

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 1 What Is History?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why is history important?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *What types of things can history reveal about the past?*
2. *What are historical periods?*
3. *What do students of prehistory look for?*

Terms to Know

era a large division of time

archaeology the study of objects to learn about past human life

artifact an object made by people

paleontology the study of fossils

fossil plant or animal remains that have been preserved from an earlier time

anthropology the study of human culture and how it develops over time

species a class of individuals with similar physical characteristics

Where in the world?



What do you know?

In the first column, answer the questions based on what you know before you study. After this lesson, complete the last column.

Now...		Later...
	Why do people want to learn about the past?	
	What is a period of 10 years called?	
	How many days are in a calendar year?	
	What is a leap year?	

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 1 What Is History?, *Continued*

Why Study History?

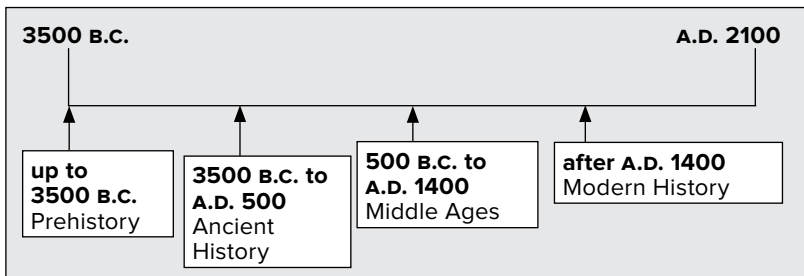
People who study history are called historians. Historians study causes and effects of historical events. A cause is a reason that something happened. An effect is what happened because of an event. Historians try to figure out why things happened. They use their understanding to think about how those things make a difference today.

Learning about the past helps us understand the present. It helps us decide what to do in the future. Knowing what went wrong in the past can help us make better decisions today when we face similar choices.

Measuring Time

A group of 10 years is called a decade. A group of 100 years is called a century. Ten centuries grouped together is called a millennium, which is a period of 1,000 years.

A period of several centuries is sometimes called an **era**. The earliest era is called *prehistory*. Prehistory is the time before people invented writing. The next period is called *Ancient History*. Then come the *Middle Ages*. Sometimes the Middle Ages are called the medieval period. The era after the Middle Ages is *Modern History*. We live in the era of Modern History.



To keep track of days and months, we use a calendar. Some cultures use calendars that are different from ours. Some calendars are arranged according to nature or the position of the moon.

Our modern calendar is based on one that started in ancient Rome. Julius Caesar invented it. We call it the Julian calendar. It started counting years from the time that Rome began. It was created with 365 days each year and one extra day every fourth year, called a leap year. However, there was a problem with the Julian calendar. It lost several minutes each year. That meant there was one day lost every 128 years. It needed to be fixed.



Marking the Text

- Underline the sentence explaining what historians look for when they study history.



Reading Check

- Why is it important to understand cause and effect when studying the past?



Sequencing

- Put these words in order, from largest number of years to smallest number of years.

century, decade, millennium



Marking the Text

- On the time line, circle the earliest era that historians study. Draw a box around the era in which we live.

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 1 What Is History?, *Continued*



Making Connections

5. Who created the calendar we use today? What is our calendar called?



Defining

6. What do the letters B.C. and A.D. mean?



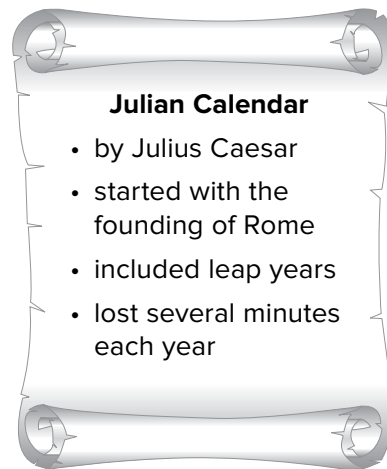
Reading Check

7. When would a historian use a calendar? When would a historian use a time line?

Pope Gregory XIII decided to create a new calendar. Pope Gregory changed the starting date of his calendar. He began counting years on his calendar from what he thought was the birth of Jesus. He also fixed the mistake from the Julian calendar. Pope Gregory included leap years in his calendar, too. We call Pope Gregory's calendar the Gregorian calendar. Although there are other calendars, most of the world uses the Gregorian calendar today.

