

## Contextualization

“The importance of context in history is based on the simple premise that the past is different than the present, and to interpret the past using the values and beliefs of the present will distort and misrepresent the past...To think historically, then, you must constantly remind yourself that the past is different from the present and that historical events must not be evaluated in isolation from the total cultural and intellectual environment of the time in which they took place.”

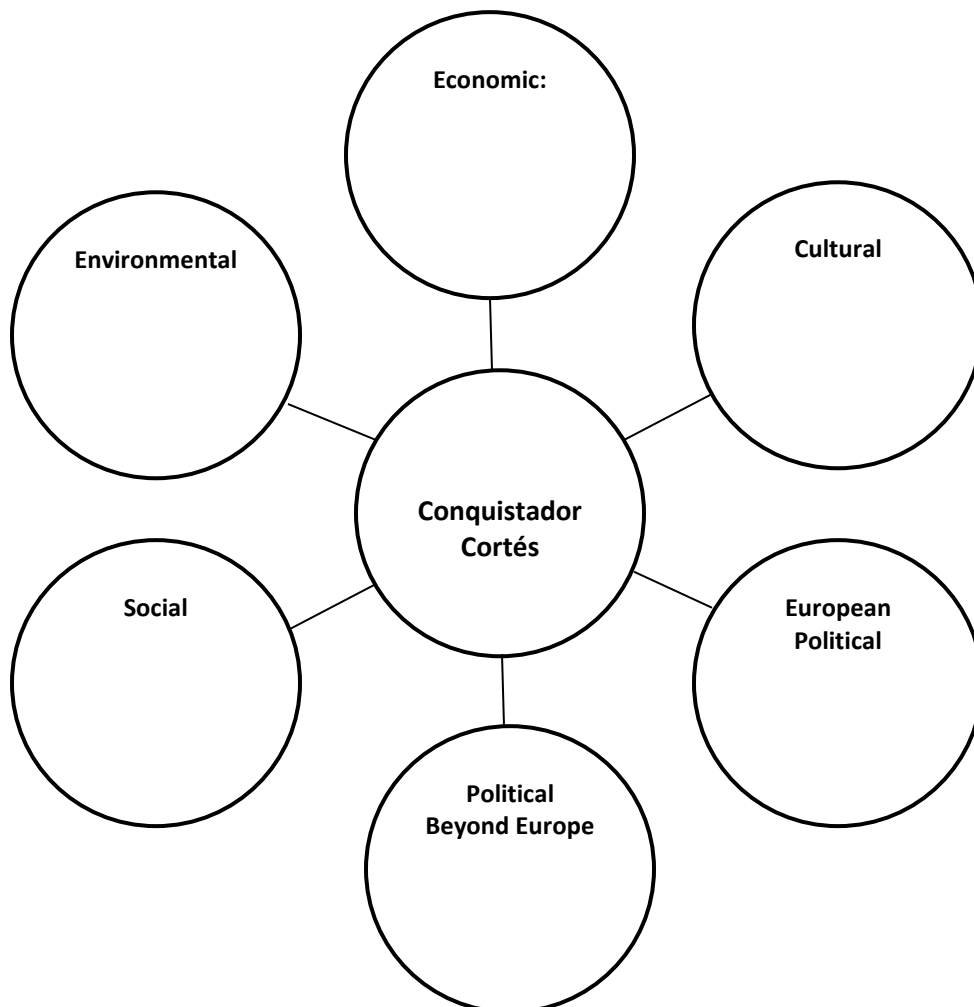
The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide by Furay and Salevouris (p. 60-61)

In order to understand historical events, you must be able to put them into context. Four underlying questions to the skill of contextualization have been identifies:

1. What was happening at the time the event occurred or the document was written/created that might have an influence?
2. What was happening at the specific place where an event occurred? In the country as a whole? In the larger region? In the world?
3. How does a specific event relate to larger processes? How do larger processes shape a specific event?
4. How does the context in which a source is read or viewed inform how it is understood?

### Contextualization: Mind-Map

The use of a Mind-Map can help you think about context in a number of ways and help structure your thinking. Complete the Mind-Map below to think systematically through the relevance of each element of the context to the source. Take notes on important aspects of the conquistador Cortés from the text and primary account on page 413..



***Las Casas and the Spanish Treatment of the American Natives* Textbook pg 415**

1. CONTEXTUALIZATION: Who was Bartolomé de Las Casas? How would his background (CORNPEG) shape his views/context of the event?
2. In what ways did this account help create the image of the Spaniards as “cruel and murderous fanatics”?
3. What motives may have prompted Las Casas to make this critique?
4. How might his opinion have affected the broader standing of Spain in the global politics of the age?