

# **POSTMODERNISM AND HISTORY**

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# THE “AGES OF HISTORIOGRAPHY” (FROM A POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE)

## Premodernism

- Before 18<sup>th</sup> Century
- History not a developed discipline, mixed with other disciplines.
- All histories starting with Herodotus & Thucydides

## Modernism

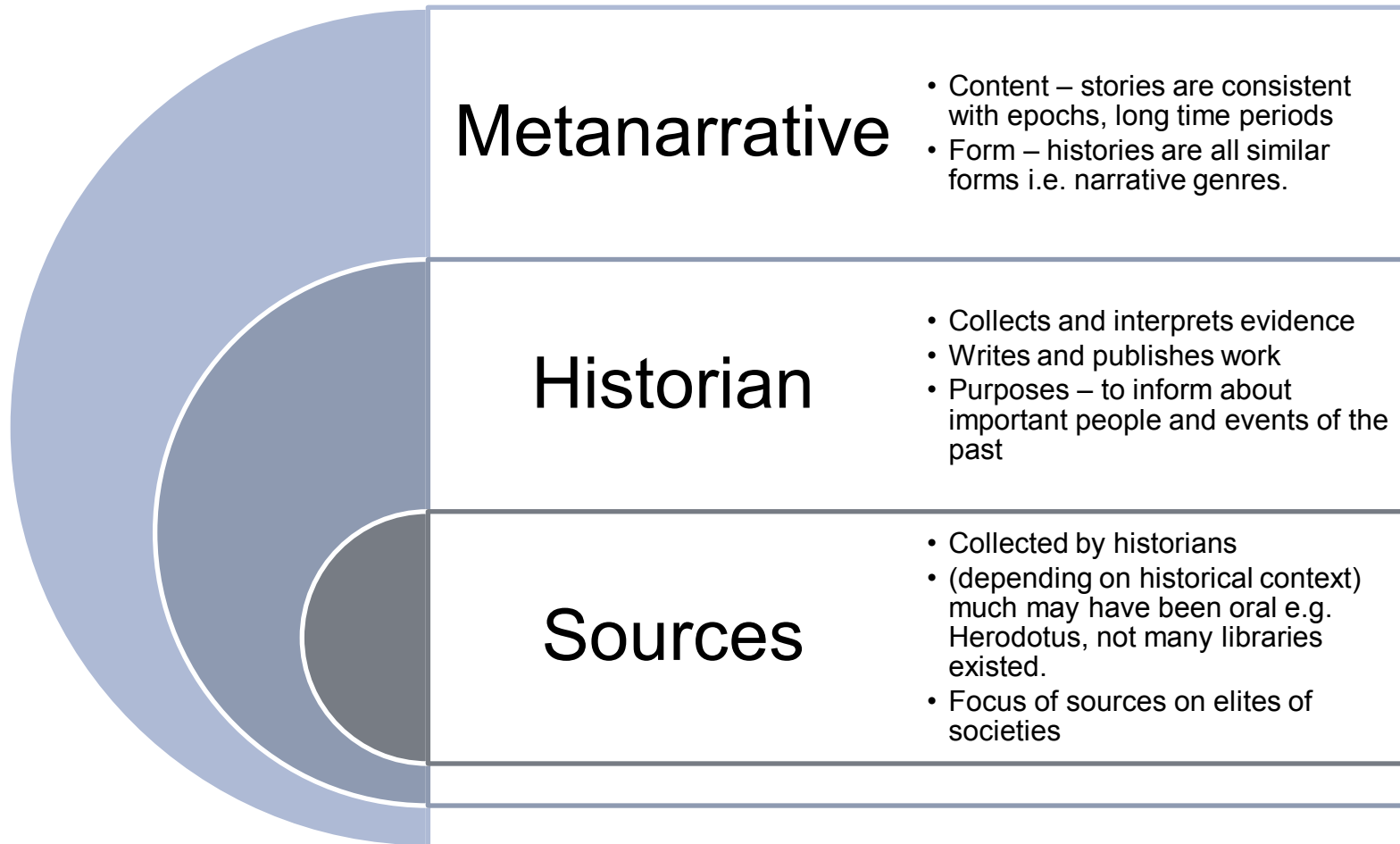
- Begins during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century – ideas of great stories of history, wider audiences, greater communication, nationalism (search for historical identity)
- Historians from about 1850s-1930s

