

1 Historical concepts and skills

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LESSON 1.1 Overview

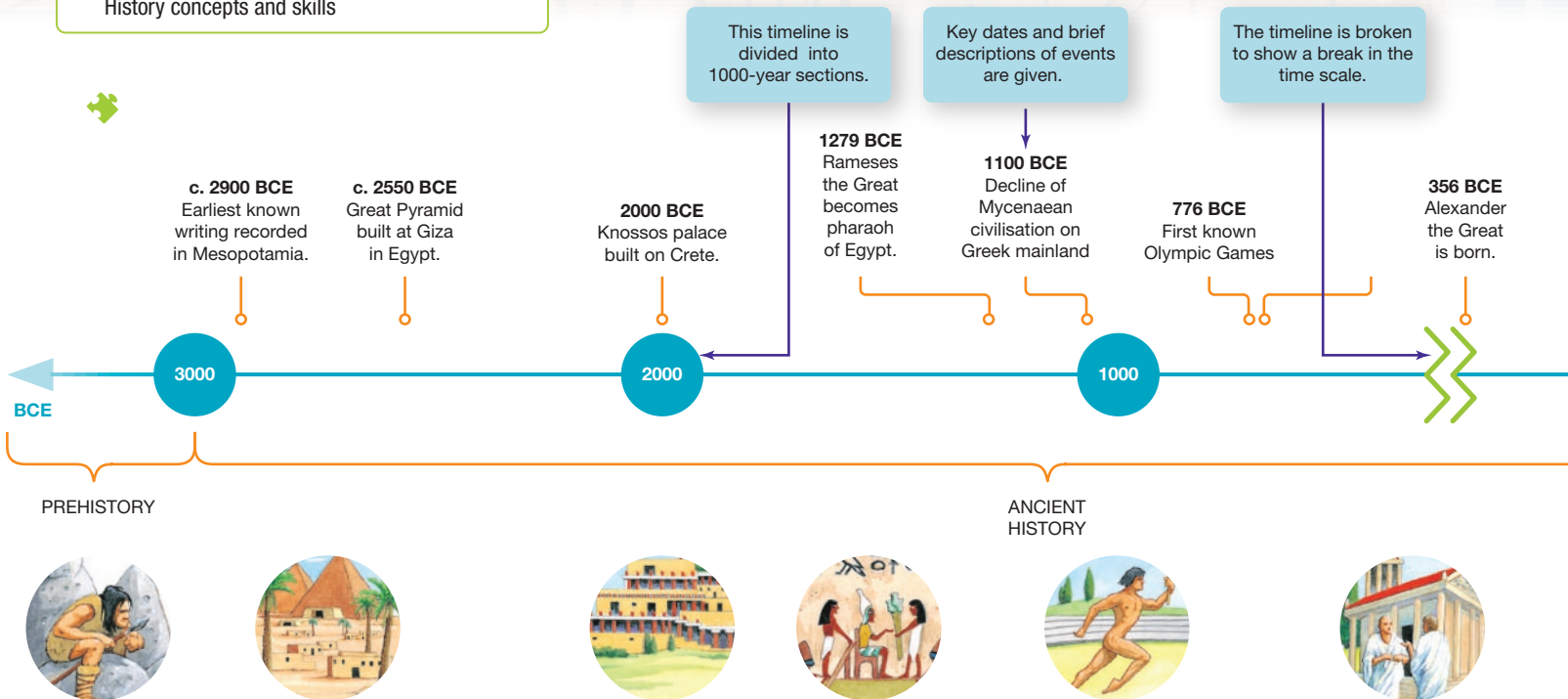
INQUIRY QUESTION

Why is the ancient world important to study, and what skills do I need to understand History?

Our study starts in a period called the Old Stone Age, when the ancestors of every modern human on our planet lived in Africa. We then follow the path of these human-like species, who migrated out of Africa less than 100 000 years ago. Most archaeologists believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians arrived in Australia between 50 000 and 65 000 years ago and possibly much earlier, spreading throughout the land over many thousands of years. Approximately 11 000 years ago, people in the Middle East changed from hunting and gathering to a way of life based on farming. Gradually, farming spread, enabling people to live in settled communities from times around 3000 and 2000 BCE.

