A historian is a person who studies and writes about the people and events of the past. Historians find out how people lived, what happened to them, and what happened around them. They look for the reasons behind events. They also study the effects of events.

Have you ever wondered if you could be a historian? To answer that question, you will need to find out how history is researched and written. Historians use a number of tools to research and organize information. You can learn about these tools in the next few pages. As you study this textbook, you will see that these tools will help you understand world history.

Archaeologists are scientists who unearth the remains of the past. Historians depend on their work.
Measuring Time

Main Idea
Historians rely on calendars and the dating of events to measure time.

Reading Focus Have you ever thought about traveling back in time to a place long ago? Historians do just that. Read to see how historians keep track of past events.

Calendars Historians rely on calendars, or dating systems, to measure time. Cultures throughout the world have developed different calendars based on important events in their history. Western nations begin their calendar on the year in which Jesus was thought to have been born. The Jewish calendar begins about 3,760 years before the Christian calendar. This is the time when Jewish tradition says the world was created. Muslims date their calendar from the time their first leader, Muhammad, left the city of Makkah for Madinah. This was A.D. 622 in the Christian calendar.

The dates in this book are based on the Western calendar. In the Western calendar, the years before the birth of Jesus are known as “B.C.,” or “before Christ.” The years after are called “A.D.,” or anno domini. This phrase comes from the Latin language and means “in the year of the Lord.”

Dating Events To date events before the birth of Christ, 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. (Notice that “A.D.” is written before the date, while “B.C.” is written following the date.) Therefore, a date in the 100 years before the birth of Christ lies between 100 B.C. and A.D. 1.

To date events after the birth of Christ, or “A.D.,” historians count forward, starting at A.D. 1. A date in the first 100 years after the birth of Christ is between A.D. 1 and A.D. 100.

Thinking Like a Historian
1. Identify What do “B.C.” and “A.D.” mean? How are they used?
2. Dating Events What year came after 184 B.C.?
3. Comparing and Contrasting As you read, use the Internet to find out the current year in the calendars mentioned in your text. Why are calendars different from culture to culture?
Organizing Time

Main Idea

Historians organize history by dividing it into blocks of time.

Reading Focus  Have you ever thought about the names given to a block of events, such as “summer vacation” or “the baseball season?” Read to see how historians use names to describe different stretches of time in history.

Periods of History  Historians divide history into blocks of time known as periods, or eras. For example, a period of 10 years is called a decade. A period of 100 years is known as a century. Centuries are grouped into even longer time periods, which are given names.

The first of these long periods is called Prehistory. Prehistory refers to the time before people developed writing, about 5,500 years ago. This is followed by the period known as Ancient History, ending c. A.D. 500. (c., or circa, means “about”). Historians call the next thousand years the Middle Ages, or the medieval period. From c. 1500, Modern History begins...
and continues to the present day. In this book, you will study the history of the world from prehistory to the beginning of the modern period.

**What Is a Time Line?** Which came first: the American Civil War or World War II? Did the train come before or after the invention of the airplane? In studying the past, historians focus on *chronology*, or the order of dates in which events happened.

You might be wondering how to make sense of the flow of dates and events. An easy way is to use or make a time line. A *time line* is a diagram that shows the order of events within a period of time.

Most time lines are divided into sections in which the years are evenly spaced. In some cases, however, a spread of time may be too long to show all of the years in even spaces. To save space, a period of time may be omitted from the time line. Where this happens, a slanted or jagged line appears on the time line to show a break in the even spacing of events. For example, the time line above shows a break between 1500 B.C. and 800 B.C.

A time line also labels events. Each event on the time line appears beside the date when the event took place. Sometimes events and their dates are shown on a single time line. In other cases, two or more time lines are stacked one on top of the other. These are called multilevel time lines. They help you to compare events in different places at certain periods of time. For example, the multilevel time line above shows events in three ancient civilizations from 2500 B.C. to 650 B.C. The skill “Reading a Time Line” on page 711 will help you learn to work with time lines.

**Thinking Like a Historian**

1. **Reading a Time Line** Look over the time line above to get an idea of what a time line shows. What is the title? When does it begin and end? What two features make this time line different from many other time lines? Why are they used?

2. **Understanding a Time Line** Why do you think the dates on the time line are marked with a “c.”?

3. **Making a Time Line** Create a time line using the terms B.M.B. (before my birth) and A.M.B. (after my birth). Fill in the time line with five key events that happened before and after you were born. Illustrate the time line with copies of photos from your family album.
How Does a Historian Work?

