

MURPHY BI-WEEKLY WRITING TIP

Consider Historical Context

Dear Murphy Students:

When writing your research papers, it is often a good idea to understand and provide the historical context on your topic. This allows you to present a more complete picture of your topic and its significance, and it often helps you develop a more complex argument.

What is historical context?

Put simply, historical context is what was happening before and at the time something was made.

This usually includes **social, political, cultural, and economic** situations.

Here are a few questions you can ask yourself to help analyze historical context:

- What year was the [book, law, theory, artwork, etc.] created? In what country?
- Why was it created? What problem was it trying to address?
- What [book, law, theory, artwork, etc.] came before it?
- What notable social, political, or cultural movements existed at the time?
- What were popular or controversial beliefs at the time?
- What notable conflicts were at the time or before (e.g., wars)?
- What was the economic background of the person/people who created it?
- What kind(s) of technology existed at the time?

All these questions may not apply to your paper, but they can still help you expand on your topic and make interesting connections.

Where does it go?

Information about historical context often appears in **two parts** of your paper:

- **In the introduction:** if you only want to explain *some* historical context, you can write a few sentences near the beginning or middle of the introduction.
- **After the Introduction:** sometimes, if it needs to be explained in a lot of detail, you can write at least a paragraph *after* the introduction to provide the historical context.

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4. Choose any of the available white rectangles.
5. Fill out the form with your assignment info.

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If you have questions or want to put this into practice, feel free to contact me! 😊