

Historical context is ... Historical context is the political, social, cultural, and economic setting for a particular idea or event.

In order to better understand something in history, we must look at its context--those things which surround it in time and place and which give it its meaning. In this way, we can gain, among other things, a sense of how unique or ordinary an event or idea seems to be in comparison to other events and ideas.

Lord of the Flies was published in 1954, after WWII, in the beginning years of the Cold War and the Atomic Age. This is its historical context.

The author, William Golding, was British, and lived in England during WWII

World War II (1939 - 1945)

The Allies = The U.S., Great Britain (England etc.), and the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a.k.a. Russia) and other allies

The Axis = Germany, Japan, Italy

The Blitz = sustained bombing of Britain by Nazi Germany between 7 Sept 1940 and 10 May 1941; London was bombed 57 consecutive nights. 43,000 civilians (about 1/2 in London) were killed by bombing, and more than a million houses were destroyed or damaged in London alone

Evacuation = Civilians, particularly children, were moved to rural areas thought to be less at risk. Operation Pied Piper on 1 September 1939, prior to the Battle of Britain, officially relocated more than 1.5 million people.

Who emerged from WWII as “superpowers”? The U.S. and U.S.S.R. (Russia), but neither of them was content to share the world stage – both wanted to be “the one” superpower, which led to the Cold War.

The Cold War

- was not a war with combat and fighting, but a continuing state of political conflict, military tension, economic competition, and later the threat of nuclear war.
- lasted 46 years
- affected countries other than the U.S. and Russia because nuclear war was a threat to the whole planet’s environment and atmosphere – literally – people could die from the nuclear fallout, radiation, pollution, etc.

The Atomic Age

The U.S. dropped the first atom bomb on Hiroshima, Japan (and the 2nd one on Nagasaki, Japan) to end WWII. Although nuclear science existed before this event, the bombing of Hiroshima represented the first large-scale, practical use of nuclear technology. It changed the world forever in terms of people’s thinking, politics, culture, etc.