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-  **eWorkbook**
Customisable worksheets for this topic
-  **Digital document**
Key terms glossary
-  **Video eLesson**
History concepts and skills



SkillBuilder

Use the SkillBuilder activities to develop these Historical concepts and skills:

- HISTORICAL QUESTIONS
- CHRONOLOGY
- USING HISTORICAL SOURCES
- CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
- CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES
- HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
- COMMUNICATING



Where appropriate, a timeline is divided into eras.

Brackets are used to mark a specific period of history.

221 BCE
First Qin emperor unifies China.

146 BCE
Rome conquers Greece.

392 CE
Christianity becomes the official religion of Roman Empire.

632 CE
Death of Mohammed

900 CE
Most Mayan cities in decline (South America)

1340 CE
Black Death reaches Europe.

1500 CE
World sea exploration begins.

1789 CE
French Revolution

BCE

CE

1000

2000

CE

MEDIEVAL HISTORY

MODERN HISTORY



LEARNING INTENTION

By the end of this lesson you should be able to:

- **identify** the historical concepts and skills
- **explain** why they are important.

1.2.1 Introduction

Although the ancient **civilisations** disappeared a long time ago, much **evidence** of the ancient past has been left behind. Our modern society can trace aspects of its origins back to people or civilisations that existed thousands of years ago.

We can thank the ancient Egyptians for some aspects of modern architecture and the art of writing; the ancient Greeks for developments in medicine, mathematics, science and philosophy; the ancient Romans for their influence on art and architecture and our modern political and legal system; and the ancient Chinese for many technologies, including the compass, paper and printing, and gunpowder.

Our societies operate in many ways that are similar to those that existed thousands of years ago. We, as historians, can study similarities from the evidence that these societies left behind, examining such things as art and religion, currency, laws and regulations, trade routes, writing and language.

1.2.2 Historical concepts and skills

Historians study past civilisations, cultures and societies to understand how people lived, their ideas, customs, rulers and livelihoods. They examine sources to explain how lives were shaped by others and events. This topic covers concepts and skills related to discovering **ancient history** in Australia and worldwide, exploring the development of early societies. You will become proficient in these concepts through future lessons.

TABLE 1 The concepts and skills that you will use in History.

Concepts and skills	Description
Asking historical questions	Shaping our understanding of the past by the questions we ask and the responses we receive.
Sequencing chronology	Arranging historical events in order of time.
Using historical sources as evidence	Investigating written and non-written materials (sources) that can give us information about the past; evidence is the information we get from sources that is useful to our investigations.
Identifying continuity and change	Considering the parts of life or society that have stayed the same and those that have changed over a period of time.
Analysing cause and consequence	Looking at the relationship between historical events or actions; e.g. when one event or action happens because of the other.
Determining historical significance	Considering the importance given to events of the past.
Communicating	Being able to express our interpretations of the past by constructing a historical argument using knowledge and evidence.

SOURCE 1 We can also view the concepts and skills diagrammatically.



The concepts and skills you will learn while studying History are also important in many careers. These skills will help you to:

- carry out research
- draw conclusions and make decisions based on evidence
- recognise the difference between fact and opinion
- understand that more than one way of thinking about any problem is usually possible
- think critically
- communicate effectively.

A knowledge of history is important in our everyday lives too. And history gives many people great personal pleasure. How much more enjoyment do people derive from travel, books and movies when they know about the history that shaped the places they visit, or the stories they read or watch on a screen?

1.2.3 Historical questions

When studying History, our investigation of the past is guided and shaped by the questions we ask. We can ask a range of different questions to find the desired information we seek. Knowing how to phrase these questions assists our research of the past.

Questions can be developed using the historical concepts and skills listed in this topic, such as **cause and consequence**, **continuity and change**, **significance** and evidence.

TABLE 2 Questions that could be commonly asked in the History classroom.

