UNIT 3 · LESSON 3

What does it mean?

How context changes meaning

AIMS

How confident are you now? Circle one face for each aim at the end of the lesson.

Content Use a timeline and background information to explain what a source may mean. ☹ 😐 ☺

Language Use time words (before, after) and careful words (may, might) to explain a source's context. ☹ 😐 ☺

Skills Change your interpretation when you learn the context. ☹ 😐 ☺

Learn: Key words

Say each word. Read the meaning. Write the word in a language you know.

WORD	MEANING	IN MY LANGUAGE
context	the who, when, where and why of a source	
interpret	to decide what something means	
interpretation	what someone thinks a source means	
sequence	the order that things happen in	
chronology	the order of events in time (History)	

Model: How context changes meaning

Look at Source A. Copy the teacher's model.



Source A

A clay soldier. Photo: Diego Tirira, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons (cropped).

INTERPRETATION 1

Before I knew the context, I thought _____

_____

CONTEXT

Now I know _____

_____

INTERPRETATION 2

So it may suggest _____

_____

THE CONTEXT MATTERS BECAUSE…

_____

Read: The first emperor

Read the story. Then answer the questions with a partner.

Long ago, China had many kingdoms, and they often fought each other. In 221 BCE, the King of Qin won the wars and united China. He called himself Qin Shi Huang, the First Emperor. He had become king as a boy, in 246 BCE, and at that time workers started to build his tomb at Mount Li.

The emperor wanted to live forever, so he looked for a medicine to stop death. But he also prepared for death. In 210 BCE, he died and was buried in his tomb under a large hill of earth. Nobody knew about the clay soldiers under the fields nearby.

More than 2,000 years later, in 1974, some farmers were digging a well. They found pieces of clay soldiers. Archaeologists started to dig, and in 1979 a museum opened on the site. The archaeologists are still digging today.



Modern illustration. This is not a source.

unite = join together to make one **tomb** = a place under the ground for a dead body

1 Why did the emperor start his tomb when he was young?

2 Did anyone know about the soldiers before 1974? How do you know?

3 Underline every date in the text.

Order: Put it in sequence

Put the six events in chronological order. Write 1–6. Use the dates to help you.

	EVENT	DATE	ORDER
A	The First Emperor dies. He is buried in his tomb.	**210 BCE**	
B	Farmers are digging a well. They find pieces of clay soldiers.	**1974 CE**	
C	The King of Qin unites China. He becomes the First Emperor.	**221 BCE**	
D	A museum opens on the site. People can visit the soldiers.	**1979 CE**	
E	A boy becomes King of Qin. Work on his tomb begins.	**246 BCE**	
F	Sima Qian writes a history of China.	**about 94 BCE**	

Think: Think about the context

Check your order with the timeline on the slide. Then answer the questions.

1 How many years after the emperor died did Sima Qian write?

2 Could Sima Qian see the tomb being built? How do you know?

3 He was not there. So how could he find out about the tomb? What might he not know?

Read: Source B: Sima Qian's history

Use the context questions first. Then read the source and answer the questions.

CONTEXT QUESTIONS

Who? Sima Qian, a historian
When? about 94 BCE
Where? at the Han emperor's court, China
Why? to write a history of China
Was he there?



Modern illustration. This is not a source.

"Nobody came out again"

In the ninth month, the First Emperor was buried at Mount Li. When he first became king, workers started digging there. After he united China, more than 700,000 workers were sent to build the tomb. They dug very deep, and they filled the tomb with palaces and towers, and with strange and valuable treasures.

Workers made crossbows that fire arrows by themselves, so anyone who digs into the tomb will be shot. They used mercury to make rivers and seas. Above, there were the stars of the sky, and below, there was the land.

The workers knew all the secrets of the tomb, so they were shut inside, and nobody came out again. Then trees and grass were planted, so the tomb looked like a hill.

 **crossbow** a weapon that shoots arrows	 **mercury** a silver metal that is liquid	 **treasure** gold, jewels and other valuable things

Adapted from Sima Qian, Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji), chapter 6, about 94 BCE. Shortened and simplified translation from the Chinese for this lesson. Pictures: modern illustrations.

1 Name two things in the tomb.

2 What does Sima Qian NOT write about?

3 Is Source B a primary or a secondary source? Why?

Think: A silent source

Sima Qian does not write about the clay soldiers. What could this mean? Check each idea against the evidence.

CONTEXT CLUES

- He wrote more than 100 years later.
- He was not there.
- The soldiers were under the fields.
- The workers were shut inside the tomb.

For each idea, circle one choice. Then finish the sentence.

1 There were no clay soldiers in 210 BCE. MODEL

There is **(evidence against)** / some evidence for / no evidence for or against **this idea,**

because *the soldiers were buried by the tomb and made for the emperor, so they were there in 210 BCE.*

2 Sima Qian did not know about the soldiers.

There is **evidence against** / **some evidence for** / **no evidence for or against** **this idea,**

because _____

_____

3 He wrote about them, but that part was lost.

There is **evidence against** / **some evidence for** / **no evidence for or against** **this idea,**

because _____

_____

LAST QUESTION **Does Source B support the view that there were no soldiers? Why not?**

_____

_____

Notes: How context changes meaning

Look at the first row. Then complete the row for Source B with a partner.

SOURCE	CONTEXT: WHO? WHEN? WHERE? WHY?	WHAT DOES IT SHOW?	HOW DOES THE CONTEXT CHANGE WHAT IT MEANS OR WHAT IT CAN TELL US?
Source A clay soldier MODEL	workers for the emperor; about 210 BCE; buried near his tomb (primary)	a life-size soldier made of clay, with a detailed face	It was buried near the emperor's tomb with about 8,000 others, so it may suggest an army to protect him after death.
Source B Sima Qian			

Use: before / after · so it may suggest · because · The context matters because… · This connects with…

Write: Why does context matter?

Write a paragraph of 4 sentences on your own. Choose Source A or Source B.

How does the context change what the source may mean?

CHECKLIST

- ☐ when it was made (before / after)
- ☐ context: who, when, where or why
- ☐ a careful word: may, might, probably
- ☐ a reason: because…

SENTENCE STARTERS (IF YOU NEED THEM)

1. Source ___ was made in ___, after ___.
2. At first, it seems to show ___.
3. However, in this context, ___.
4. So it may suggest ___, because ___.

My source: Source A / Source B (circle one)