

What is context? How do historians use it to understand and write about the past?

Objective:

- **Describe** context and **contextualize** the lunchroom fight.
- **Explain** how do historians use context it to understand and write about the past.

Lunchroom Fight Introduction

➡ **Directions:** Read the information below about the lunchroom fight and answer the accompanying questions.

During the principal's investigation she found out the following information:

The fight was between Justin and Max. Justin is a new student. He is shy, quiet, and does not have many friends. He moved to town last month because his father was hired to take over the town's main business. Justin's father fired many people, including Max's parents, when he reorganized the business. Max is a popular student, who is known for his friendliness and good humor. In the past few weeks, however, he has been withdrawn and somewhat depressed.

1. What information does this passage provide about the lunchroom fight that the other sources you have read did not give you?

2. Does this information change your idea of who started the lunchroom fight? If so, how? If not, why not?

Contextualizing a historical event is the act of describing where the event it took place, what led to it, and why.



Contextualize

To contextualize an event historians try to answer these questions:

When did it happen?

Where did it happen?

What led to it?

Lunchroom Fight Contextualization Practice

➡ **Directions:** Read the sources below from the principal's investigation of the lunchroom fight, then use the evidence from each source to complete the table below. Each row in the table should have at least two pieces of evidence.

Max's mother: "Max would never start a fight. He's the sweetest boy. I know he's had a hard time lately with me and his dad losing our jobs, but he still would never start a fight with anyone. He's a mentor to the younger boys and helps out at church. You can ask anyone in this town."

Justin's father: "I can guarantee 100% that Justin would never lay a finger on anyone unless he was really provoked. Trust me. And I know because we've had to move around quite a bit in the last few years because of my job, so unfortunately, Justin knows what it's like to be the new kid. And I've watched him go through these adjustment periods at each new school. He just lies low, and pretty soon the other kids see what a great kid he is. So I know for a fact that Justin wouldn't stir up trouble. It's really not in his nature."

Jamie (student in English class with Max and Justin in the period right before lunch):

"I wasn't in the cafeteria today, and I'm not friends with any of those guys, but I've seen Max and his friends be mean to Justin in the hallways and in class when the teacher isn't looking. Not physical or anything, but they'll like say jokes under their breath and then laugh and stuff like that. They make him uncomfortable."

English teacher: "To be completely honest with you, I'm not surprised that this happened. There has been a lot of tension in the school and in the town, in general, with the reorganization plan. A lot of people are very upset with the decisions of the new management to fire people, and I must say that I myself am very surprised that they've done this. It's a tremendous strain on the community, and I feel for all the boys."

Town Context: What is happening in the town that might explain the lunchroom fight?	Who said this?	Explain if this source is useful for explaining the town context around the lunchroom fight or not and why.

School Context: What has been happening in the rest of the school (for example, in English class)?

Who said this?

Explain if this source is useful for explaining the school context around the lunchroom fight or not and why.

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SQ 6: What is context? How do historians use it to understand and write about the past?

➡ **Directions:** Based on the information provided, respond to the prompts below.

Part I

Describe context. **Explain** how do historians use context it to understand and write about the past.

Contextualize

Part II

➡ **Directions:** Based on the town and school contexts that you recorded in the table above, contextualize the lunchroom fight by describing what happened in the town and school before the fight that led to it.

