ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS  Why is history important? How do we learn about the past? How do you research history?

Historians use the work of archaeologists to study the past. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was an English philosopher who wrote a great deal about science and learning. He was interested in education. This excerpt is from Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral.

"Histories make men wise; poets, witty; the mathematics, subtle; natural philosophy, deep, moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend."

FRANCIS BACON

*Contend* can mean to struggle, argue, or assert. Why do you think Bacon says that history makes men “able to contend”?

What is Francis Bacon saying about history?

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SS.6.W.1.6 Describe how history transmits culture and heritage and provides models of human character.
**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 the past by looking at what people left behind
- **artifact**: an object made by people
- **paleontology**: the study of the past using 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

**What Do You Know?**
Directions: In the photographs below, circle the tools that archaeologists use to study the past.
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 after 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. We can learn from the choices people made long ago. Knowing what went wrong in the past can help us make better decisions today.

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. After many years, the calendar did not follow the seasons correctly. It needed to be fixed.

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 with 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. He made a plan so that the calendar will always be accurate. We call Pope Gregory’s calendar the Gregorian calendar. Although there are other calendars, many people throughout the world use 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.

Sometimes when historians 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.

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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.
Digging Up the Past

Archaeology is the study of the past by looking at what people left behind. An archaeologist is someone who 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 is another study of the past. 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. 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 new species of early human. A species is a group of living beings. 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.

NGSSS Check How do archaeologists use artifacts and fossils? SS.6.W.1.5

Think Critically

7. Analyze What do paleontologists look for in fossils when they dig in the earth?

Show Your Skill

8. Draw Conclusions How are archaeologists, paleontologists, and anthropologists like detectives?

Think Critically

9. Conclude What can we learn from the discovery of Lucy or other fossils and artifacts?
LESSON 2
HOW DOES A HISTORIAN WORK?

It Matters Because
Knowing how historians work helps us understand historical information.

Discuss with a partner what this man is doing, and how his research might reveal information about the past.

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 general attitude about people or life
- bias: an unreasoned, emotional judgment about people and events
- scholarly: concerned with academic learning or research
- conclusion: a final decision reached by reasoning

What Do You Know?

Directions: 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.
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 long ago.

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.

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.

Historians analyze the information in their sources. They look for reasons that the source was created. Then historians decide if they can trust the source. 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.

Sources That Historians Use

**Primary Sources**
- Written at the time of the event
- Eyewitness to history
- Reliable source for historians
- Includes letters, diaries, tools, clothing

**Secondary Sources**
- Written after an event
- Author did not witness the event
- Contains facts about an event
- Includes textbooks and encyclopedias

Writing About History

Historians analyze what they read. They make inferences about the information. 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 sometimes not that easy.
To make an inference, historians start with primary sources. Then they use facts they already know are true. 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.

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, many historians disagree about Genghis Khan. Some say that Genghis Khan was a brutal leader. 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 terrible or a good leader? A historian must use evidence to explain his or her conclusions. If both conclusions are supported by evidence, they both can be correct.
LESSON 3

RESEARCHING HISTORY

It Matters Because
Knowing where to find information about your subject will make it easier to complete research projects and other schoolwork.

Choose a topic to research. After you have finished the lesson, write down the steps you learned to show how you will research the topic.

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.

URL
Web site
blog or blogger
search engine

Terms to Know

credentials
qualifications or something that gives confidence

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

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?

NGSSS
SS.6.W.1.4 Describe the methods of historical inquiry and how history relates to the other social sciences.
SS.6.W.1.5 Describe the roles of historians and recognize varying historical interpretations (historiography).
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, the next step is to collect your research materials. Start with an encyclopedia. Then visit the library to find a book about your subject. Finally, look for articles on the Internet. Look at each book and article to make sure it is trustworthy. A source that has too many opinions could be 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.

Researching on the Internet

Looking for information on the Internet can be 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 author 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.

The home page 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 good information about the government. A URL that ends in .edu is the site of a school or college. Most .edu sites pride themselves on accuracy.
Nonprofit organizations usually end their URLs in .org. These sites may be very accurate. However, they often contain opinions.

**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 watch out for some easy mistakes.

The first one to watch out for is **plagiarism**. Plagiarism happens when a writer uses the exact words or ideas from another person without giving credit. Copying someone else’s work is wrong, and it is against the law. Students who plagiarize are likely to get a failing grade.

**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.

Something else to watch out for is 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. For example, long ago, women had different rights than women have today. A historian should use evidence to draw conclusions. He or she should not use modern ideas about how women work and live in today’s society.

**NGSSS Check** List three rules for doing historical research. SS.6.W.1.4
Reflect on What It Means . . .

History is not just something that happened in the past. It happens every day in places in your community and around the world. Knowing the history of an event or the story behind something can provide a wealth of information to knowing the big picture. In other words, smaller events over a period of time can lead to a major event, one that can affect your life, your community, and your world—all in one.

Research an event that took place in the distant or recent past, either in your community or around the world. Make sure the event made an impact on you, your community, and on the world.

On the map below, label where the event took place, write a brief description of the event and date, and then write on a separate piece of paper about how it affected you, your community, and the world.

Take the Challenge

Make a time capsule with items that you would want a future civilization to uncover. Place objects in the shoebox that will reveal how you live today, such as what you eat, the games that you play, the music that you listen to, and the clothes and accessories that you wear. Share your time capsule with the class.