

Why Study History?



Why Study History?

The purpose of this lesson is for your students to learn about the importance of history as a course. Using this resource, students will work with a partner to read and take notes on the importance of history. The lesson will conclude with a discussion activity to share the students' thoughts and opinions.

Prior to the lesson:

1. Print the resources before class:

- 1 copy of the **Predict This** vocabulary activity for each student.
- 1 copy of the **Why Study History?** reading - I recommend one copy for each student to annotate, but if you are limited in copies, you can create a class set.
- A **Why Study History? Doodle Notes** - one copy for each student with the **Why Study History? Spectrum** or **Why Study History Dialogue** copied onto the back of the notes.
- 1 set of the numbers to post to create a human bar graph during the preview 4 Corners activity.
- Create envelopes with your own personal artifacts for the artifact study portion of the lesson.
- 1 set of the **Word Wall Terms** to post in the front of your room. If you can copy them onto card stock, you can keep them up all year long.
- 1 sheet of chart paper for your anchor chart (recommended but not required.)

2. Prepare the resources:

- Put items in an envelope that tell your story: copies of report cards, movie tickets, family pictures, etc. You can engage your students while building a relationship with them from the beginning of school.
- Post the **Human Bar Graph Numbers** on a wall with plenty of space in front of it. If you cannot post all the numbers in a line, you can place them in different spots around your room.
- Post the **Word Wall Terms** in the front of the room or a focal point for the students.

Why Study History?

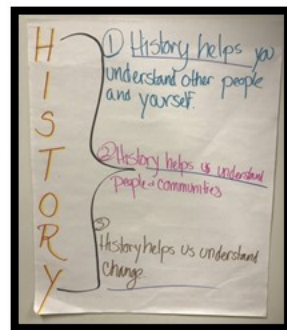
Day of the lesson:

1. Begin the lesson with the **Preview** questions in the PowerPoint presentations. (Two different versions are available for you to choose from.) You can have your students start by writing a response in their Interactive Notebook. Once your students have completed writing (usually about 4-5 minutes), ask them to stand in front of the number that best represents their response. They should create a line by standing in front of each other. Once you see where everyone is standing, encourage them to talk to other students standing in the same location and explain why they choose their answer. Have a few students share their responses after a few minutes.
2. **Create groups of four students.** Ask them to look at the terms on the Word Wall and discuss what they already know about these terms. Briefly discuss the meaning of each term using the **Predict This** vocabulary activity. It is not necessary for the students to write these definitions down, they are included later in the reading and Doodle Notes activity.
3. Hand each group an **envelope of artifacts.** Give the students time to examine the artifacts with their group. Ask the debrief questions in the PowerPoint presentation.
4. Share the quote on the study of history - ask how it applies to their own lives.
5. Give students the **Why Study History?** reading and Doodle Notes. Depending on the grade level you teach, you can have your students work with a partner from their group or guide them through the reading and notetaking process.
6. Complete the **Why Study History?** Spectrum activity. Give students time to rank the statements independently, then as a group, discuss their answers.



Allow groups to share their answers from the Why Study History? spectrum. Use the most common responses to create an **anchor chart**.

Running short on time? Modify this resource by eliminating the human bar graph, artifact study or Spectrum discussion.