**Main Idea**
Historians study a variety of sources to learn about the past.

**Reading Focus** Have you ever searched for clues on a treasure hunt? Read to find out how historians look for clues to create a written record about the past.

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**Where Is the Evidence?** Historians begin by asking questions, such as: Why did two particular countries go to war? What effect did their fighting have on peoples’ lives? How does the conflict influence our world today? Such questions help historians identify and focus on historical problems.

Historians generally find evidence in primary sources and secondary sources. **Primary sources** are firsthand pieces of evidence from people who saw or experienced an event. They include written documents, such as letters, diaries, and official records. They also include spoken interviews as well as objects, such as photos, paintings, clothing, and tools. The skill “Analyzing Primary Source Documents” on page 716 will give you a chance to work with written primary sources.

**Secondary sources**, on the other hand, are created after the events by people who played no part in them. Secondary sources are partially based on primary sources. They include biographies, encyclopedias, and history books—even this textbook.

Historians study secondary sources for background information and for a larger view of an event. However, to get new evidence that advances knowledge, historians must turn to the firsthand information found only in primary sources.

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**Examining Sources**
Historians analyze, or examine, primary and secondary sources. First, they determine **where and when** a source was created. Another important question historians consider is **why** a source was created. Was it a letter meant to be kept secret? Was it a government document published for all citizens to read?

**Can the Sources Be Trusted?** Historians examine sources for **credibility**, or truthfulness. This is because each source reflects a **point of view**, or a general attitude about people and life. The creator of a source uses his or her point of view to decide what events were important, which people were key players, and what details were worth recording. Sometimes point of view is expressed as a **bias**, or an unreasoned, emotional judgment about people and events.

Historians try to be aware of point of view and bias both in their sources and in themselves. Therefore, they check new...
Historians piece together the credible evidence and draw conclusions. In drawing conclusions, they use their own thinking and knowledge of the past to interpret, or explain, the meaning of the events.

**Cause and Effect**

Historical events are linked by cause and effect. A *cause* is what makes an event happen. The event that happens as a result of the cause is known as an *effect*. Historians look for cause-and-effect links to explain *why* events happen.

Usually, one event is produced by many causes. Similarly, one event often produces several different effects. These cause-and-effect links form what is called a *cause-and-effect chain*. Because so many historical events are related, cause-and-effect chains can become very long and can include events that occur over a long period of time. The chart above shows such a chain of events.

**Thinking Like a Historian**

1. **Understanding Evidence**  Suppose a friend wanted to write a history of your life so far. What primary sources might he or she use to find evidence of your daily activities?

2. **Analyzing Sources**  Find two written accounts of a recent event in your town. Which of the two accounts do you think is the most credible? Why?

3. **Recognizing Cause and Effect**  Study the cause-and-effect chart on this page. What were three major causes of Rome’s decline? What were two important effects of Rome’s decline upon history?
Historians try to understand how climate, landforms, and human activities have shaped past events.

**Reading Focus** Have you ever had a party or sports event cancelled because of bad weather? Read to find out how historians study the effects of the natural world on history.

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*Geography* is the study of the earth’s physical and human features. In this text, you will discover how geography has shaped the course of events in world history. Sometimes the study of geography is broken down into five themes. *The Five Themes of Geography* are:

- **location** (Where is it?)
- **place** (What is it like?)
- **human/environment interaction** (What is the relationship between people and their surroundings?)
- **movement** (How do people in one area relate to people in other areas?)
- **region** (What common features bring geographical areas together?)

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### Location

"Where is it?" In using geography, historians first look at where a place is located. Every place has an absolute location and a relative location. *Absolute location* refers to the exact spot of a place on the earth’s surface. For example, the city of Atlanta, Georgia, is located at one place and one place only. No other place on Earth has exactly the same location. *Relative location* tells where a place is, compared with one or more other places. Atlanta is northwest of Miami and southwest of New York City.

### Place

"What is it like?" *Place* describes all of the characteristics that give an area its own special quality. These can be physical features, such as mountains, waterways, climate, and plant or animal life. Places can also be described by human characteristics, such as language, religion, and architecture.

### Human/Environment Interaction

"What is the relationship between people and their surroundings?" Landforms, waterways, climate, and natural resources all have helped or hindered human activities. People in turn have responded to their environment, or natural surroundings, in different ways. Sometimes they have adjusted to it. At other times, people have changed their environment to meet their needs.
**Movement**

“How do people in one area relate to people in other areas?” Historians answer this question within the theme of movement. Throughout history, people, ideas, goods, and information have moved from place to place. Movement has brought the world’s people closer together. Transportation—the movement of people and goods—has increased the exchange of ideas and cultures. Communication—the movement of ideas and information—has allowed people to find out what is happening in other parts of the world.

