

Continuity and Change

We all agree that Tunisian children should know about the history of their country; it is important to know what happened and when it happened. But history is much more complicated than just a list of dates. Getting children to realise the complex mixture of continuity (things staying the same) and change in history is important in helping them to understand their heritage.

When you try to make students appreciate continuity and change, you can focus on aspects which are obvious, but also on aspects which are a surprise. For example, in the language mission, many students would be surprised to find out that their Arabic language contains words which come from Ottoman Turkish. The language changed during Ottoman times, and then these words have remained as part of the language for centuries afterwards.

In fact, most of the missions help students to track continuity and change across the eras of Tunisian heritage. Looking at the contribution of each different people to modern-day Tunisia makes them appreciate the changes to Tunisian culture which were brought to Tunisia by each people. It also lets them see those aspects of their heritage which have remained consistent over time. For example, in the Food mission, children have to make predictions about continuity of food and agriculture, based on evidence presented to them in the hotspots.

Students can see continuity and change across time periods, but also between documents, photographs, or events. For example, in the Ceramics mission, students are asked to identify characteristics which are shared between tiles or which differ between tiles.

As you go further in asking your students to think about continuity and change, ask them to identify characteristics to investigate, and then compare those characteristics between two documents, two time periods or two events, looking for evidence of continuity and change. An example is below:

Characteristic	Evidence from Now	Evidence from Roman times
Olive farming	Photograph of olive groves outside tunis	Mosaic of olive trees

Finally, be aware that some events act as turning points. Imagine Tunisia at the time of the Beys in the 1700s, when slavery existed, and individual rights were not guaranteed. The abolition of slavery was a turning point, which eventually led to guaranteed rights for all. By studying continuity and change, your students should learn that

1. Continuity and change exist across all aspects of Tunisian heritage
2. Change can happen fast or slow
3. Change can be good or bad
4. Times when significant changes happen are called turning points
5. Thinking about how important changes and constants are helps children to understand their heritage.