Word Wall Terms

And

Predict This

evidence



artifact



point of view



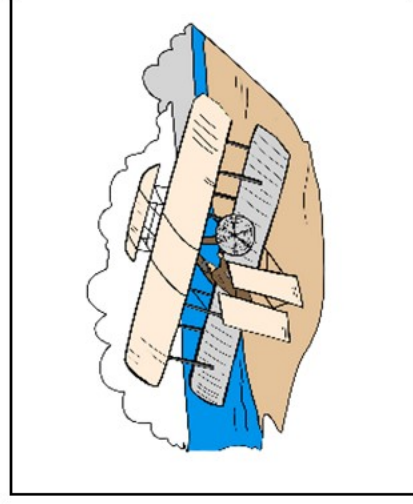
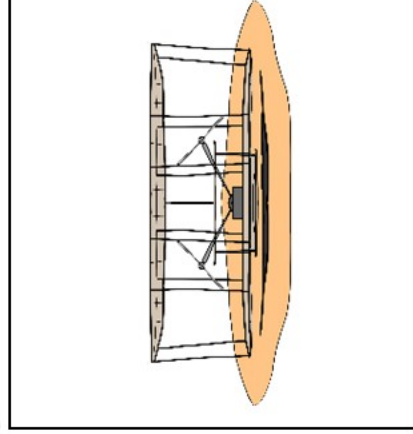
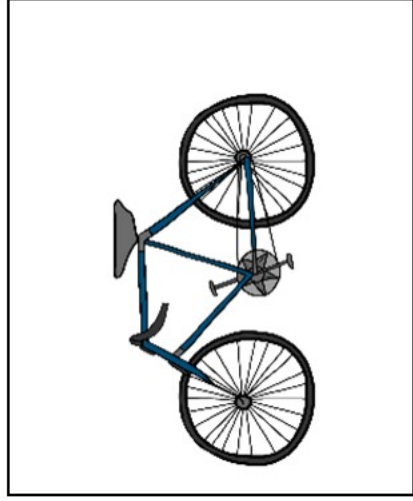
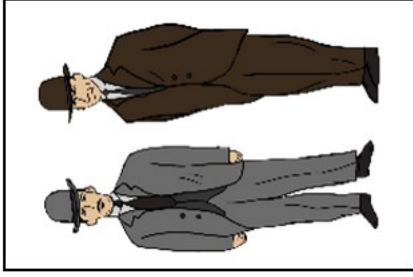
primary source



secondary source



chronology



bias



era





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Predict This

Use the vocabulary word wall as your word bank. Choose the word that you think matches that definition.

| Which word means... | Word Guessed | Glues You Used |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| A human made object. | | |
| A way of looking at something, may be shaped by many things, such as the person's age, religion, job, or political views. | | |
| The sequence of events in time. | | |
| Information that can be used to prove a statement or support a conclusion. | | |
| A document or other record of past events created by people who were present at that time. | | |
| Anything that might change a person's observations. It can make a source less than trustworthy. | | |
| Information written after the time period by an expert or historian. | | |
| A long and distinct period of history with a particular feature of characteristic. | | |

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Why Study History?