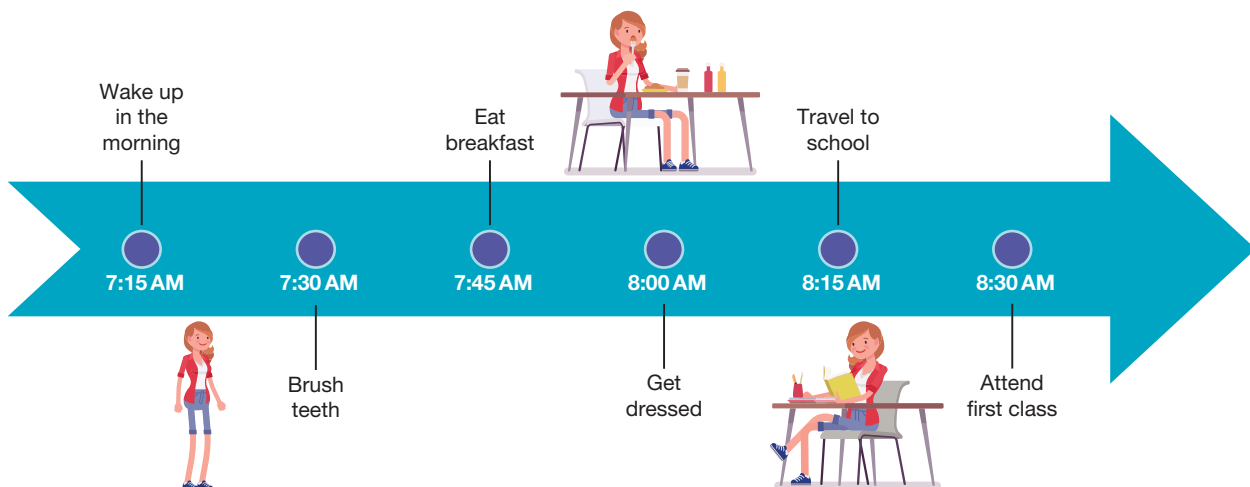
Historical thinking concepts and skills	Example of questions
Sequencing chronology	When does my timeline of events begin and when does it end? What event appears before ... and what happened after? What event caused ... to occur?
Using historical sources as evidence	Who wrote this source? Why did they write this source? What does this source tell me about the historical period I am studying, and what does it not tell me?
Identifying continuity and change	At the beginning of the historical period I am studying, what was life like in regard to ... (power structures/economy/people/ideas/technology)? By the end of the historical period I am studying, what changed in regard to ... (power structures/economy/people/ideas/technology)? What/who caused these changes to occur? How quickly did these changes occur? What remained the same? What/who stopped these things from changing?
Analysing causes and consequences	What were the short-term causes of ...? What were the long-term causes of ...? What were the political/economic/environmental causes of ...? What were the immediate consequences of ...? What were the long-term consequences of ...? What were the political/economic/environmental consequences of ...?
Determining historical significance	Why is this person/event/idea/movement important? How important was this person/event/idea/movement to those living during the historical period? How many people were affected by this person/event/idea/movement? How is this person/event/idea/movement remembered today?

1.2.4 Chronology

Chronology involves recording events in order of time. It is an important skill because historians need to know the order in which events occurred so they can get a sense of what happened. A story will make more sense if we start at the beginning and work towards the end. Historians also sequence events chronologically to track changes that have happened over time and the causes of these changes.

A historian will use a **timeline** to see how one event might have contributed to another. A timeline representing the sequence of events in your morning can be seen in **SOURCE 2**.

SOURCE 2 A simple timeline representing the sequence of events during a typical morning



1.2.5 Using historical sources

Evidence refers to the facts that indicate whether something is true or really happened. Sources are needed to prove or disprove events from the past.

Sources

Sources are any written or non-written materials that can be used to investigate and provide information about the past. We can use sources from the time we are studying, and after the time, to explore the different points of view, or **perspectives**, of people from the past.

Primary and secondary sources

Historians can use two types of sources to investigate events from the past.

