

1. What is History?

- 1.1 History : A science that tells us about events in the past
- 1.2 The scientific method of history
- 1.3 History and us
- 1.4 The past and the future

1.1 History : A science that tells us about events in the past

Last year, in Standard IV, we studied the life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and his mission of establishing Swaraj. The time before the birth of Shivaji Maharaj was about 400 years before now, or in the other words, the time '400 years ago'.

For our convenience, we divide time in different ways. Often we use words like 'now, some time ago, after some time', or 'today, yesterday, tomorrow', or 'this year, next year', etc. When we use these

words, we are actually measuring time in our minds. 'Now', 'today' and 'this year' are terms that indicate the present. 'Some time ago', 'yesterday' and 'last year' are terms that indicate the past. 'After some time', 'tomorrow' and 'next year' are words that indicate the future.

The time that has already gone by is the past. The time that we are in now is the present. The time that is yet to come is the future.

The past includes many events that have already taken place. For example, if you are 10 years old today, it means that the event of your birth happened 10 years ago in the past. Similarly, after 10 years from now, that is, in future you will be 20 years old. The time gone by between today and the day of your birth is your past – the past in the life of a person.



Past

Day of birth

Ten years ago



Present

We are 10 years old.

Today



Future

We shall be 20 years old.

After 10 years

The science that tries to understand past events is called 'history'.

1.2 The scientific method of history

In Stds III and IV, as part of Environmental Studies, we have become acquainted with various sciences. The special characteristic of all these sciences is that their facts or evidence can be tested in experiments which can be repeated anywhere, any time. The method of using a number of different tests to determine whether the evidence is reliable is called the scientific method.

There are many things that happened since our birth that we may not know about. However, our grandparents or parents or others often tell us amusing stories of our childhood. Those stories are a part of their memory. However, when different people tell us about the same event, we find differences in their narrations. It

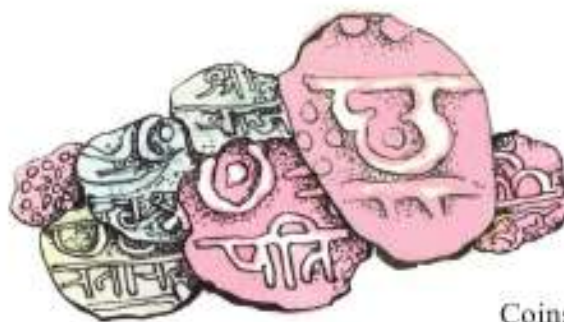
makes us wonder which one is right. We need to examine the details of each narration carefully to decide the correctness of the facts.

It is not possible to conduct experiments to recreate the events that have happened in the past. Therefore, the method of presenting history is different from that of other sciences. Even so, history uses the scientific method at every stage, namely, while looking for and collecting evidence, examining the evidence and while putting it together. When required, help is also taken from other sciences. That is why, history is considered to be a scientific discipline. History is not written solely on the basis of imagination.

Ancient objects, structures, sculptures, pots, coins, inscriptions, copper plates, books, manuscripts, traditional stories and songs remembered



Pots



Coins



A copper plate



Books and manuscripts

The sources of history

over many generations, etc. are the 'sources of history'. The sources of history are of three types : 1. Material sources 2. Written sources 3. Oral sources. In order to find out what happened in the past and how it happened, evidence available from all these sources is collected and thoroughly examined to determine its reliability. With the help of the evidence that stands these tests, past events are put in a proper sequence and a historical account is written. This is the scientific method.

1.3 History and us

The study of science helps us to find the answers to many questions, for example, environmental science studies the problems of degradation of the environment, pollution, etc. and looks for their solutions. In the same way, every science has its own areas of study. History studies events of the past.

Individual or collective actions of human beings have consequences. They result in an environment that may be either favourable or unfavourable for the progress of society. This affects our day-to-day life. For example, if the people of a village work together and help one another, the village makes good progress. However, if the people cannot come together, it puts obstacles in the way of its development.

History attempts to find out answers to many questions by studying the way of thinking of past societies, their actions

and the consequences. The study of history makes it possible for us to study what is and what is not favourable for the progress of human society. History thus provides us with guidelines about how we should behave today in order to shape a good future.

By telling us the life stories of great people, history also serves to inspire and to motivate us. By studying history, we get to know about the give and take that took place between our own and other civilizations. We learn about the progress of human civilization. We also understand how people's way of life went on changing.

