Definition Assignment: Anachronism

This assignment is to write three different definitions, (parenthetical, sentence, and expanded), which will exercise differentiating levels of details in the definitions according to their audience. The objection of this assignment is to write a clear, professional, and appropriate definitions. The different definitions serve to teach potential historiographer student how they will learn, use, and apply the word Anachronism. The students these definitions are presented to are assumed to have no previous knowledge of this word.

Parenthetical Definition

Anachronism (an object, expressions, or periods of chronologically misplacement; it is either Parachronism or Prochronism).

Sentence Definition

An Anachronism is a historiography term in which an object, philosophical idea, verbal expression, material, or custom is misplaced in a period (of time) it doesn't belong in, or has not yet been invented in such period. Anachronisms occur due to lack of research and historical knowledge.

Expanded Definition

Refer to the next page.
Anachronism

Where does this term originate?
Anachronism derives from the Medieval Greek work *anachronismos*, which originally meant “late in time.” It was later adapted in the late sixteenth century into the Italian word *anacronismo*, meaning a “chronological misplacement.” It was not until the seventeenth century where the English and French used this word (Vico, 1993).

An Analysis of the term Anachronism

Arguably, Anachronism consists of two subcategories.

1. **Parachronism:** refers to anything appearing in a time period which is not normally found in. This may be an object, event, philosophical idea, idiomatic expression, or custom which originated in an earlier date and were common, however are now considered rare or inappropriate.
2. **Prochronism:** refers to an object, philosophical idea, event, idiomatic expression or custom which has been attributed to a time period where it had not been invented yet, therefore could not have existed.

Other common subcategories include (Vico, 1993):

1. **Eventful Connection:** refers to relating an uneventful period as eventful. Such as, placing events into periods where they did not occur.
2. **Uneventful Connection:** refers to relating an eventful period as uneventful. Here events are ignored, or falsely claimed as insignificant.
3. **United Connection:** refers to uniting two time periods which should be separated. For instance, uniting the 3rd century to 21st century.
4. **Divided Connection:** refers to dividing two time periods which should be united. Periods such as 3rd and 4th century are deemed unrelatable.

Common Reasons for finding Anachronisms

1. In the academic field, anachronisms occur when an unqualified person attempts to do history (Marwick, 2001). It is the adoption of the political, social, or cultural concerns and assumptions of one era, to interpret of evaluate the events and actions of another.
   a. This can take a form as a lack of research. Typically a person has not found enough information on a subject, therefore fills it in with his or her assumptions.
   b. In addition, lack of research can also refer to a person’s inability to access additional research. The research they need could be a hard copy manuscript locked away in a museum, only found in X country.
2. Intentional anachronisms in art and literature became quite popular in the 18th century. It was a popular belief that the subject of the canvas should be “translated into the
manner as well as the art of the age we live in” (Tambling, 2010). Yet as time passed, anachronisms ability to engage the audience had a reserves effect.

3. Comical anachronisms are used to make serious points about historical and modern society, such as drawing parallels to political or social conventions.

4. Language anachronisms are typically intentional. They inform the audience about a film set in the past. Because language and pronunciation change so fast, modern people would have a difficulty understanding a film in 15th century English; thus we willingly accept characters speaking an updated language.

The ability to identify anachronisms may be employed as a critical and forensic tool to demonstrate the fraudulence of a document or artifact purporting to be form an earlier time.

**Examples of Anachronisms**

An example of an anachronism comes from Act 2, Scene 1 of William Shakespeare’s’ Julius Caesar. The play depicts the time frame of 44 AD, yet Shakespeare is caught placing a mechanical clock, which was invented in his time into his play. “Brutus: Peace! Count the clock. Cassius: The clock has stricken three” (Tambling, 2010).

Another example is from the assumption that the Donation of Constantine was written in the 4th century, during the historical era of Constantine I. This forgery stated Constantine the Great had transferred authority over to Rome, and the western part of Roman Empire to the Pope. It was not until the 15th century, where Lorenzo Valla exposed historically inaccurate words within the document, such as the word *straps* which was invented in 8th century. This document could not have come from 4th century; it used a word which was invented in the 8th century (Valla, 1922).

**Visual Representations of Anachronisms**

Figure 1 depicts is a painting by Constantin Lecca. This painting is a historical example of a political Prochronism. Lecca had painted 19th century flags within a 16th century illustration of the peace agreement between two Romanian leaders (Lecca, 1859). The prochronism promotes legitimacy for the unification.

*Figure 1 An example of a Prochronism.*
Works Cited