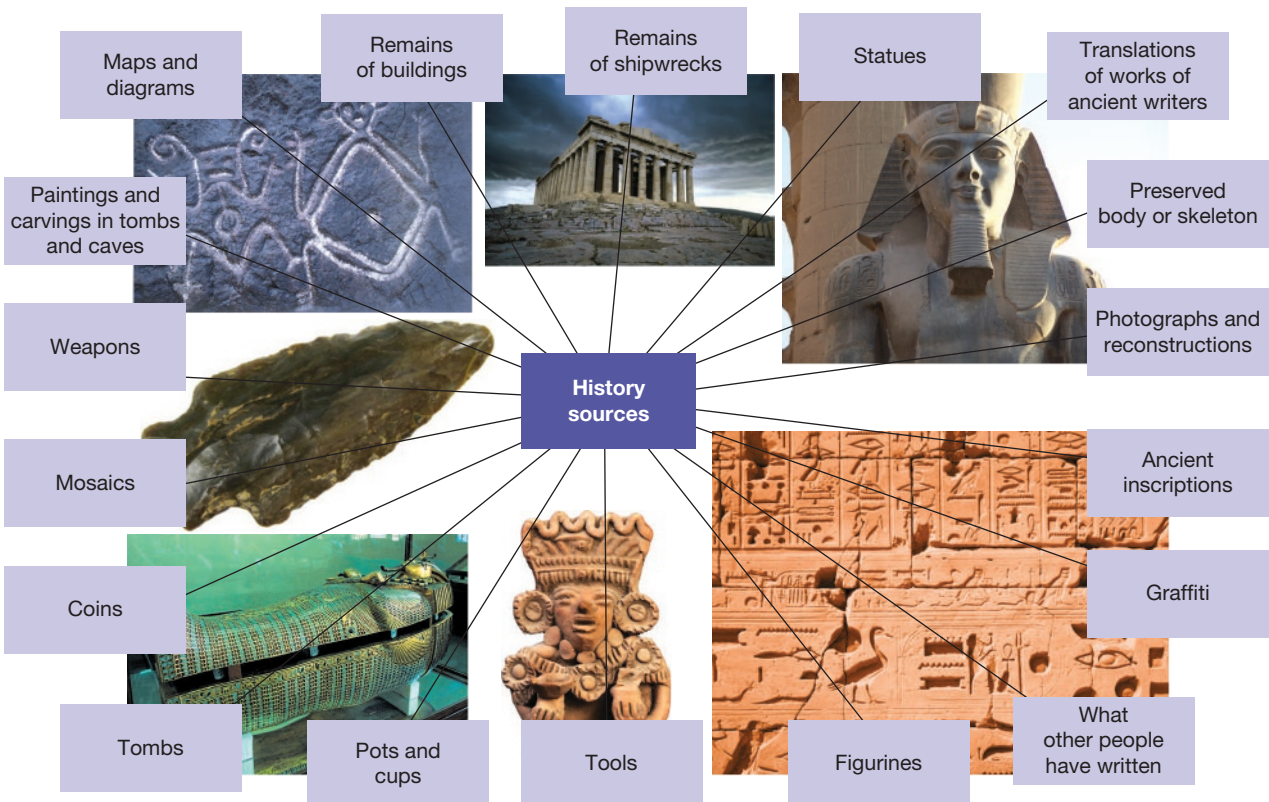
- **Primary sources** were created or written in the period that the historian is investigating.
- **Secondary sources** are written or created by people living after the period that the historian is studying.

Primary sources might include bones, stone tools, art, photographs or many other traces. Written primary sources can include such things as poems, songs, letters, newspapers, speeches, myths and legends.

Secondary sources can include books, articles, websites, models, timelines, computer software and documentary films. To create secondary sources, historians often:

- locate information in primary sources
- interpret that information
- use it to explain what happened.

SOURCE 3 The many different types of primary source



Analysing evidence

When using historical sources as evidence, historians need to ask questions of each source, such as: Where did the source come from (origin)? Why was it created (purpose)? A source may be a fact or someone's opinion — that is, it could be **biased**. One way to test sources for reliability is to compare them with other sources. If this evidence leads to the same conclusion, we call it 'supporting evidence'. If it leads to different conclusions, we have 'contradictory evidence'.

When we use sources to try to find out about the past, we must ask some questions. For example:

- What type of source is this?
- Who wrote or created this source and when was it written or created?
- Why was this source written or created?
- What evidence does the source provide?
- What was happening at the time the source was written or created?
- Can I trust the source?

1.2.6 Continuity and change

When studying different societies, historians can see that some aspects of life have remained the same over time, while other aspects of life have changed dramatically. This concept is known as 'identifying continuity and change'.

Change refers to something that is different from what has occurred in the past. It may occur over a long period of time or may occur dramatically and suddenly.

