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5 Evaluating significance

This unit will help you to develop the skills to evaluate significance effectively. The skills you will build are how to:

- assess significance
- show that significance can change
- decide what is most significant.

In the exam, you will be asked to tackle questions such as the one below. This unit will prepare you to write your own response to this type of question.

Exam-style question

'The most significant problem facing the Virginia colonies was chance events.'

How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

You may use the following in your answer:

- Chief Wingina
- the running aground of the *Tiger*.

You **must** also use information of your own.

(16 marks)

There are several things that can help you decide if something is significant, including:

? frequency – how often it happened; are there lots of examples of it?

? quantity – how many people it affected; how widespread it was, socially and geographically

? quality – how deeply it was felt by people

? longevity – how long it lasted.

It is very important to deal with the stated feature, consequence, factor or problem first when answering an essay question, even if you do not think it is the most significant. In the question above, 'chance events' is the stated problem for you to evaluate.

It is also important to consider relative significance, comparing the significance of different problems, features, causes or consequences. Here are some useful words and phrases you can use to do this:

Although X was significant, Y was more so because ...

By 15nn, X was becoming more significant than Y because ...

Although X was more important than Y in such and such a place because ...

The most significant problem/factor/consequence overall was ...

The three key questions in the **skills boosts** will help you understand how to evaluate significance.

1 How do I assess significance?

2 How do I show that significance can change?

3 How do I decide what is most significant?

A student studying the question on page 41 collected the following pieces of evidence:

- A All supplies on the Tiger were ruined when it capsized.
- B Colonists set off too late to plant crops for winter.
- C Mix of colonists wrong: too many gentry, not enough farmers
- D Harsh climate for settlers – hot, humid in summer; freezing in winter
- E Colonists increasingly demanded help from Native Americans.
- F The colonists did not work together.
- G Friendly at first, Wingina got other chiefs to join an attack on the English in spring 1586.
- H Many colonists had wanted to become rich quickly and were disillusioned.
- I Wingina believed the English were supernatural (many locals died from new diseases).
- J Wingina was unpredictable and suspicious.

They then wrote the following conclusion:

Wingina was unpredictable, helping the settlers at first but then changing his mind. In spring 1586, he joined with other Native American tribes to attack the English. It was only because the settlers found out and were prepared that the attack didn't work. Although Wingina was killed, the damage he caused was already done. The surviving colonists left in summer 1586. Wingina was the most significant reason behind the colony's failure.

1 Look at the evidence in the student's list and sort it into the three columns in the table below.

Wingina as a cause	The colonists as a cause	Chance events as a cause

2 What important evidence has been ignored by the student writing this conclusion? Which column in 1 has the most evidence?

3 The student looked again at the evidence in the list that suggested the colonists as a cause. She found one piece with a strong link to Wingina. Which piece?

4 Look at your answer to 3. Which other pieces of evidence from the list can be linked to it?

5 Now you have looked back at the evidence in more detail, look back at your answer to question 2? Draw an arrow on the value continuum below to show your answer. Have you changed your mind? Explain your decision.



Raleigh and Virginia

This unit uses the theme of Raleigh and Virginia to build your skills in evaluating significance. If you need to review your knowledge of this theme, work through these pages.

1 Draw  lines linking the answers to the questions.

answer	question
A Manteo	a What was the name of the Native American tribe that inhabited the region of Virginia where the colonies were established?
B Algonquin	b Who planned the colonial expeditions and raised the necessary investment?
C Croatoan	c Which experienced sailor and soldier led the first colonial expedition in 1585?
D Grenville	d Who came to England in 1584 and returned to Virginia as Lord of Roanoke in 1587?
E Raleigh	e What was the name of the friendly Native American tribe attacked by mistake in 1587?

2 Circle  the correct answers to the questions below.

<p>a Which of the following was not a problem faced by the first colony?</p> <p>A Their settlement burned down</p> <p>B Insufficient food over winter</p> <p>C Left England too late</p> <p>D Spoiled gunpowder</p>	<p>b Which of the following Native Americans accompanied the colonists?</p> <p>A Wanchese</p> <p>B Manteo</p> <p>C Wingina</p> <p>D Alsoomse</p>
<p>c Which of the following were the second colonists promised?</p> <p>A A four-room house</p> <p>B Two cows and a horse</p> <p>C 500 acres of land</p> <p>D £20 if they stayed three years</p>	<p>d Which of these men went on both colonial expeditions?</p> <p>A Thomas Harriot</p> <p>B John White</p> <p>C Thomas Harvey</p> <p>D Ralph Lane</p>

Remember this?

