

HISTORY, INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE, STUDY SKILLS

TASK 1: Which words, feelings or associations come to your mind when you hear the word history? Fill in the chart.

Positive (+)	in between (+/-)	Negative (-)

TASK 2: Why do we study history? What is it good for? Does it have any relevance to our present life?

What is History?

TASK 3: Try to suggest and write down your definition of history.

TASK 4: Which problems can we encounter when we study history?

Chronology

Chronology is the study of the exact time and sequence in which things happened. Putting events into chronological order may help us understand better why things happened. A **timeline** shows the order of events on a line.

TASK 5: Make up a story using the following events. You must use all the events. Choose any order of events you want.

- Someone came into the classroom
- Someone left the classroom
- Someone screamed
- The teacher disappeared

Compare your story with the story of your neighbour.

Did you have the same order of events?

Does a different order mean a different story?

How to divide historic time into periods

TASK 6: *Can you suggest any criteria for the division of time into historical periods?*

Criteria				
periods				

What should be the dividing points? Can we agree on any important events?

What way do you think future historians could call our time?

Dating and calendars

TASK 7: How did people measure time in the past? What types of calendars do you know? What is the year zero of these calendars? Are they still used? Where?

- **Christian calendar** (Gregorian/Julian)
Accepted worldwide, dating from the birth of Jesus Christ
common symbols: **BC** (before Christ) **AD** (Anno Domini)
 BCE (before common era) **CE** (common era)
- Jewish calendar - starting 5560 BC. Why?
- Islamic calendar - starting 622 AD. Why?
- Chinese calendar, 12 year cycles, 12 animal signs

How did the Romans measure the time? What about the Egyptians? Sumerians?

What problems do historians face while rewriting dates into our calendar?

Change and Continuity, Progress and Regress

Things are changing all the time. There are new inventions, new possibilities, new ideas, new challenges.

TASK 8: *Try to think of three important changes that have happened **in your lifetime** in your personal life, in technology and in politics. Write them down and compare with the ideas of your neighbour.*

Personal history	technology	politics

In history we do not study only the changes. The aspect of continuity is equally important.

TASK 9: Which events from the life of Napoleon represent change and which continuity? Put them down into the right column.

crowned Emperor	exiled to St. Helen	republican ideas	education	new map of Europe
food supplies	Continental blockade	careers open to talented men	increased birth rate	

Change	Continuity

Which of the columns do you consider more important?

TASK 10: Evidence

- What can our pockets tell about us? Empty your pockets and add a few things you use every day. What can the things tell us about you, your lifestyle, hobbies, interests, job.... Let your neighbour find out about you.
- *Variation: teacher brings some things in a bag, students make deductions about the owner of these things. Some students put their things into bags provided by the teacher, other students try to guess whose things they are.*
- Are some of the things a good source of information? Which of them are useless?

TASK 11: Sources

- What can a historian use as his source of information?

Are the following things useful as a source of information?

Medieval Castle yesterday's newspaper Columbus's diary Declaration of Independence history textbook Alexander's sword class register Cosmas's Chronicle Palacký's History photos Michelangelo's David jaw of a Neanderthal Man

- Could you divide your suggested sources into two categories? What is the clue? What can a historian use it for?
- What way do you think we divide the written sources? What is the clue?
- Which category do you consider more reliable – Primary or secondary written sources? Why? What are the possible limitations? Which institutions care about such sources of information?

Bias

Can we always believe things we read or see in the media, books, textbooks, photos, videos?

TASK 12: Compare the following texts:

Text A:

Arnold failed his essay in history. He was very angry with his teacher. He claimed that the teacher never explains any task properly and so it was not his fault that he had missed the topic of the essay. Arnold asked his classmates what the task was but he did not get any clear answer. Finally he decided to do his best, spent several afternoons planning and writing the essay and so it is not a big wonder he was disappointed with the final result.

Why are the students punished for the incompetence of their teachers?

Text B:

Arnold failed his essay in history. It was not a big surprise for his teacher that he completely missed the topic. He never pays attention in lessons and hardly ever hands in any homework. There was not any other chance than to give him mark five. The teacher thought ridiculous Arnold's argument that the classmates were not able to give him clear instructions as all his classmates covered the topic well. The teacher thought that Arnold had worked on his essay the last evening or maybe even morning before handing it in. Why are the students so irresponsible?

Which story do you believe more?

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to identify yourself with the feelings or attitudes of another person. We try to understand what is going on in his/her mind. We do not have to agree with the actions of of the chosen person, but we try to understand his/her feelings, motives.

TASK 13: *Have you ever empathised with a film hero, character of a novel, classmate....? What problems did you have to overcome?*

Is empathy important for history?

As we can have a correct and incorrect answer to a question is it possible to have ,correct' or ,incorrect' empathy?