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### Using History to Explain Current Events

2020 has been a tough year for us all, whether you are out of work, losing money in the stock market, are a graduating senior, set to have a wedding, having a baby, part of a minority group etc. Every aspect of life has been completely altered in every way shape and form, from how we see each other as human beings to going to the grocery store. We could have never anticipated the problems that are occurring in our country today, but we can brace for what is to come with our context of our nation's history. Many use the phrase "history repeats itself" and just as many deny this statement, but could it possibly be true? It seems that in 2020, we have seen a lot of history repeating itself, from the Covid-19 pandemic to the Black Lives Matter Movement. We see Americans wrestling with this idea of history repeating itself consistently, so I would like to try this statement. How do contemporary everyday Americans use history in pursuit of their own ends or in simpler terms how do we use our history in our daily lives? I would like to examine ideas such as comparing Coronavirus to the Cholera epidemic, the Black Lives Matter Movement with the American Civil War, as well as. I will be analysing this history relating to our society with the use of artifacts like memes, news articles, etc.

The first topic I would like to discuss is the current pressing issue of Covid-19, by now I am sure you are so tired of hearing about it, I get it, I am too, but there are ways we can almost find comfort in all this uncertainty, by analyzing the Cholera outbreak of 1832. It draws huge parallels to our society in the mists of Covid-19 and we can almost look at it in a way to make predictions about what is happening. So, first we must know

about Cholera to make such a statement. We know from class that a trend in the Cholera outbreak was that there was backlash against the educated and a support of the informally trained or the self-taught so called “experts”. This is similar to what we see today, there's always a person who refuses to wear a mask in Walmart, claiming the Covid virus is fraud and made up by the United States government so we conform to their laws, or people saying it is all a ploy to shut down our economy into another recession. People did the same thing during the Cholera epidemic, questioning authority and professional doctors. On May 15, 2020 Time Magazine released an article about France’s mishandling of the 1832 Cholera epidemic, I think we can learn a lot from this article about our current political and social situation. This “artifact” uses history effectively to make a point about the present and I will explain how. For starters during the Cholera outbreak hospitals could not keep up with the volume of patients coming through infected with the virus, we saw this in the beginning of the Covid outbreak and we are seeing this again with a new spike in the virus.

Perhaps the most important point this article makes is the parallel between King Louis-Philippe’s rule during Cholera and President Trump’s handling of Covid-19. “Attempting to quell conspiracy theories, his chief of police proclaimed that the government had not poisoned the drinking water --- but that the miscreants may have done so. He had intended to allay the people’s fears, but wound up stoking them instead.” (Samuels, Maurice, Time Magazine 2020). We have seen this before with President Trump in our current time, he did not ensure a government shutdown until there had already been a handful of cases in the United States, and even then places were still open for food, shopping, entertainment, etc. Samuels goes on to say “Despite

his unpopularity and mishandling of the crisis, Louis-Philippe managed to hang on to power during the cholera outbreak because neither side that opposed him offered a convincing alternative to his flawed leadership. She offers advice to those looking to improve our current stance in the covid outbreak with our political leadership, “Those who seek to unseat President Trump in the next election should take heed”. Urging Americans to find a solution to the issues facing us during the virus and tell us that just because we do not like his ideas of surviving the virus does not mean he will not be reelected as there is no unanimous alternative solution. This historical evidence from the cholera outbreak gives us suggestions to help us in our pandemic and how to find solutions.

The second artifact I choose is a meme, you will see it displayed at the bottom of this essay, but it says “The whole world: Oh No! Coronavirus!” “Ancient Pre-Columbians: First time?”. This goes along with my previous theme of Covid-19, but this time we are talking about disease from European contact in the Americas. During the European conquest, many diseases got passed around through the Columbian Exchange. Before contact with Europeans, disease did exist in the Americas, but the limited contact between groups of people made it hard to pass them around. In the meme they are relating it to the current covid-19 crisis by saying “First time?” as a symbol of the fact that the people who lived in the Americas prior to European contact went through many waves of epidemics, causing populations to decrease drastically over the time period of the Europeans establishing settlements. This meme is almost a representation of the fact like “yeah, we have been through this before” only the Ancient peoples of the pre-columbian era endured many more than just one deadly disease. We

can use our knowledge of the population decline from these ancient diseases to understand how our current population will be affected or how the disease itself could affect us.

The third artifact I have chosen highlights the problems that caused the American Civil War, it is a tweet that says “The most embarrassing thing about the U.S. having another civil war is it’s not even for a new reason.” (Dweck, Jess, Twitter 2020). As we know, the American Civil War was started by the Southern states ceding from the union due to differences in views on the topic of slavery. Abraham Lincoln, head of the Northern Union created the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 during the Civil War, but it was not until after that all slaves were considered free people, but free people did not necessarily mean citizens. African Americans were still unable to vote, their neighborhoods were separated from the whites, they had less work opportunities, and systematic racism still existed heavily. Today, we see the Black Lives Matter Movement as a reflection of the Civil Rights Movement, there are times when key speakers mention early slavery, the Civil War, and systematic racism. The Black Lives Matter Movement first made ground when an African American man by the name of George Floyd was killed at the hands of the police. They fight out against police brutality and systematic racism. When the author of this tweet says “it’s not even for a new reason.” She means that racism still exists in our country unfortunately. There was a lot of speculation going into the election of 2020 that if one side won over the other a civil war would break out again. The Republican Party usually gets its support from the Southern United States, those states that were a part of the Confederate Union, among others. It was a trend that those who supported Trump also still had this attitude of racism and

tended to follow the Blue Lives Matter Movement. The Blue Lives Matter Movement is almost a direct opposite to the BLM Movement, saying basically that police lives matter. Although, we know that policing is just a uniform, they can go home and take it off, or go in public and not be a police officer, but this is clearly not the case for those of African American descent. Due to this plethora of information many were led to believe that Trump supporters would start a Civil War if Biden took office. I think it is very clever how this author used her context of the civil war to almost predict what might happen in this year's election.

In conclusion, we can use history for a multitude of reasons to relate to our society today, and it is not just American history we can look at. Global trends so cause and effect relationships too from past to present history in the making. 2020 has been a rough year for us all, but we are not going through it totally blind, due to our nation's history we can make predictions and have a little comfort in the historical information that leads us to these predictions. We realize that epidemics and pandemics happen, possibly once every 200 years or so from the information throughout the decades and we can look to Cholera and the diseases endured by Native Americans to see how they affect society and how long they could potentially last. We can look to as early as the Emancipation Proclamation to study trends of freedom movements and systematic racism in our society as well as how to combat it. Overall, history is a great tool to use for current events.

Artifact 1:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/time.com/5837393/paris-cholera-lessons/%3famp=true>

Artifact 2:

**\*The whole world\* : Oh no! Coronavirus!**

**Ancient Pre Columbian civilizations:**



Artifact 3:

