

MAIN IDEAS

- 1 **Culture** Historians often ask questions about the past in order to understand the present.
- 2 **Culture** Historians use a variety of methods to help them answer questions about what happened in the past.
- 3 **Culture** Historians examine evidence and draw conclusions as they answer historical questions.



▲ **Cave Paintings** Caves throughout the world have ancient paintings of human hands. These hand paintings were found in a cave in Argentina. Historians believe that the hands marked territorial ownership or served as the artists' signature.

TAKING NOTES

Reading Skill: Categorizing

When you categorize information, you organize similar kinds of information into groups. In Lesson 4, you will read about the three main jobs of a historian. Record what you learn in a web diagram like the one below.



Skillbuilder Handbook, page R6

Words to Know

Understanding the following words will help you read this lesson:

recounting telling in detail (page 39)

Her recounting of the tribe's origins was filled with dramatic descriptions and memorable details.

system group of things that work together as a whole (page 40)

Their belief systems mostly came from the society in which they lived.

quarry open pit from which stones are taken (page 43)

Historians don't know how workers moved the enormous stones from the quarries to the building sites.

How Historians Study the Past

TERMS & NAMES

primary source
secondary source
oral history

Build on What You Know You may know where your parents or ancestors came from and some of the stories about them. Relatives and their stories help people understand their family history. Now learn what historians use to help them understand the past.

Understanding the Past

- 1 ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What questions do historians ask to help them understand the past?

People investigate their family history to find out about their ancestors. In the process, however, they also find out about themselves. We study world history for the same reasons.

Why Study History? What has already happened to a person, a family, or a society affects what will occur today and in the future. But history is much more than simply recounting and studying past events. Examining a historical event also involves studying a society's culture, religion, politics, and economics.

When historians examine past events, they try to find patterns. They look for causes and effects that explain how and why events happened. They also try to understand why some ideas and traditions last and why others die out. Just as important, historians attempt to see the past through the eyes of the people who lived it. By doing so, historians gain greater insight into human nature and answer important historical questions.

Storyteller This West African griot, or storyteller, memorizes and tells the stories that make up his village's history. ▼



Asking Historical Questions As historians study the past, they ask themselves questions like those below. These questions help historians compare different societies and draw conclusions about the past.

- How have groups or societies interacted, and what have been the results?
- How have leaders governed societies?
- How have belief systems developed and changed?
- How have societies dealt with differences among their people?
- How have societies tried to protect people's security?
- How are societies similar and different?

REVIEW Why do we study history?

The Historian's Tools

2 ESSENTIAL QUESTION What methods do historians use to help them answer questions about what happened in the past?

When you hang up a picture, you use a hammer to pound in the nail. Historians also use tools to do their job. These tools include primary sources, secondary sources, and oral history.

Primary Sources A **primary source** is something written or created by a person who witnessed a historical event. You will learn about an ancient primary source on the next page. Primary sources include letters, diaries, eyewitness articles, videotapes, speeches, and photographs. Artifacts, such as the human-made tools below, are also primary sources.

Artifacts

These ax heads from different prehistoric periods show historians how early peoples' toolmaking ability advanced over time.



▲ 200,000 B.C. In the Paleolithic Age, humans made tools by chipping stone.



▲ 3000 B.C. In the Neolithic Age, humans learned to polish tools.



▲ 600 B.C. By the Bronze Age, humans had learned to shape a thin ax head.

Primary Source

The Rosetta Stone

The Rosetta Stone is a primary source from ancient Egypt that dates back to 196 B.C. Historians found the stone in 1799. They know now that the three different kinds of writing on the stone record the deeds of a young Egyptian ruler. The first writing is shown in the top inset. The other two writings are shown in the bottom inset. But no one could read much of the first two writings until 1822, when a French scholar cracked their code. The Rosetta Stone provided important information about the writing system of the ancient Egyptians.

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

What questions did the Rosetta Stone help historians answer?



Secondary Sources Historians also use secondary sources to learn about past events. **Secondary sources** are written after a historical event by people who did not witness the event. Books, paintings, and media reports that are based on primary sources and appear after an event are all secondary sources. Sometimes secondary sources are the only ones that are available. They can sometimes provide more balanced views of an event than primary sources.

Oral History When cultures have no written records, historians rely on oral history as a resource. **Oral history** is made up of all the unwritten verbal accounts of events. It includes the stories, customs, and songs that a culture has told and passed from generation to generation. For example, West African storytellers, like the one shown on page 39, have memorized and told family histories and the traditions and stories of their villages for hundreds of years.

REVIEW What tools do historians use to learn about the past?

How Knowledge of the Past Changes

3 ESSENTIAL QUESTION What steps do historians take as they answer historical questions?

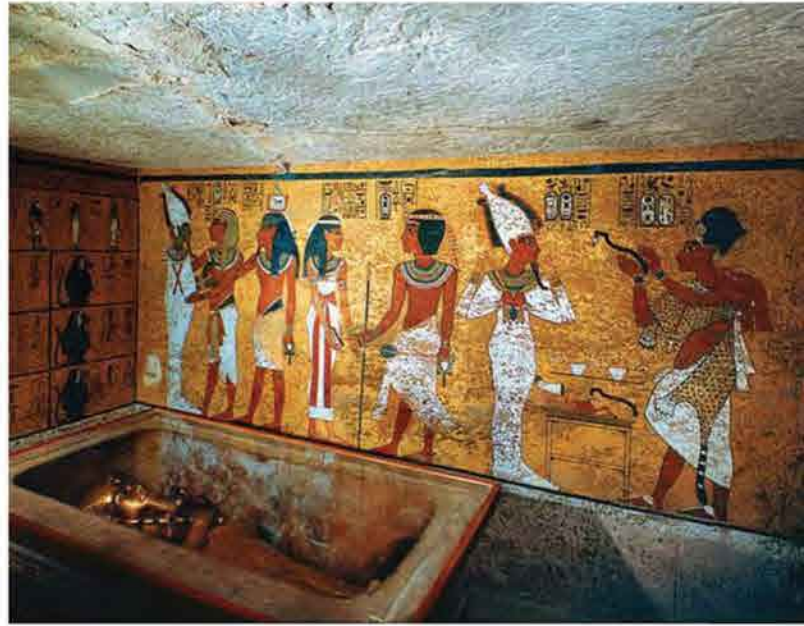
Detectives use fingerprints and other evidence to solve crimes. Historians act as detectives too. They use evidence from primary, secondary, and oral sources.

Fact or Fiction? Historical evidence isn't always as simple as a bloodstain at a crime scene. Historians sometimes have more information than they can use when they try to answer a question. They must sort through all of the information and choose what's most important and most trustworthy as evidence.

In addition, sometimes what historians thought was true turns out to be false. For instance, one historian proved that the so-called mummy's curse was false. According to legend, the curse would kill anyone who entered the tomb of an ancient Egyptian ruler.

Many people believed the curse had caused the death of English archaeologist Lord Carnarvon. He died suddenly in 1923, shortly after entering the tomb of ancient Egyptian ruler "King Tut." People believed that the other archaeologists who had entered the tomb between 1923 and 1926 would also die as a result of the curse. However, a historian later examined the archaeologists' death records. Their average age at death was 70 years. The evidence did not support the existence of the mummy's curse.

Drawing Conclusions The mummy's curse was easy to disprove. But not all historical questions are so easily answered. Sometimes different historians arrive at different conclusions based on the same facts.



▲ **King Tut's Tomb** This photograph shows the interior of King Tut's tomb. Some people believed that exposure to the tomb killed Lord Carnarvon.

On pages 2–3, you learned that Stonehenge was built out of stones dragged from faraway quarries. Most historians agree that the monument was begun around 3000 B.C. as a place of worship. Earlier theories held that it was built as a temple for a group of priests who practiced magic. However, later experts realized that the monument was finished long before these priests lived in the area. Today some historians suggest that the builders of Stonehenge were sun worshipers. But other experts maintain that Stonehenge will never reveal all its secrets.

REVIEW How are historians like detectives?

Lesson Summary

- Asking historical questions can help solve mysteries about the past.
- A historian's most important tools are primary sources, secondary sources, and oral histories.
- Examining evidence can lead to a new answer to a question or deepen a mystery.

Why It Matters Now . . .

The answers to historical questions can help people as they respond to today's events and challenges.

4 Lesson Review

Terms & Names

1. Explain the importance of
primary source secondary source oral history

Using Your Notes

Categorizing Use your completed web diagram to answer the following question:

2. What is the difference between primary and secondary sources?



Activity

Recording an Oral History Interview an older relative about a historical event that occurred in his or her lifetime. Use the interview to write down what you learned about the event.



Main Ideas

3. Name two of the questions historians ask themselves when they study the past.
4. What resources do historians particularly rely on when a society does not have a written history?
5. What do historians do when they sort through evidence, such as that involving the "curse" of King Tut's tomb?

Critical Thinking

6. **Distinguishing Fact from Opinion** List two facts and two opinions about Stonehenge.
7. **Comparing and Contrasting** Compare a historian's job with that of an archaeologist.