## Postmodernism

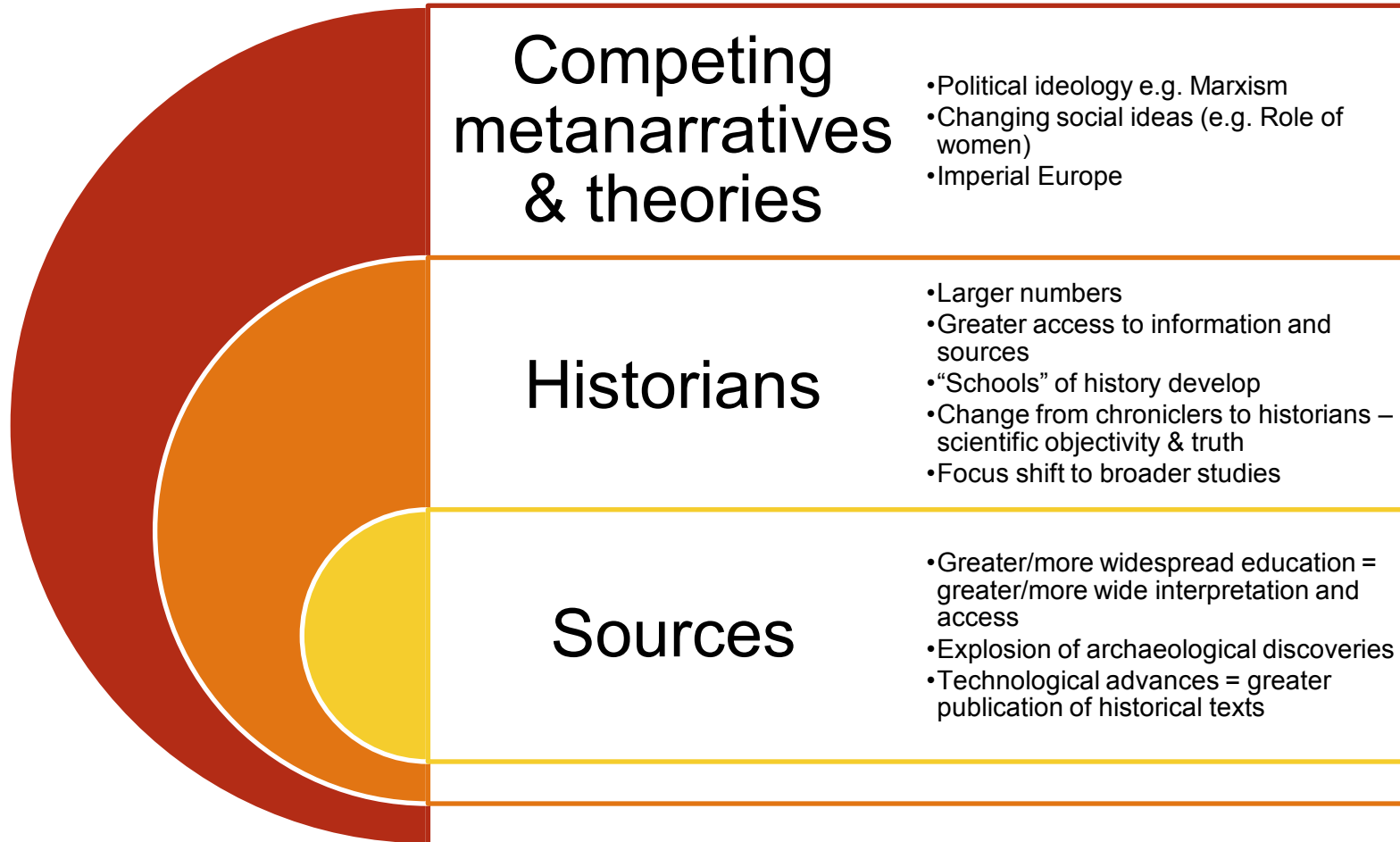
- Reaction to/critique and reassessment of Modernist theory – Post-War Period, Cold War, Post-colonial world.
- Historians/historical theorists from about 1930s