Every village, city, district, state and country has its own history. Similarly, the earth, its mountains, water bodies, the animal world, mankind all have their own history.

Every science, too, has a history. It tells of the many scientific discoveries that brought about important changes in human civilization and of the scientists who made those discoveries.

1.4 The past and the future

The past, present and future are linked by a continuous chain of events, for example, the Indian people fought against the British government to get Independence. This is a historical action. As a result, India became an independent nation on 15th August 1947. So, we can say that Independence was a consequence

of an action, i.e., the Indian people's struggle for Independence.

In this way, the events of today are linked with past actions. When we understand this, we realize that the future depends on past events. This is what we learn from history. For example, we learn that man began to make tools from materials available in nature, that he learnt how to make use of fire and that he invented the wheel.

The next generations added to these developments. Technology developed

further hand in hand with the physical and intellectual development of man. This process is going on continuously even today. Inventions of today are only possible on the foundation of the discoveries and inventions of the past.



Inventions and technology of the past



Inventions and technology of the present

Exercises

1. Fill in the blanks.

- (a) The science that tries to understand past events is called -----.
- (b) History is not written solely on the basis of -----.

2. Answer each question in one sentence.

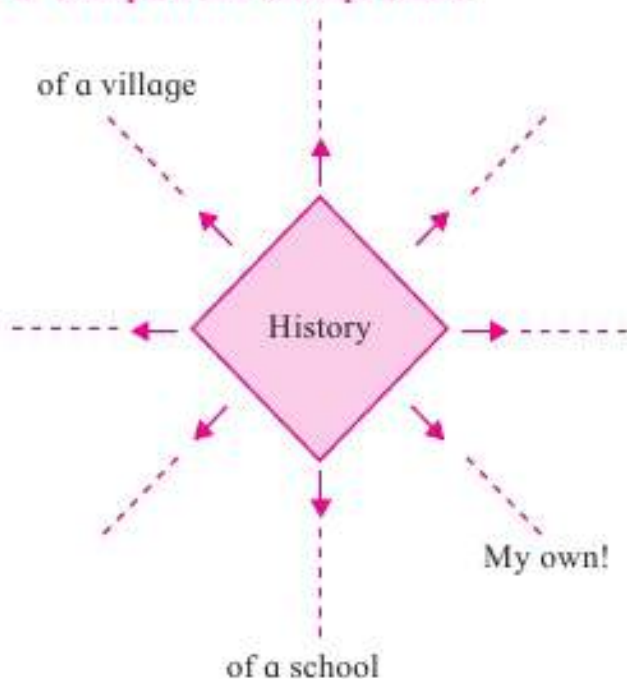
- (a) What is the scientific method?
- (b) Of which action is India's Independence the result?

- (c) What does the study of history make possible?

3. Answer the following questions in brief.

- (a) Why is history considered to be a scientific discipline?
- (b) What is it that puts obstacles in the way of village development?

4. Complete the concept chart.



5. Classify the sources of history using the chart given here.

Sources of history – coins, letters, forts, traditional songs, pots, copper plates,

old structures, stone inscriptions, folk songs, pillars, biographies, rock-cut caves, folk tales.

Material	Written	Oral

Activities

- Collect information and pictures of the historical structures and ancient religious places in your village/city/neighbouring area.
- Make a list of the sources that you would use to find out the history of your school. Write down the kind of information that you could get from each of them, for example, the foundation stone of the school : the date of foundation, the person who inaugurated it, etc.

Do you know this?

Archaeology

In many places, we see remains of objects and structures created in ancient times by human societies of those times. All of those remains are not always found above the ground. Some get buried under layers of soil that floods or strong winds deposit over them in the course of many years. The remains of human and animal skeletons also get buried in the same way. The science that studies past cultures with the help of ancient remains is called archaeology. The Latin word 'archaeos' means 'ancient'.

Archaeologists locate, dig out and study ancient remains. The method of digging the ground in order to bring to light any ancient remains that lie buried there is called 'archaeological excavation'. Such excavations are done very carefully, and each layer of soil that is dug up is examined scientifically.

The first step is to identify and make a careful record of places where such ancient remains may be found. The next step is to plan where to dig and how to go about the digging.

While studying the ancient remains, archaeologists try to find answers to many questions like the following :

- To which period do the remains belong?
- To which civilization do the remains belong?
- What was the daily life of the people of that civilization like?
- What kind of relations did those people have with people of other civilizations?
- In what ways did they make use of the natural resources in their surroundings in order to meet their own needs?