Continuity refers to the things that endure, relatively unchanged, over time. You will find that many things remain the same across long periods in history. Sometimes these continuities have lasted into modern times.

SOURCE 4 The ruins of an ancient house at Sardis, located in present-day Türkiye (formally Turkey)



SkillBuilder discussion

Continuity and change

1. Consider house building. Look at the images — what are the main changes in construction?
2. What remains the same?

SOURCE 5 A modern suburban house in Western Australia



1.2.7 Causes and consequences

Once historical events have been placed into chronological order, investigating how one event has caused another event and how events are connected becomes easier. We can also look at the developments that have happened in both the short term and over a longer period of time.

In history, events do not occur without reason. Every event will have a cause and is likely to result in several effects or consequences. Identifying patterns of cause and effect is an essential skill for historians that allows them to explain how and why things happened in the past.

Causes may include people, societies, politics, beliefs, economics or any other historical factor. Likewise, effects can include impacts on people, societies, politics, beliefs, economics or any other historical factor. Not all causes leading to a specific event are equally significant — some causes may have more influence than others.

Some causes occur immediately before an event begins, while others may have existed for several years, decades or centuries before the event. Some effects occur immediately after an event or action, while others may occur years, decades or centuries following the event or action.

1.2.8 Historical significance

Historical significance relates to the importance of particular aspects of the past such as events, individuals or groups, developments, ideas or movements, and historical sites. We need to make judgements about what is important and what is less important.

When we try to establish the significance of an aspect of the past, we must consider a number of questions. For example:

- How relevant was it to people living at that time?
- How many people were affected?
- How did it change people's lives?
- How long were people's lives affected?
- How important and long lasting were the consequences?
- How relevant is it to the contemporary world?

SkillBuilder discussion

Historical significance

What aspects of your life as a student do you consider to be significant? For example, consider access to technology, the physical state of the space you use, the resources you can access or the subjects that you are studying.

Do you think that the things you consider to be significant were important 10, 50 or 100 years ago? Do you think they will be significant 50 years from now?

1.2.9 Communicating

As a result of our investigations, we can apply our new knowledge of a historical period and communicate it, using facts and evidence. We can present our interpretations of the past in a variety of ways including written and multimodal presentations, oral presentations and other methods. Use an appropriate and clear format to communicate historical findings, including subheadings, guiding questions and formal language.

Furthermore, as historians, we must acknowledge the sources we use and the interpretations of other historians in our work. This is called referencing. There are several guidelines to follow when referencing. Often, your school or teacher will have you follow a particular reference guide, which explains how to create a reference list.

1.2 SkillBuilder activity COMMUNICATING

1. In small groups, **construct** a list of ten events, places or people that you consider to be the most significant in world history. Rank them in order of historical significance and then share your responses with your classmates.
2. After you have shared your responses, **discuss** some of the reasons each of the lists is unique and what would cause the lists to be similar or different.

1.2 Exercise

learnon

Learning pathways

■ LEVEL 1

1, 2, 3, 8

■ LEVEL 2

4, 5, 6, 9

■ LEVEL 3

7, 10, 11

REMEMBER AND UNDERSTAND

1. What is heritage?
 - A. A record of past events in order of time
 - B. Information that has been passed from one person to another
 - C. Everything that has come down to us from the past
 - D. Information that indicates whether something is true or really happened
2. **Describe** the difference between primary sources and secondary sources.
3. Complete the following sentences by choosing words from the box.

Contestability	theory	debate	contradict	evidence
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- a. A hypothesis is a _____ or possible explanation that has to be tested by looking for _____ that might support it and other evidence that might _____ it.
 - b. _____ is the situation when particular interpretations of the past are open to _____.
4. **Describe** a way to test primary sources for reliability.
 5. **Explain** what the term 'bias' means and why we might not be able to trust a primary source.
 6.
 - a. What does it mean to empathise with the people you study?
 - b. Identify the questions you might consider when trying to understand the perspectives of people in the past.

ANALYSE AND APPLY

7. Each year, many countries donate money for conservation work to preserve historical sites. Why do you think so much effort goes into conserving traces of the past?
8. Look at the mind map in **SOURCE 3** and describe each of the types of sources pictured around the mind map.