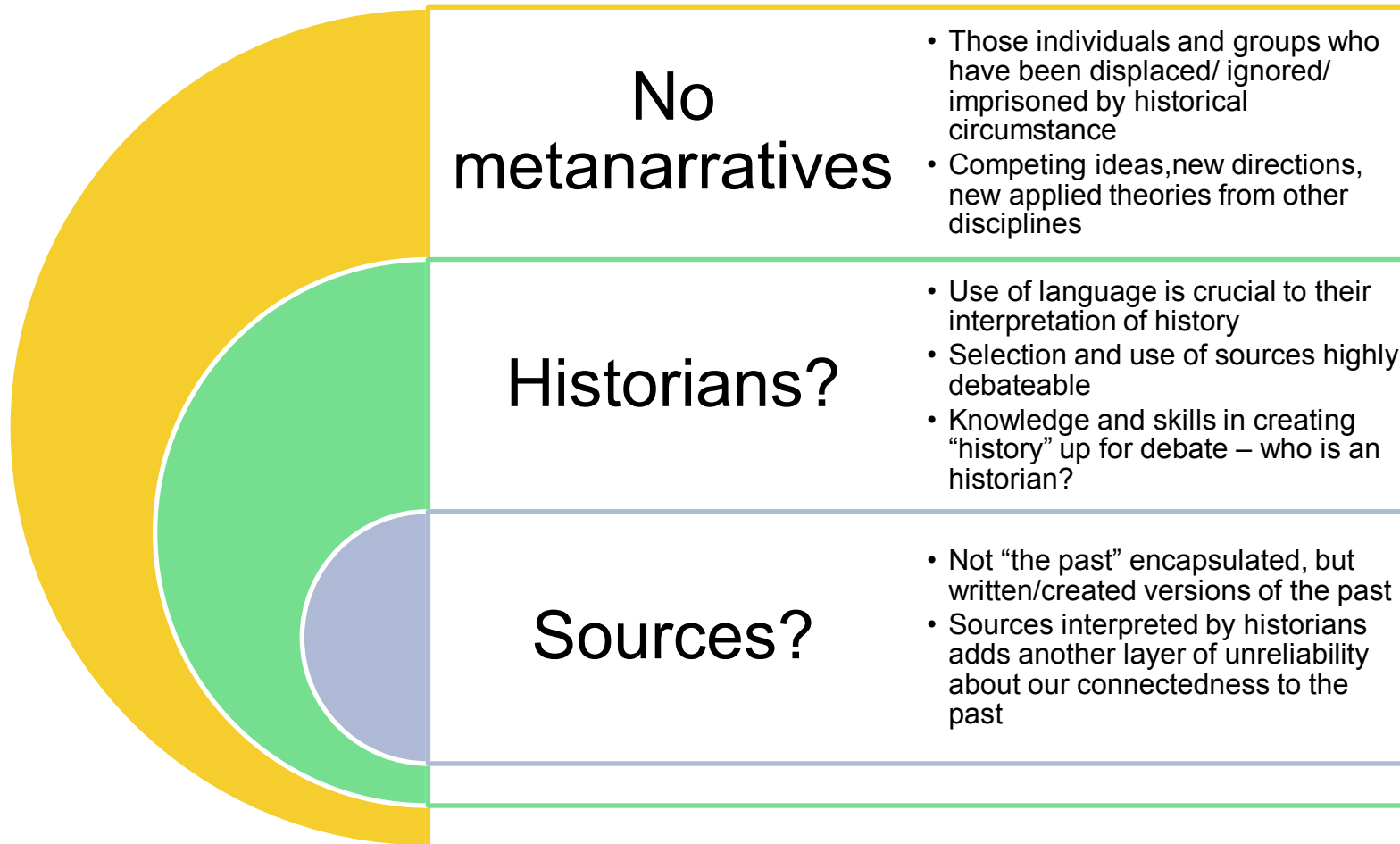
# PREMODERN HISTORY



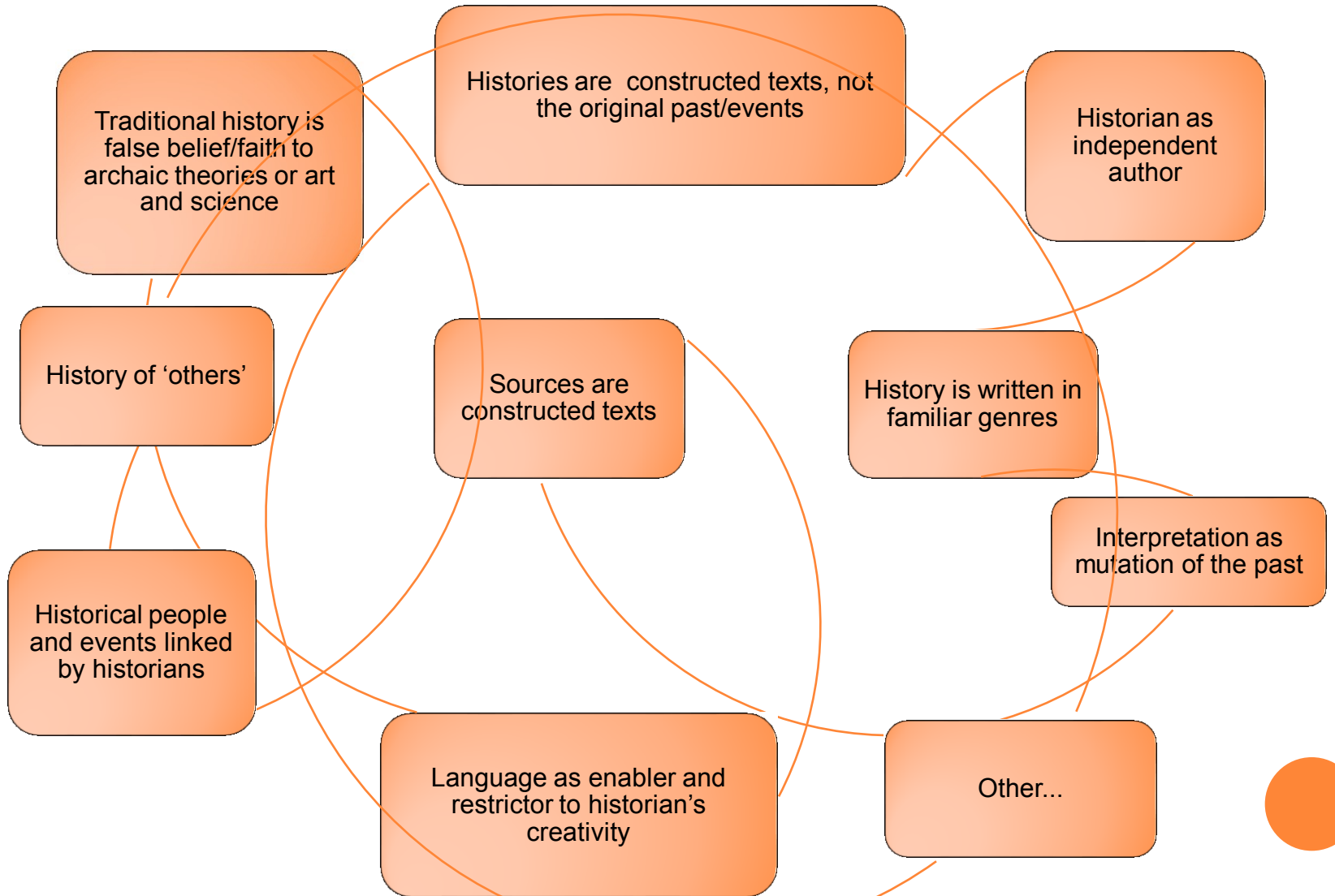
# MODERN HISTORY



# POSTMODERN HISTORY



# POSTMODERNIST THEORY ON HISTORY





# IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A POSTMODERNIST “SCHOOL”?

“Postmodern” Historians

# POSTMODERN HISTORIANS AND HISTORICAL THINKERS

- Do not share all common traits, methodology or purpose
- Are not all historians but rather apply other theories to history (e.g. Literary, gender etc)
- Often have competing views about the focus of history/meanings of history
- Use varying methodologies – not all are trained historians
- Are from different contexts (time, historiographical, philosophical etc)
- Have different aims – some to destroy past assumptions, some to question, some to enhance





# “POSTMODERN” HISTORIANS – WEBB, *EXTENSION HISTORY: THE HISTORIANS*

- Paul Carter, *Lost Subjects* (1999):
  - Presents his history by means of a series of ‘voices’. No omniscient narrator. (much like Herodotus?)
- Simon Schama, *Dead Certainties* (1991):
  - Admits that parts of the history is a “work of the imagination that chronicles historical events” – either his own interpretation of a variety of sources combined OR entirely his ideas based on what he understands was likely to have happened.
- Richard Price, *Alabi’s World*, (1990):
  - Using different **fonts** to give the idea of different voices – requires reader to imagine various accents, voices etc.
- Norman Davies, *The Isles* (1999):
  - Doesn’t use national terminology i.e. “Britain” as he says it detracts from the contribution of other groups
  - Uses various other time-neutral imaginary terms e.g. “Midnight Isles”
  - Mixes traditional sources (Celtic archaeology) with non-traditional (myths, ancient Irish literature & modern songs)