3 Tick whether the following statements are true or false.

	true	false
a Raleigh led the expeditions to colonise Virginia.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b The colonists worked well together to build a strong, stone fort at Roanoke.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c The colonists arrived too late to plant crops for the winter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d The colonists did not have enough supplies or seeds to plant to survive the winter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e Manteo and Wanchese led the Native Americans of Roanoke.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f The Native Americans where the colonists settled were Algonquins.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g The colonists were willing to live and work among the Algonquins.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4 Name one way in which the second group of colonists who attempted to settle in Virginia were different from the first.

.....

.....

.....

5 Number the following events 1–12 to show the order in which they happened.

A Raleigh made Manteo leader of the Virginia colony and John White expedition leader. <input type="checkbox"/>	B The colonists made more and more demands on the Algonquian. <input type="checkbox"/>	C Manteo and the colonists attacked friendly Croatoan people by mistake. <input type="checkbox"/>
D All supplies on the <i>Tiger</i> were ruined and the colonists arrived too late to plant anything. <input type="checkbox"/>	E Five ships left England for Virginia. <input type="checkbox"/>	F Thomas Harriot wrote an Algonquin–English dictionary. <input type="checkbox"/>
G Ralph Lane led the surviving colonists back to England. <input type="checkbox"/>	H A second group of colonists left for Virginia. <input type="checkbox"/>	I George Howe was murdered by Roanoke people. <input type="checkbox"/>
J Manteo and Wanchese arrived in England. <input type="checkbox"/>	K White left for England. When he returned to Virginia, the colonists had disappeared. <input type="checkbox"/>	L Wingina asked other chiefs to help him attack the colonists. <input type="checkbox"/>

1 How do I assess significance?

'How far' questions require you to judge what was the most important (significant) problem, feature, change, cause or consequence. Having more pieces of evidence to support it doesn't necessarily make something the most significant. This skills boost will help you to assess significance. (For more on judgements, see Unit 7.)

A student trying to establish the most significant problem facing the first Virginia colony collected the following evidence:

- A All supplies on the Tiger were ruined when it capsized.
- B The colonists set off too late to plant crops for winter.
- C The mix of colonists was wrong: too many gentry, not enough farmers.
- D Lane and Grenville, leaders of the 1585 colony, did not get on and divided colonists' loyalties.
- E Colonists increasingly demanded help from Native Americans.
- F Native Americans thought the colonists were supernatural as they could kill without touching (i.e. the colonists brought new, unknown diseases).
- G Wingina was increasingly hostile to the settlers as they demanded more help.
- H Wingina was planning to ambush the settlers, so the settlers attacked the Native Americans.

- 1 a In the table, write  the letter of each piece of evidence, from the student's list above, that goes with chance events and poor planning. Some pieces of evidence might belong in more than one column.

Factor	Chance events	Poor planning		
Evidence				

- b Look at the evidence you have left. What two headings could you group them under? Write  them in the remaining column headings then list the evidence that goes with each underneath.
- 2 One way to assess significance is to look at the quantity of evidence. Given that, which factor do you think was most significant? 

Another way to decide if something was significant is to consider how things would have been different without it.

- 3 Could the first colony have survived if D, E or H hadn't happened? Complete  the table, then pick one and explain your choice. 

	Yes, probably 	Maybe 	No way 
D			
E			
H			

- 4 If you could pick just one problem from the list without which the 1585 colony would have survived, which would it be and why? 

- 5 a Has your answer to 2 changed? 
- b Which is the more effective way to test significance: by considering quantity or how things would have been without it?

3 How do I decide what is most significant?

Sometimes the question suggests what is most significant. Be prepared to challenge the question. This skills boost will help you to decide what is most significant.

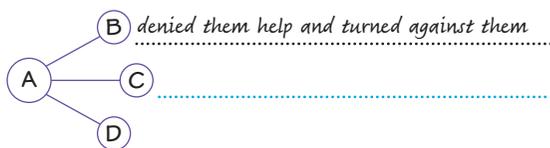
Raleigh: expedition organiser	Chief Wingina
Actions: raised finance, organised ships and supplies and recruited colonists. He was not allowed to go on the expedition himself.	Actions: friendly at first, he refused to help the colonists survive the winter. In spring 1586, he planned to attack them.

1 The table above shows details of both Raleigh and Wingina. In order to compare significance, look at the actions of each. Who do you think was more to blame in the failure of the colony? 

One way of deciding the significance of a cause, consequence or change is to look at its interaction with other causes, consequences or changes. Study these four reasons in one student's notes for the failure of the 1585 colony:

- A Chief Wingina How helpful was he? An unpredictable man, his patience with the colonists' demands for help soon ran out. In spring 1586, he planned an attack on the colonists.
- B The colonists How fit for purpose were they? They expected to rule the Algonquins and get rich quickly. Many were gentry, not used to work. They relied on handouts from the Algonquins.
- C The planning of the expedition How good was it? Raleigh raised the finance, organised ships and supplies; and chose the colonists. The expedition left too late to plant crops for winter.
- D Chance events How unlucky were they? The Tiger ran aground. It carried most of the vital supplies, which spoiled. The colonists brought diseases that killed the local people, who thought they were magic.

