

B. Learning to See in Terms of Cardinal Anchor Facts

1. Anchor facts are not merely facts about the past; they are facts that explain how the world we live in came to be the way that it is.
2. Because the past is the explanation of the present, there are many anchor facts. (Literally everything you look at has a past that is the explanation for the way that thing is today—you included.)
3. Therefore, just as we must learn to think of the world in terms of ten *major* blocks, we must also learn to identify *major* anchor facts. And beyond that, to achieve the greatest possible clarity, we must learn to see that there is yet another level of importance both in terms of cultural blocks, and in terms of historical facts. I use the term “cardinal” to denote this highest level. (The world “cardinal,” as a noun, refers to the *highest* ranking officials within the Catholic Church. “Cardinal,” as an adjective, thus means of *highest* importance.)
4. *Cardinal anchor facts* in any context of historical learning are the facts that empower us, beyond any others, to grasp the connection between past and present, to see the story we are learning as integrated sum, and thus to maintain the connection between past and present as we continue to learn more facts, thus improving our learning and retention. (This is the *opposite* of the experience most people have with history. As they “learn” more facts, they end up forgetting the ones they thought that they learned before. Indeed, for most students of history, the vast majority of historical facts ever “learned” are eventually forgotten entirely.)

C. The Cardinal Anchor Facts of American History

1. How the World Became What It Is Today: 9-11-2001
 - a) Among all the facts of American history that explain the state of the *world* today, none stands out more dramatically than “9-11.”
 - b) Anyone who was of adult age that day will always remember where they were when they first learned what was happening. The reason the event is seared in our memory is that we knew *tWWLi* would never be the same. We literally woke up in one world, and because of the events that unfolded that day, we would from that point on live in another.
 - c) What happened? Terrorists, following a violent, fundamentalist interpretation of the religion of Islam, hijacked four passenger liners and used them as bombs to destroy the twin towers in New York, strike at the Pentagon (America’s military headquarters) and one other unknown location (the last attack was foiled by American passengers on board, all of whom were killed when the plane they were fighting for control of crashed.) The attack was a form of “jihad” (“holy war” in Islam).
 - d) From that day forward, the United States became focussed on fighting what has come to be known as the “War on Terror.” It is a global initiative, that has caused American government to change radically—including by the adoption of widespread

spying on American citizens themselves—and to invade first the country of Afghanistan (where the government was known to support terrorists, and where the mastermind of the “9-11” attack, Osama Bin Laden, was believed to be hiding), and second Iraq, which was alleged to be hiding weapons of “mass destruction” that could be placed in the hands of Jihadist terrorists.

- e) Since 2001, other countries have suffered greatly in the conflict against terrorism, in part because of America’s actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, but also, as in Syria and Libya, where terrorists have initiated civil wars against the previous governments of those countries, causing further disruptions in the world, including a refugee crisis where the citizens of those countries have flocked to Europe.
- f) *One* of the reasons Americans recently voted for Donald Trump as president was the perception that he would take more effective actions against terrorism than his predecessor, Barack Obama.
- g) It is difficult to exaggerate how much the world has changed since 9-11. That is the kind of event that qualifies as a *cardinal* anchor fact.



September 11, 2001: the day the world changed from what it was before into what it is today — the first of the *cardinal* anchor facts of American history today.