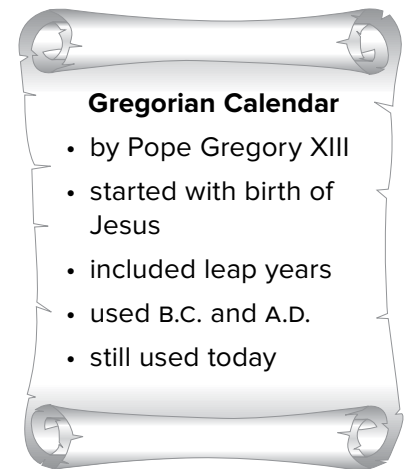
The Gregorian calendar has a special way to mark the years. Years that happened after the birth of Jesus are marked A.D. The letters stand for the words *anno domini*. Those are the Latin words for "in the year of the Lord." The years before the birth of Jesus have different letters. They are marked as B.C., which means "before Christ."

To date events before the birth of Jesus, or B.C., historians count backwards from A.D. 1. There is no year 0. The year before A.D. 1 is 1 B.C.



Julian Calendar

- by Julius Caesar
- started with the founding of Rome
- included leap years
- lost several minutes each year



Gregorian Calendar

- by Pope Gregory XIII
- started with birth of Jesus
- included leap years
- used B.C. and A.D.
- still used today

Sometimes historians avoid the religious reference when they write. They use a different way to explain the years. Instead of B.C., they use B.C.E., which means "before the common era." Instead of A.D., they use C.E., which means "common era." The years are still numbered the same way.

A time line shows the order of events in a period of time. Most time lines are divided into even sections of time. They have labels that tell when something happened. Sometimes a time line cannot show all the events in a long period. In this case, a time line might have a slanted or jagged line in the middle. That means that some years are left out of the time line. A multilevel time line is one that has two or more lines stacked on top of each other.

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 1 What Is History?, *Continued*

Digging Up the Past

Archaeology is the study of the past by looking at what people left behind. An archaeologist digs in the earth for artifacts. An **artifact** is an object made by people. Tools, pottery, weapons, and jewelry are artifacts. They help archaeologists learn what life was like in the past.

Paleontology studies prehistoric times. Paleontologists study fossils. **Fossils** are the remains of plant and animal life that have been preserved from an earlier time.

Anthropology is the study of human culture. Anthropologists study artifacts and fossils, too. They look for clues about what people valued and believed.

A paleontologist named Donald Johanson made an important discovery in Africa in 1974. He found the skeleton of an early human who lived more than 3.2 million years ago. He called the skeleton Lucy. Lucy belonged to a different species of early human. A **species** is a group of animals or humans. The members of a species are alike in some way. Lucy is the oldest human species that scientists have ever found. Lucy can help us learn more about how humans developed.



Check for Understanding

What is the difference between a time line and a calendar?

1. _____

What is the difference between an artifact and a fossil?

2. _____

Defining

8. What is a *species*?

Reading Check

9. How are archaeologists, paleontologists, and anthropologists like detectives?

FOLDABLES®

10. Place a two-tab Foldable along the dotted line to cover the Check for Understanding. Label the anchor tab *Learning about the Past*. Label the two tabs *Measuring Time* and *Digging Up the Past*.

On the front and back of the tabs, write three words or phrases that you remember about each. Use your notes to help you answer the questions under the tabs.

Glue Foldable here

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 2 How Does a Historian Work?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do we learn about the past?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *What types of evidence do historians use to understand the past?*
2. *How do we write about history?*

Terms to Know

evidence something that shows proof or an indication that something is true

primary source firsthand evidence of an event in history

secondary source a document or written work created after an event

point of view a personal attitude about people or life

bias an unreasoned, emotional judgment about people and events

scholarly concerned with academic learning or research

conclusion a decision reached after examining evidence

Where in the world?



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What do you know?

In the K column, list what you already know about how a historian works. In the W column, list what you want to know. After reading the lesson, fill in the L column with the information that you learned.