2 a Consider which was the most significant reason for the failure of the 1585 colony by looking at the impact of each on the others. Did A (Wingina) have a knock-on effect on B? C? D? Briefly explain  any knock-on effects alongside. If there are none, leave it blank. One has been done to help you.



b Look at your answers for 2 a. Which reason(s) are most important (interact(s) most with other reasons)? 

.....

Remember:

- Significance is not necessarily based on how much evidence there is.
- What is significant can change with time and context.
- What is significant can be determined by its impact on or interaction with other developments.

Sample response

Exam-style question

'The colonists themselves were to blame for the failure of the Virginia colonies in the years 1585–87.' How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

Here are three students' responses to the exam-style question above.

Answer A

The colonists were significantly to blame for the failure of both colonies. If they had been able to work with the Algonquins better, they could have survived. Wingina was significant because he refused to help them, so could be significant too. The second lot of colonists disappeared. When White returned to Virginia in 1590, he found only the word 'Croatoan' carved on a post. This could mean that the Croatoans killed them. The colonists, led by Manteo, had killed friendly Croatoans just before White left for England.

Answer B

The colonists were to blame for the failure of both colonies. The first colonists demanded too much from the Algonquins and Wingina, their unpredictable chief, soon tired of demands for handouts of his people's food. He turned against the colonists, many of whom did not survive the winter without the help they needed. If the expedition had been properly planned, it might have left in time to plant crops; and if the supplies had been shared between different ships for the dangerous voyage, it would not have mattered so much when the Tiger ran aground. So, poor planning was to blame for the failure of the colonies. The problems it caused in 1585 led the Native Americans to begin to be hostile to the colonists in 1586 and 1587.

Answer C

Poor planning, rather than the colonists themselves, was certainly the most significant cause of the failure of the first colony. By causing hostility between the colonists and the Native Americans, it contributed greatly to the failure of the second. Although the second colonists were better prepared, they faced hostility from the Algonquins. They made Native American hostility worse when they killed friendly Croatoans by mistake. Nevertheless, had the first expedition set off in time to plant crops, and had it not lost the bulk of its supplies when the Tiger ran aground, the 1585 colonists would have been less reliant on Wingina and could have formed better relationships with them. Another reason why poor planning led to hostility was that the 1585 colonists were not suitable. Many wanted to get rich quickly and expected to rule the Native Americans, who they thought would do the work. So, although Native American hostility was more significant from the very start of the 1587 colony, the problems caused by poor planning in 1585 can be said to have been most significant overall.

- 1 Read the students' responses and complete the table to highlight the strengths of each.

Has the answer ...	A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
clearly highlighted the most significant cause?			
supported it with specific evidence?			
shown how it impacted on other factors?			
shown any change of significant factor over time?			

Your turn!

Exam-style question

'Wingina was the most significant reason for the failure of the Virginia colonies.'

How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

You may use the following in your answer:

- Walter Raleigh
- inexperience.

You **must** also use information of your own.

(16 marks)

- 1 Draw up  a plan for an answer to the question above.

Handwriting practice area for the plan, consisting of 10 horizontal dotted lines.

- 2 Write  the introduction and conclusion to go with your plan. The introduction must be clear about how far you think Wingina was the most significant reason for the failure of the colonies, and also identify other reasons and how important they were. Your conclusion must summarise the main points of your plan and show how far you agree with the statement in the question.

Handwriting practice area for the introduction and conclusion, consisting of 15 horizontal dotted lines.

Review your skills

Check up

Review your response to the exam-style question on page 49. Tick ✓ the column to show how well you think you have done each of the following.

	Not quite ✓	Nearly there ✓	Got it! ✓
identified what was significant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
showed how significance changed over time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
showed what was most significant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
supported my points with evidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Look over all of your work in this unit. Note down ✎ three things you have learned that you will apply when evaluating significance.

- 1
- 2
- 3

Need more practice?

On separate paper, plan and write ✎ your response to the exam-style question below.

Exam-style question

'The Puritans posed the most significant threat to the Elizabethan religious settlement 1558–69.'

How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

You may use the following in your answer:

- the vestments controversy
- the oath of supremacy.

You must also use information of your own.

(16 marks)

How confident do you feel about each of these **skills**? Colour in ✎ the bars.

1 How do I assess significance?

2 How do I show that significance can change?

3 How do I decide what is most significant?