

# A Patterned Past?

## Framing and keying in history textbooks

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Some historical events can become important anchors in the narration of the past as well as in discussions about the future. While discussing the EU referendum, for example, David Cameron referred to the English defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. This 'event' was also evoked during the Napoleonic Wars and the two World Wars. Historical events provide frameworks for observing and understanding the present. In this process of framing, the mechanism of 'keying' plays an important role: in order to make sense of the world, people can 'key' present experiences or more recent episodes to specific past events by way of historical analogies. Van der Vlies explores these processes of framing and keying in English and Dutch history textbooks, published for students between the ages of 11-14 in the period 1920-2000, in order to gain more insight into possible patterns while narrating and interpreting the past. Textbook narrations that combine different histories, places and times in a productive way generate meaning from historical combinations. The study of these cross-references between histories in textbooks can reveal widespread frames of references and possible schemata in the narration of (national) history.

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**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November**  
**5.00pm – 6.30pm**  
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**All welcome.**

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