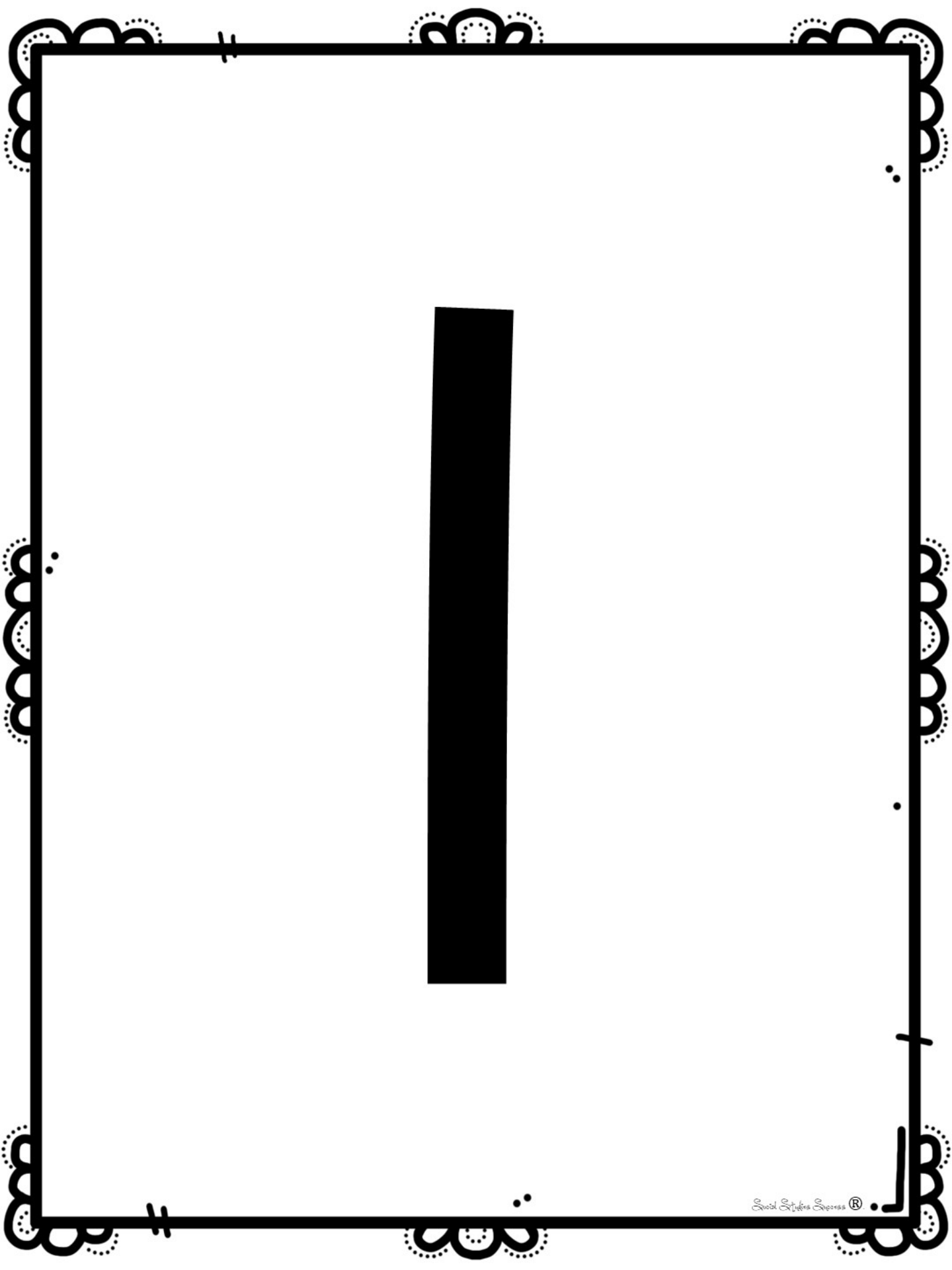
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| Information written after the time period by an expert or historian. | | |
| A long and distinct period of history with a particular feature of characteristic. | | |

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Human Bar Graph Numbers



2

3

4

Why Study
History?

Reading and
Doodle Notes

Why Study History?

Why do we study history? For thousands of years we have learned about the people who came before us - their actions, triumphs, and anguish. *Why do we do this?* Put simply we study history to learn about ourselves - how would we react and act in instances like those in the past. The past is made of human interactions between each other and the environment. When you study history, you start to see patterns in human behavior. An understanding of the past is key to an understanding of the present.

To study history, you must start with a question. You are looking to find the answer to this question by studying the past. A question you could ask is *"What makes a great president?"* A question like that could lead you to a study of American presidents. This could lead to another question - *How does a great leader react in time of crises?"* or *"What characteristics makes a person great?"* Who decides?"



Next you would need to gather facts and information related to your questions. This becomes the **evidence** you need to analyze to reconstruct the past. Evidence is the information that can be used to prove your statement or to support a conclusion. When you study history, evidence can be found in many different forms. It might be an old letter or photograph. Or it might be an **artifact** - a human made object - such as a tool, button or old vase. Evidence can also be found in pictures, music and even old movies. You draw your conclusion based on the patterns of evidence you find in your research.

As you study the past looking for evidence, you are actually looking at **primary sources** - a document or other record of past events created by people who were present at that time. A letter, such as the one Abraham Lincoln wrote to his son's teacher, is an example of a primary source. You are looking to find patterns and establish meaning through these documents and artifacts left by people from other times and places. While these primary sources can sometimes be difficult to read, they provide the best information on a certain topic or question.

You can also gather information from **secondary sources**. A secondary source is written after the time period by an expert or historian. They were not present at the event or maybe not even alive during the same time. Many secondary sources are created long after an event occurs. Secondary sources can include books, magazines, and short articles. Secondary sources can be useful for summarizing a large amount of information.