EVALUATE AND COMMUNICATE

9. Suggest what we might learn about the past from old graffiti or one of the other types of primary sources listed in the **SOURCE 3** mind map.
10. **Explain** why it might be wrong to think that primary sources are more reliable than secondary sources.
11. Today we live in a world where people are sometimes killed over differences in religion. How might a knowledge of history help bring understanding between different religions?

Answers and sample responses for this topic are available online.

LESSON 1.3 SkillBuilder: Historical questions

online only

What are historical questions?

Historical questions may be asked to evaluate historical sources, examine cause and consequence, or how or why something happened.

LESSON 1.4 SkillBuilder: Chronology

online only

What is a timeline?

A timeline is a tool that arranges events in the order they occurred. It typically includes dates and descriptive labels. Timelines can span short periods or many centuries. They may be simple lines or visually detailed with colours and images.

LESSON 1.5 SkillBuilder: Using historical sources

online only

Why is it important to use historical sources?

Almost all our knowledge of Ancient Rome comes from primary sources. Works of art and writings tell us much about ancient Roman culture. Buildings and sculptures tell us about entertainment, technology, skills, religious ideas and values. Written records tell us about Roman ideas about politics, history, law and a vast range of other subjects.

LESSON 1.6 SkillBuilder: Continuity and change

online only

What are broad patterns of change?

During any period of history, some changes happen quickly and others occur slowly. Some changes affect only limited numbers of people, while others are widespread. Broad patterns of change are patterns of change that are extensive and widespread.

LESSON 1.7 SkillBuilder: Causes and consequences

online only

How do we analyse cause and consequence?

Analysing cause and consequence involves examining why certain events happened and understanding the impact they had.

This process requires identifying the different factors that contributed to an event and evaluating their relative importance. It also involves looking at the immediate and long-term effects of the event on people, communities and broader historical developments.

LESSON 1.8 SkillBuilder: Historical significance

online only

How do we analyse the historical significance of an event or person?

Historical significance is a decision that modern people make about what is important from our past. In deciding whether something has historical significance, we can consider specific events, people, locations and ideas as being particularly important to us.

Since significance is a decision that we make, it means that different people can decide that different things are significant, or that they can disagree about the reasons a particular person, event, place or idea is important.

LESSON 1.9 SkillBuilder: Communicating

online only

How do we communicate our historical interpretations, based on evidence from sources, with the right concepts, knowledge and terms?

Communicating involves using the correct terminology and metalanguage in a sentence to discuss sources or historical skills and concepts. It is essential to developing a coherent argument about the historical event, movement or figure being discussed.

LESSON 1.10 Review

1.10.1 Key knowledge summary

Use this dot point summary to review the content covered in this topic.

1.2 History concepts and skills

- Historians investigate and interpret the past.
- History helps us to understand the present and what the future may hold.
- History provides us with essential skills.
- The seven Historical concepts and skills that you will develop throughout your course are:
 - *Asking historical questions*: This involves asking questions in a way that helps to shape our understanding of the past.
 - *Sequencing chronology*: This involves understanding the sequence of historical events and placing them in a timeline. It helps you to comprehend the order in which events occurred and how they relate to each other over time. This skill is essential for constructing a coherent narrative of the past and understanding the progression of historical developments.
 - *Using historical sources as evidence*: This skill focuses on the ability to locate, analyse and interpret various types of historical sources, such as documents, artefacts and oral histories. You learn to evaluate the reliability and perspective of sources, which is crucial for constructing accurate historical accounts and understanding different viewpoints.
 - *Identifying continuity and change*: This involves identifying what has stayed the same and what has evolved over time. This skill helps you to recognise patterns and trends in history, understand the reasons behind changes, and appreciate the persistence of certain elements across different periods.
 - *Analysing causes and consequences*: This involves analysing the reasons behind historical events and their outcomes. You learn to identify and evaluate the factors that led to specific events and the short-term and long-term effects of these events. Understanding causes and consequences is key to comprehending the complexities of historical processes.
 - *Determining historical significance*: This refers to the importance of certain events, individuals or developments in history. You learn to assess the impact and lasting influence of historical phenomena, considering factors such as the scale of change, the number of people affected and the duration of the impact.
 - *Communicating*: This focuses on the ability to effectively convey historical knowledge and understanding through various forms of communication, including writing, speaking and using digital media. You learn to present your ideas clearly and persuasively, using evidence to support your arguments and engaging with different audiences.