K	W	L

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 2 How Does a Historian Work?, *Continued*

What Is the Evidence?

Historians look at **evidence** to find out about the past. Evidence is proof that something is true. Evidence might be an object, such as a soldier’s uniform or a scrap of pottery. Evidence might also be a document or book that was written during a historical event.

A **primary source** is a kind of evidence. Primary sources are created by people who saw or were part of an event. Letters and diaries are primary sources. Tools and clothing are also primary sources. Historians use primary sources to learn what people were thinking at the time of the event. Primary sources can help historians explain events that happened long ago.

A **secondary source** is also evidence. Secondary sources are created after an event. They are created by people who were not part of the event. Your history textbook is a secondary source. Encyclopedias are also secondary sources. Secondary sources can give a broad view of historical events or people. However, new information can only come from primary sources.

Historians analyze the information in their sources. They look for reasons that the source was created. Then historians decide if the source is reliable when it comes to its facts. Each source was written with a particular **point of view**, or attitude about people or life. The author of a source uses his or her point of view to decide what to include in the document. Sometimes a point of view is based on feelings and not on facts. A judgment based only on feelings is called a **bias**. Sources with a bias cannot always be trusted to be factual or true.

Sources That Historians Use

Primary Sources	Secondary Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written at the time of the event • Eyewitness to history • Reliable source for historians • Includes letters, diaries, tools, clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written after an event • Author did not witness the event • Contains facts about an event • Includes textbooks and encyclopedias

Glue Foldable here

FOLDABLES®

? Comparing and Contrasting

1. Place a three-tab Venn diagram Foldable along the dotted line. Label the top tab *Primary Source*, the middle tab *Both*, and the bottom tab *Secondary Source*.

On the reverse sides of the top and bottom tab, list facts about each that are unique or different. On the reverse side of the *Both* tab, list similarities of both sources. Use this information to determine which source is the most trustworthy.

✓ Reading Check

2. What is a historian's job when looking at primary sources?

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 2 How Does a Historian Work?, *Continued*



Paraphrasing

3. In your own words, explain how to make an inference.



Marking the Text

4. Underline the text that explains what a scholarly journal is.



Explaining

5. Explain why it is important for historians to read articles in scholarly journals.

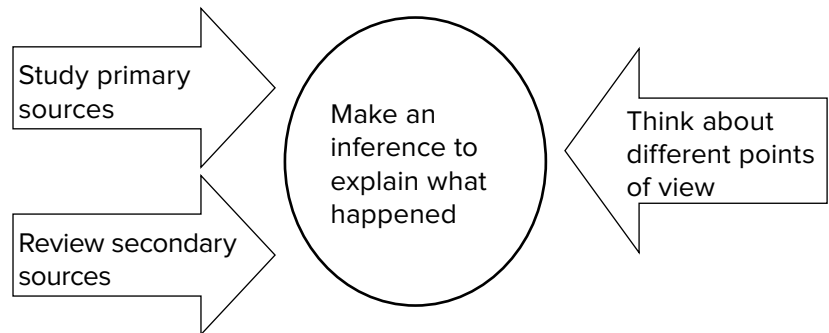
Writing About History

Historians interpret information from primary sources to make inferences. Making an inference means choosing the most likely explanation for the facts. Sometimes the inference is simple. When you see someone with a wet umbrella, you can make the inference that it is raining. Making inferences about historical events is not so easy.

To make an inference, historians start with primary sources. They use sources they already know are trustworthy. Next, they read secondary sources. They think about the different points of view. Finally, they make an inference to explain what happened.

Many historians write articles about their inferences. Most articles are published in **scholarly** journals, or magazines. Scholarly magazines are concerned with learning. Usually, other historians read the articles to make sure the facts are correct. They decide whether they agree with the inferences in the article. Historians must be careful to make inferences based on facts. They do not want to show a bias in their writing.

How Historians Make Inferences



Historians can write and review scholarly articles because they become experts on a historical subject. They focus their research. Some historians focus on a very narrow area of study. Someone might study a particular historical person, such as Queen Elizabeth I of England. Someone else studying the past might focus on the events of a single place and time.