All historical evidence, whether primary or secondary, must be looked at carefully. You should examine each source for the **point of view** of the person who created the source. A point of view, or way of looking at something, may be shaped by many things, such as the person's age, religion, job, or political views. For example, a historian would expect that a Northern soldier in 1864 would have had a point of view different from that of a soldier fighting for the South.

Why Study History?

Sometimes a source contains information or conclusions that reflect a certain point of view. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but you must be careful to look for signs of **bias** when analyzing evidence. In general, bias is anything that might change a person's observations. Bias takes many forms, ranging from a simple friendship to an unfair dislike of a person or group. Whatever its form, bias can make a source less than trustworthy.

Sometimes a source you examine isn't even true! In today's world, spreading false information is extremely easy! People may write inaccurate stories in order to persuade someone to support a certain point of view. When studying history, it is essential to ensure you are reading accurate information. As a famous president once said,



Everything you read on the internet isn't true! – Abraham Lincoln

You can check for accurate information on the internet by asking critical questions: Who is the author? Is the article free from bias? What is the source of the information? Is the information found in several different sources? Are the sources cited and verifiable? If you check your information, you will find if it is accurate or not (like the quote from Lincoln - not true!)

Once the evidence is selected and evaluated, you can begin to reconstruct what happened. You can start by establishing a **chronology**, or sequence of events in time. Once you are certain of the correct order of events, you are better able to make connections among those events. You can look for patterns among **eras** or across time. You can identify cause and effect. You can also begin to look for long-range changes and trends that may have developed over many years or even decades. For example, when deciding what makes a great president, you could examine the events during different presidencies and evaluate how different presidents reacted to these events. You could then compare these reactions to those of other leaders when faced with a similar situation.

History is not like other subjects you study in school; sometimes there can be more than one correct answer. History is still open to interpretation. In fact, some people describe history as an ongoing argument about the past. The way we view certain events can change over time. Differences of opinion about how to look at the past makes history interesting and important. With each new generation of people come new arguments. As historian Frederick Jackson Turner once wrote,

"Each age tries to form its own conception of the past. Each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time."

In other words, our understanding of the past is always being shaped by the point of view of those in the present. In that sense, history is never finished. The lessons of the past shape our understanding of the present, and must light our way to the future.

Why Study History?

Including artifacts -

and sources

EVIDENCE:

Next you gather...

A chronology is ...

A chronology can be used to ...

An era is...

Using the internet as a source:

Look carefully for

point of view: bias:

Secondary Sources:

Primary Sources -

History is ...

You start with a

Processing Assignments

Why Study History? Spectrum

Directions: listed below are different reasons why you should study history. Read the statements and choose the five that you think are the most important reason to study history. Once you have chosen your top five reasons, rank them from most important (1) to least important (5).

- ☐ History gives you an opportunity to develop analytical thinking skills.
- ☐ History helps you better understand yourself and your actions.
- ☐ History helps you understand people who are different.
- ☐ History allows you to gain perspective and learn to see a bigger picture.
- ☐ History inspires you.
- ☐ History can help you connect to those who have lived before you.
- ☐ History is entertaining and fun.
- ☐ History helps us understand people and societies.
- ☐ History helps us understand change.
- ☐ History helps us develop our own morals.
- ☐ History provides identity to a group of people or culture.
- ☐ Studying history is essential for good citizenship.
- ☐ Understanding history is essential in our global society.
- ☐ History shapes who and what we are.

Key

Why Study History?

You start with a

~~QUESTION~~

Next you gather...

EVIDENCE:
information used to prove a statement or support a conclusion

Including artifacts -

human made objects

and sources

Primary Sources - Record of past events created by people who were there at the time

Secondary Sources:
written after the time period by an expert

Look carefully for

point of view:
bias:
anything that may change a person's observations

Using the Internet as a source:
• Who is the author?
• Is there bias?
• Can you confirm the information?
• Are the sources verified?

A chronology is ...
sequence of events
A chronology can be used to ...
look for patterns
identify cause and effect
An era is ...
period of time with common

*Answers vary
History is ...
• Open to interpretation
• never finished
• a light to the future

Characteristics