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ENGL 301  
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Term: Historiography

Introduction:

The assignment is to define a term using multiple formats such as sentence, parenthetical and expanded definitions. The definition must be written so that non-technical readers, in this case, my writing group, can understand the term Historiography, a common term used in studying history.

Parenthetical definition:

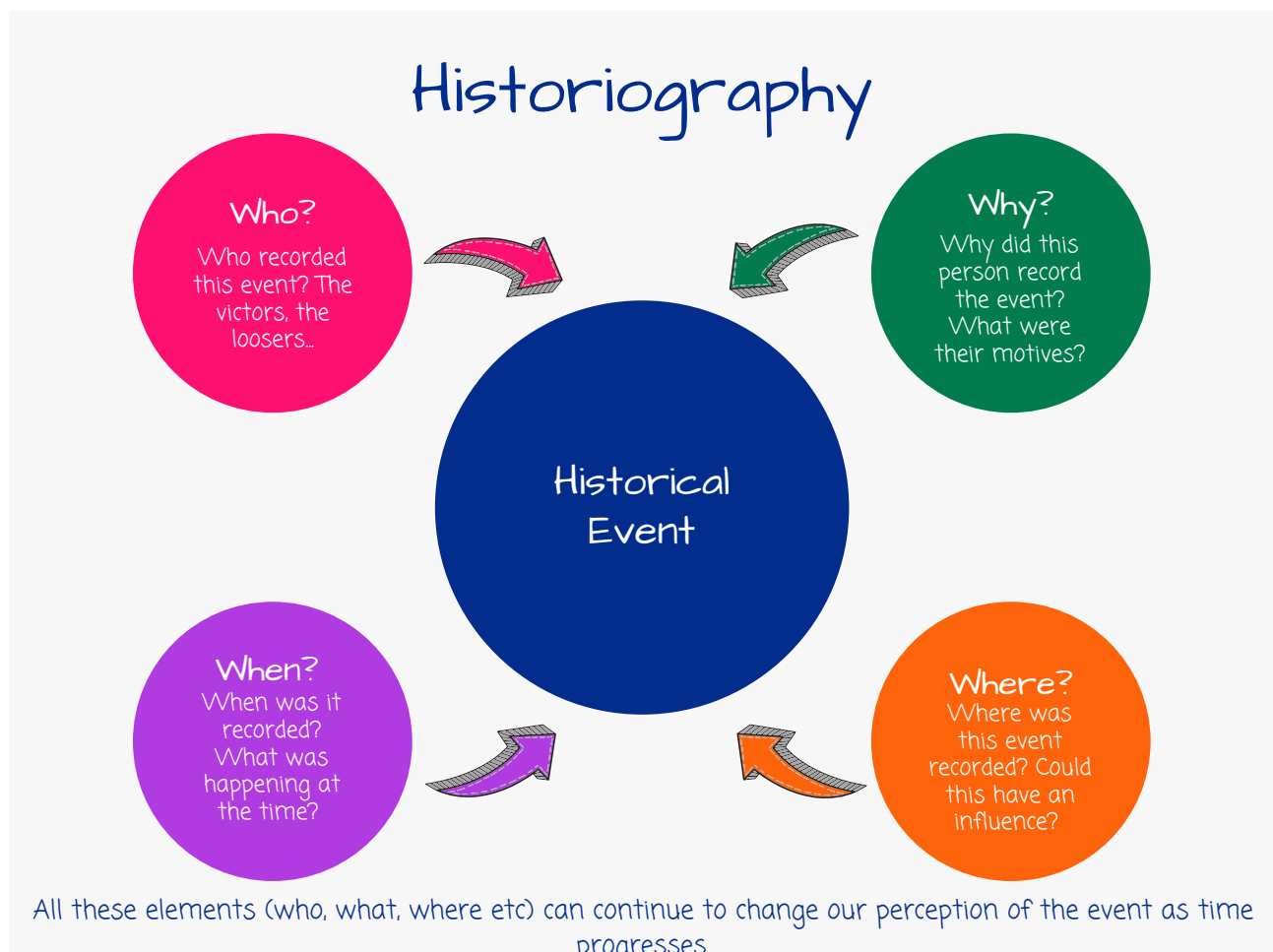
History is constantly being rewritten, and to combat this, Historians are taught historiography (the study of how history develops over time) at university.

Sentence definition:

Historiography is a discipline of history that investigates how the content behind a historical event, such as who wrote about it, can affect our understanding of it and how this perception can change and develop over time.

Expanded definition:

Figure 1



Etymology:

**Historiography** is 'the history of writing or recording.'

- o **Historico**— Latinised from the Greek *Historikos*, meaning Historical
- o —**graphy** meaning "process of writing or recording", from the Greek *Graphia*, meaning description of

(Douglas)

The History of Historiography:

Historiography always existed, but it became more utilised around the late 18th - early 19th century due to scientific history and the increase in history as a profession. As new scientific methods developed and studying history became more popular historical facts started to be questioned, either by historians discovering more evidence or science disproving a theory. It became increasingly evident that a historical event was influenced by its context and could not always be taken at face value. Thus, historians began to utilise historiography more often to understand the biases placed on the evidence (Vann).

The Operating Principle of Historiography:

Historians look at various elements and compile them together when studying historiography. Historians will take a piece of evidence about an event and look at its context (who wrote it, why, when and where). By understanding the context, a historian can understand the evidence's bias and its accuracy. They will then do the same for other pieces of evidence on the same event and compile everything they have learned to get the most accurate account of what happened.

An Example of Why Historiography is Important:

In 1944 in Nazi occupied Italy, 335 civilians were secretly killed at the Fosse Ardeatine as a reprisal for the Via Rasella attack that occurred the day before. The Via Rasella Attack was the killing of 32 German soldiers by Italian partisans who rejected fascist rule. For a long time, the dominant narrative was that the execution of the 335 civilians was the partisan's fault as the Germans had offered them a chance to save the civilians if they turned themselves in. However, we must look at the evidence for this narrative; it was written by German fascists who were starting to lose control of their stronghold in Italy. While some evidence vilified the Partisans, after the war, anti-fascist politicians spun the Via Rasella Attack and the Fosse Ardeatine massacre as a symbol of Italy's strong anti-fascist roots, making the partisans out to be heroes and the massacred as martyrs. Here we have two different narratives of an event from different people at different times; this is why historiography is essential. By looking at the historiography of the narrative, we can understand how it has had biases placed on it which have changed it throughout time. We must understand these biases because otherwise, we may never get the true story. The actual story here was that the partisans were never told to turn themselves in, but they did kill 32 soldiers, so they are neither heroes nor villains. Likewise, the 335 civilians did not know what they were dying for; therefore, they could not have been martyrs (Portelli).

Works Cited:

Harper, Douglas. "Etymology of historiography." Online Etymology Dictionary, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/historiography>. Accessed 5 June, 2022.

Portelli, Alessandro. *The Order Has Been Carried out History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, *VitalSource Bookshelf*, Accessed 5 June 2022.

Vann, Richard T.. "historiography". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 17 Dec. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/historiography>. Accessed 5 June 2022.