Other historians may have a very broad focus. For example, they may study the economic history of many places in a certain period of time. Others may study the history of an idea, such as medicine or technology.

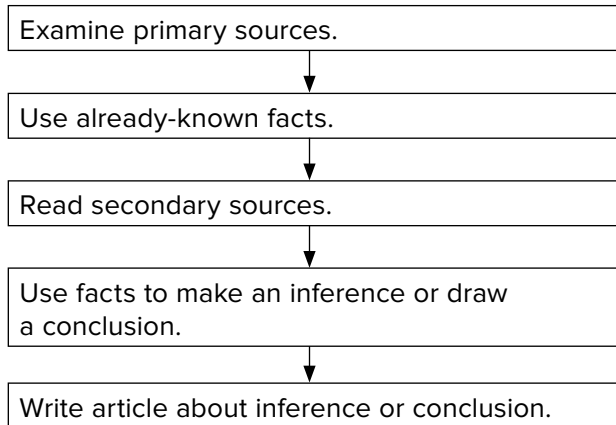
What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 2 How Does a Historian Work?, *Continued*

A **conclusion** is a final decision that is reached by reasoning. It is like an inference. Historians draw conclusions about events of the past. They look for facts and evidence in their sources. Then, they use reasoning to draw a conclusion.

Sometimes historians disagree in their conclusions. For example, some historians say that Genghis Khan was a brutal warrior. They tell how he would destroy cities and kill people when he came to a new land. Other historians disagree. They say that Genghis Khan was a good ruler. His empire had a time of peace. Traders were safe to trade goods. People were protected by good laws.

Which conclusion is correct? Was Genghis Khan a cruel warrior or a good leader? A historian may use evidence to explain his or her conclusions. If both conclusions are supported by evidence, they both can be correct.



Glue Foldable here

Check for Understanding

Explain how historians use different sources to draw conclusions.

1. _____

How are a person's point of view and bias related?

2. _____

 **Marking the Text**

6. Underline the definition of *conclusion*.

 **Reading Check**

7. Why do historians draw different conclusions about events of the past?



8. Place a one-tab Foldable along the dotted line. Label the anchor tab *Historians*. Label the Foldable *Evidence, Inferences, and Conclusions*.

Make a memory map by drawing three arrows below the title and writing three words or phrases that you remember about historians and their work. Use your memory notes to help you complete the activity under the tab.

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 3 Researching History

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do you research history?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *How do you begin a research project?*
2. *How do you safely research on the Internet?*
3. *How do you interpret historical events accurately?*

Terms to Know

credentials evidence that a person is qualified for a task

URL abbreviation for *uniform resource locator*; the address of an online resource

.gov the ending of a URL for a government Web site

.edu the ending of a URL for a Web site of an educational institution

.org the ending of a URL for a Web site of an organization

plagiarize to present someone's work as your own without giving that person credit

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What do you know?

Read the list of words that relate to the Internet. Circle the words you know. Write something you know about each circled word.

browse _____

URL _____

Web site _____

home page _____

blog or blogger _____

search engine _____

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 3 Researching History, *Continued*

Planning Your Project

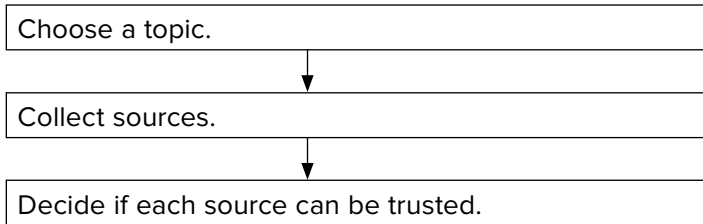
The first step in researching a history topic is to choose a topic. Your topic should not be too broad or too narrow. To test your topic, look it up in an encyclopedia. If there is no entry for your topic, it may be too small. If there are many entries, or a very long entry, the topic may be too large.

After you choose a topic, decide what you want to learn about. Create six questions to help you find out who, what, when, where, why, and how. Write each question on a separate note card. As you find the information that answers each question, write it on the card.