**Region**

“What common features bring geographical areas together?” To make sense of all the complex things in the world, historians often view places or areas as regions. A region is an area that is defined by common features. Regions can be defined by physical features, such as mountains and rivers, or by human features, such as religion, language, or livelihood.

**Six Essential Elements**

Recently the study of geography has been broken down into Six Essential Elements:
- The World in Spatial Terms
- Places and Regions
- Physical Systems
- Human Systems
- Environment and Society
- The Uses of Geography

You will learn about the Six Essential Elements in the Geography Handbook on pages GH2–GH3. Knowing these elements will help you in your study of history.

**Thinking Like a Historian**

1. **Identify** How are absolute location and relative location different?
2. **Analyzing Themes** What characteristics do geographers use to describe a place?
3. **Linking History and Geography** Make a list of the Five Themes of Geography. Under each theme, explain how you think geography has shaped the history of your community.
What Is a Historical Atlas?

**Main Idea**
Maps give information about areas of the world at different periods of history.

**Reading Focus** Have you used a map to go from one place to another? Read to find out how you can rely on maps for clues about the past.

**Historical Maps** An atlas is a book of maps showing different parts of the world. A historical atlas has maps showing different parts of the world at different periods of history. Maps that show political events, such as invasions, battles, and boundary changes, are called historical maps.

Some historical maps show how territories in a certain part of the world changed over time. Below are two maps. One map shows the areas of Europe, Asia, and Africa that were ruled by Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. The other map shows the same region as it looks today. Placed next to each other, the maps help you compare historical changes in the region from ancient times to today.

In the larger map, Alexander’s empire stretches from the eastern Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Indus River in the east. There are no political borders. Instead, other things are shown. For example, the arrows on the map represent the movement of Alexander’s armies as they conquered new lands. On the smaller map, lines show modern political boundaries in the region today.
Historical Routes  On some maps, lines may show *historical routes*. These are roads or courses over which people or goods have traveled all through history. Such routes are often colored. On the map above, the purple line shows the Silk Road, the ancient trading route between Asia and Europe.

On maps of historical routes, the key gives clues to what is shown on the maps. This map’s key shows the different goods traded throughout the ancient world.

### Thinking Like a Historian

1. **Comparing Maps**  Alexander’s empire included many different territories. In what territory was the city of Persepolis located? What present-day country covers this area today?

2. **Reading a Map Legend**  Look at the map of ancient trade routes. What goods came from southern India? How were goods carried from place to place in ancient times?

3. **Analyzing Maps**  Select any chapter in your textbook. List the titles of the maps found in that chapter. Beside each map’s title, state what kind of symbols are used in each map key and what they represent.
Main Idea
The people and events of the past have left their mark on our world today.

Reading Focus How have older family members affected your life today? In the same way, many things link past to present in world history. Read about examples of past-and-present links for each of the five units you will be studying in your text.

Unit 1 Early Civilizations
For centuries, people in southwest Asia have fought over scarce land and water. Religious and ethnic differences also have led to wars. Today, one of the fiercest and longest conflicts has been between Palestinian Arabs and Israelis.

Ancient warriors attack walled city

Fighting today between Palestinians and Israelis

Unit 2 The Ancient World
People in ancient civilizations admired the deeds of their heroes. The ancient Greeks held the first Olympic games about 776 B.C. Today the modern Olympics draw athletes from all over the world.

Ancient Greek athletes

Racers in modern Olympics
The period from about A.D. 500 to A.D. 1500 is known as the Middle Ages. During this time, trade routes expanded, and ideas and goods spread. In medieval China, the Grand Canal increased trade and prosperity. Today, modern China is building the Three Gorges Dam to provide electric power for its growing cities.

Beginning about A.D. 1500, thinkers developed new ideas about government and began to use scientific ideas to explore nature. One discovery or invention led to another, creating an explosion of knowledge. Advances in science continue today.

As you read *Journey Across Time: The Early Ages*, notice how the past affects the present. When you begin each unit, collect newspaper or magazine articles about a current event from the area you are studying. Then, after completing each unit, write down how you think a past event in that region is related to the current event.

After 500 B.C., strong governments and new religions arose in many parts of the world. The Romans believed that laws apply equally to all citizens. Today, the U.S. Congress is the part of our national government that makes laws. Its upper body—the U.S. Senate—is named after the Senate of ancient Rome.

Beginning about A.D. 1500, thinkers developed new ideas about government and began to use scientific ideas to explore nature. One discovery or invention led to another, creating an explosion of knowledge. Advances in science continue today.