

# Critical Thinking: Analysis and Synthesis

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will need to think about both context and cause and effect as you work through the Analysis and Synthesis steps of the critical thinking process and draft your own response to your research question. As you can see, you're starting to build up your critical thinking skill to enhance your toolkit for problem solving. The more we can understand information from different angles, the more we can use that information to learn from the past and prepare for the future. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Critical Thinking: Analysis and Synthesis
  - a. Analysis
  - b. Synthesis
2. History and Mystery with Harriet Tubman



## BEFORE YOU START

How do you think learning more about context can help you better understand immigration issues?

## 1. Critical Thinking: Analysis and Synthesis

In the past two challenges, we've been working with a critical thinking process to investigate historical questions. In the Knowledge step, we break a research question down to help focus the investigation. In the Comprehension and Application steps, we examined sources and then put them into conversation with one another to identify connections and corroborate facts. In this challenge, we're going to finish the critical thinking process by going through the Analysis and Synthesis steps.

When you answer a research question as a historian, you aren't just saying what you think. You're making an **argument**. This means you need to:

- take a position that answers your research question,
- include evidence (from both primary and secondary sources) that backs up your answer, and
- tell your reader why or how your evidence supports your argument.

The two steps you'll be working through this challenge will help you as you prepare and craft the historical argument for your final project.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Argument

A set of reasons that support or oppose an idea or action.

#### 1a. Analysis

In the Analysis step, you're going to take a fresh look at the sources you've chosen. You probably have an idea by now about how you want to answer your research question. Think about which pieces of evidence will provide the strongest support for the position you're taking. Consider how you might use details from your sources to illustrate your main points.

As you think about your sources one more time, you're really planning out your argument. This is when you'll want to figure out where you're having difficulties connecting your evidence with your research question. If your analysis shows that you can't support your argument with the sources you have, now is the time to either keep investigating or revise your answer to the research question.

#### 1b. Synthesis

The word synthesis means to form something new out of different parts. That's what you're doing in the last step of the critical thinking process: creating an argument out of evidence from your sources and your own analysis of what you've read. Remember, a historical argument needs not only a position that answers your research question, but also evidence from your sources and your own explanation of how that evidence supports your position.



#### HINT

It's a great idea to draft your argument before a final project is due.

## 2. History and Mystery with Harriet Tubman

Have you ever been confronted with two versions of the same story? It can be hard to know which to believe, right? Historians and students of history often face the same challenge. In this *Sophia Story*, biographer and historian Kate Clifford Larson walks us through important moments in Harriet Tubman's life and reveals the critical thinking steps she took to determine their historical accuracy.



#### THINK ABOUT IT

How will these same steps strengthen your problem solving skill and help you think critically in your own life?

Let's start our examination of immigration in the present and throughout U.S. history to understand what lessons we can apply to the future.



## SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the final steps of the **critical thinking process: analysis and synthesis**. In the **analysis** step, you will review your sources once again while thinking about how your evidence may or may not support the argument you're beginning to formulate. In the **synthesis** step, you will put it all together and create an evidence-based argument. You also learned about the **history and mystery with Harriet Tubman** where Harriet Tubman's biographer used the six steps of critical thinking to discover the real story of this fascinating American hero.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: Strategic Education, Inc. 2020. Learn from the Past, Prepare for the Future.



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