The next step is to collect your research materials. Start with an encyclopedia. Then visit the library to find a book about your subject. The sources must be nonfiction.

Finally, look for articles on the Internet. Look at each book and article to make sure it is trustworthy. Look for statements that are opinions. This can help you determine whether the source is biased or untrustworthy. A good source will be full of facts. Remember, a fact is something that can be proven by evidence. An opinion is an attitude toward something. It cannot be proven true or false.

Starting Historical Research



As you collect information about your topic, write a short phrase on your notecard to help you remember the facts. On the back of each card, make notes about the books where you found the information.

Researching on the Internet

Looking for information on the Internet is quick. However, finding sources you can trust can be tricky. Many articles on Web sites do not name the author. The reader cannot tell whether the person who wrote it is an expert on the subject. A trustworthy article will include the author's name and **credentials**. Credentials are evidence that someone is an expert.



Identifying

1. Circle the research topics that are too broad for a short research paper.

World War II
Swimming the backstroke
Trees
Vampire bats



Reading Check

2. Why is it important to distinguish fact from opinion in historical writing?

FOLDABLES®



Listing

3. Place a two-tab Foldable along the dotted line. On the anchor tab, write *Using the Internet as a Source*. Label the first tab *Advantages* and the second tab *Disadvantages*.

On both sides of the tabs, list advantages and disadvantages of using the Internet for historical research.

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 3 Researching History, *Continued*



Listing

4. What are two examples of URLs that come at the end of trustworthy Web sites?



Reading Check

5. What are the consequences of using an Internet resource with biased information?



Explaining

6. Explain why plagiarism is a problem.

The homepage of the Web site can give more clues about the trustworthiness of the article. If the article is on the Web site of a university, government office, or museum, it is probably reliable.

A good clue to find out about a Web site is its online address, or **URL**. Look at the end of the URL. A URL that ends in **.gov** is a government site. This site probably has reliable information that is usually up to date. A URL that ends in **.edu** is the site of a school or college. Most .edu sites pride themselves on accuracy. However, some documents may contain opinions as well as facts.

Nonprofit organizations usually end their URLs in **.org**. These sites may be very accurate. However, they often contain opinions.

You have now collected information about your topic. You have answered the questions on your cards. Now you must sort your information into categories.

Use these categories to help you create an outline for your project. Follow your outline to make sure that your project makes logical sense.

Internet Tips

If you answer **NO** to any of the questions below, the Web site is probably not a good source.

- Can you tell who wrote the article?
- Can you easily find out who is responsible for the Web site?
- Has the page been updated recently?
- Does the writing show a bias toward one point of view?

Writing Without Bias

Putting all the facts of your research together can be hard work. You should keep in mind some important guidelines for writing about history.

One problem to watch out for when you are writing a research paper is **plagiarism**. Plagiarism happens when a writer uses the exact words or ideas from another person without giving credit. Readers are wrongly led to believe that those words or ideas were the writer's. Copying someone else's work is wrong, and it is against the law. Some authors and researchers have ruined their careers because of plagiarism. Students who plagiarize are likely to get a failing grade.

What Does a Historian Do?

Lesson 3 Researching History, *Continued*

To avoid plagiarism, follow these rules:

- Put the ideas you read in your own words.
- When you restate an opinion from something you read, include a reference to the author: "According to Smith and Jones, ..."
- Always include a footnote when you use a direct quotation from one of your sources.

Here is another important problem to avoid. When you write about history, be careful that you do not use values from today to make a judgment about what happened in the past. Ideas and values have changed over time. For example, long ago, women lived differently than they do today. A historian should use evidence to draw conclusions. They should not use modern ideas about how women work and live in today's society.

Check for Understanding

List three rules for doing historical research.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are the four steps for researching history?

4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Glue Foldable here



Explaining

7. Why is it important to not use values from today to judge what happened in the past?



Reading Check

8. What is one way to avoid plagiarism when writing about history?



9. Place a two-tab Foldable along the dotted line to cover the Check for Understanding. Label the anchor tab *Research*. Label the two tabs *Before the Internet* and *Using the Internet*.

List the ways you think people conducted research before the Internet was available and list important things you remember about using the Internet for research.