influenza pandemic would consider that the pandemic occurred before modern antiviral medicines and intensive care. Because the writer uses evidence from epidemiology, the revised poster would cite infection data and explain how respiratory viruses spread. Its urgent headings and clear prevention steps would reflect an audience needing practical guidance during a current outbreak.

Accept responses that accurately connect a historical context and a disciplinary context to a creator's perspective. The student must also explain at least two resulting text choices, such as evidence, language, form, details, or audience focus.