1.10.2 Key terms

ancient history the period from the beginning of civilisation to the fall of the Roman Empire

artefact an object made or changed by humans

biased one-sided or prejudiced; seeing something from just one point of view

cause and consequence the concept that every historical event will have a cause, and every event or action is likely to be the cause of subsequent effects or consequences

chronology a record of past events in order of time, from Latin *chronos* meaning time and *logos*, meaning to work out

civilisations societies that have towns and features such as complex forms of government and religion

continuity and change the concept that while many changes occur over time, some things remain constant

evidence information that indicates whether something is true or really happened

hypothesis (plural: hypotheses) a theory or possible explanation

Latin the language of Ancient Rome and its empire

perspectives point of view or attitude

prehistory the period before writing was invented

primary sources objects and documents that were created or written in the period of time that the historian is investigating

secondary sources reconstructions of the past written or created by people living at a time after the period that the historian is studying

significance the importance assigned to particular aspects of the past (e.g. events, developments, movements and historical sites)

timeline a diagrammatic tool representing a period of time, on which events are placed in chronological order

1.10.3 Reflection

Complete the following to reflect on your learning.

Revisit the Inquiry question posed in the Overview.

Why is the ancient world important to study, and what skills do I need to understand History?

1. Now that you have completed this topic, what is your view on the questions? Discuss with a partner. Has your learning in this topic changed your view? If so, how?
2. Write a paragraph in response to one of the inquiry questions, outlining your views.

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eWorkbooks

Customisable worksheets for this topic
Reflection



Digital document

Key terms glossary

1.10 Review exercise

Learning pathways

■ LEVEL 1

1, 2, 8, 13

■ LEVEL 2

3, 4, 5, 9, 10

■ LEVEL 3

6, 7, 11, 12

REMEMBER AND UNDERSTAND

1. We study history in an effort to learn about what?
 - A. Our past
 - B. Our heritage
 - C. Our future
 - D. Our grandparents
2. What are historical sources?
 - A. Written materials that provide information about the past
 - B. Non-written materials that provide information about the past
 - C. Stories from people who lived during the time of the event we are studying
 - D. All of the above
3. How can we, as historians, test the reliability of evidence from sources?
 - A. Compare them with other sources that are available
 - B. Ask a teacher
 - C. Ask Google
 - D. Check for bias

4. Why do historians make use of chronology, sequencing and timelines?
 - A. To investigate how events have happened from start to finish
 - B. To investigate the relationship between different events
 - C. To investigate what has changed about society and what has stayed the same
 - D. All of the above
5. What must historians be able to do to identify cause and effect?
 - A. Place events in chronological order
 - B. Create timelines
 - C. Identify patterns of cause and effect
 - D. Explain the relationship between two events
6. Why do different perspectives of events occur?
 - A. Differing values and attitudes
 - B. Differing age and gender
 - C. Differing social status
 - D. All of the above
7. What does determining historical significance mean a historian can do?
 - A. Explain all the important events that have taken place in history
 - B. Make judgements about what is more important and what is less important
 - C. Decide what is important and what is not
 - D. Argue that one event is more significant than another
8. When do historical debates occur?
 - A. Many sources of evidence are available about the same event.
 - B. Some sources of evidence contradict other sources.
 - C. Evidence is missing about an event a historian is investigating.
 - D. All of the above
9. Why is gaining confidence and expertise with history skills important?
 - A. Learning about our past can help us to predict what may happen in the future.
 - B. Critical thinking and effective communication skills are important to employers.
 - C. Knowledge of our own history is important to our everyday lives.
 - D. All of the above

ANALYSE AND APPLY

10. **Explain** what a historian is doing when identifying continuity and change.
11. **Contrast** short-term causes and effects and long-term causes and effects.
12. Think of something that happens in our own time that some people believe is wrong. An example could be the way some countries are wealthy while in others children die of starvation and preventable diseases. Do you think that at some time in the future people might consider ours to have been an unjust age? **Justify** your answer.
13. **List** three features of a well-constructed timeline.

Answers and sample responses for this topic are available online.
