

3. What is an historian?



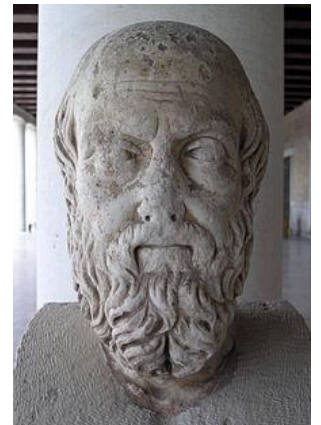
An historian is someone who studies the past, and you are about to become one! Historians look at evidence from the past and try to work out what happened and why. Historians help us learn from the past so that we can become more **informed** about the world we live in and become better citizens.

The evidence an historian uses is called a source. Historians look for sources in the **remains** of the past, and also from the thoughts of others who have studied the past. They discover new evidence about what has happened and try to **interpret** the sources to better understand the **motives** of people and the events that shape our world. Historians look at these sources and make **conclusions** about what may have happened in the past, they also try to fill in the gaps we have in our historical records.

There are many professions that use their skills to investigate the past. These include **archaeologists, anthropologists, cryptographers, linguists, forensic scientists, paleontologists.**

Some famous historians of the ancient world include:

- Herodotus, who was born in the 5th Century BC in Turkey. He wrote about Greek History, and especially about the wars between the Greeks and the Persians. He has two nicknames: “The Father of History” – because he is the first writer we know of to try to write down the past for future generations, and he is also known as “The Father of Lies” – because he often filled in gaps in his knowledge with folk-tales and strange stories that probably weren’t true.
- Thucydides, another Greek historian, who lived from 460BC to 395BC. He was stricter in his evidence gathering than Herodotus and is nicknamed “The Father of Scientific History”. He wrote about the wars between Athens and Sparta.
- Chen Shou, who was a Chinese historian. He lived from 233-297 and wrote about a time in China known as the “Three Kingdoms Period”.

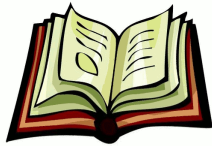




Activities

Comprehension Questions

Before you start, define the terms in **bold**.



1. What is an historian?
2. What do historians do?
3. Where does an historian look for sources?
4. What do historians do with the sources they find?
5. What other professions use skills to interpret the past?
6. What two nicknames does Herodotus have and why?
7. Write a sentence about
 - a. Thucydides
 - b. Chen Shou

Paragraph Writing – PEEL

The PEEL method is a way of writing a paragraph that has the following structure

- P- Point (your first sentence should state the main point of the paragraph)
- E – Explanation (your next sentence should explain the main point)
- E- Example (give an example to support your main point)
- L – Link this sentence with the point you are making in a long piece of writing.

Paragraph 2 is an example of a PEEL paragraph about sources.

Try writing a paragraph about the different professions that investigate the past using the PEEL method.



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