

A World Full of History, a World of Full of Knowledge, and Uncorked Vocabulary for Connections

A History Vocabulary Project

Introduction

To study history, they say, is to question human existence. Descartes, a French ***philosopher*** (a person who seeks wisdom or enlightenment) said "I think, therefore I am. Plato, a Greek philosopher and ***intellectual*** (a person possessing highly developed thinking) stated that an "unquestioned life was not worth living". It is, that questioning that leads historians to question and discover more about human existence and our interactions with others. History is not only the past; it is the social, political, economic components of the past, along with geography. Each one of those categories defines what historians research and explore. Sometime this is done in a ***chronological*** or time order or sometimes by categories.

First and foremost, we must define those areas of study. Anything that has to do with society and people are ***social*** aspects of history such as religion, ***culture*** (a way of life), and tradition. Social history is related to the field or disciplines of ***anthropology*** which is the study of human societies and cultures and their development and ***archaeology*** which is the study of human history and prehistory through the excavations of sites and the analysis of artifacts. Social historians also study ***cultural diffusion*** which is the spreading of a society's culture from one place to another culture. Simply put, it is often a mixing of one society's culture to another.

Social

Social historians use different lenses or perspectives (points of view) to determine the meaning of texts and art. ***Eurocentrism*** or Eurocentric is the point of view from a Europe or European perspective. This is also called a Western perspective. ***Afrocentrism*** or Afrocentric is from an African point of view and ***Sinocentrism*** or Sinocentric is from a Chinese point of view. All other points of view are usually classified under the ***Ethnocentrism*** or Ethnocentric point of view, which means from a particular ethnic group or a cultures point of view. For all of these points of view, each group believes that they are the center of the world and believe that their point of view is the only or correct one.

Some social aspects of society are Belief Systems which are institutions of organized beliefs which are ***fundamental*** (have underlying principles or structure) for their followers. Belief Systems also include religions which are usually more organized. There are two types of belief systems; cultures that believe in more than one god, are polytheistic (***polytheism***), and cultures that believe in one god are monotheistic (***monotheism).*** One example is Hinduism which is polytheistic. In this belief system, salvation or escape from the physical world is achieved through a spiritual oneness of the soul with the universe also known as the Brahman. To achieve this goal, the soul must obtain moksha (liberation/freedom) from the samsara (endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth). As a result of these basic teachings, Hindus believe in reincarnation, which is influenced by karma (material actions resulting from the consequences of previous actions), and dharma (fulfilling one's duty in life). Because all forms of animal life possess souls, Hindus believe in ahimsa, or that all life is sacred and should not be harmed. In fact, one animal

which Hindus consider to be extremely sacred is the cow. The peaceful and contented existence of cows is considered virtuous (honorable) by Hindus and would represent a rewarding reincarnation for a soul. For this reason, most Hindus are vegetarians so that they do not harm other living beings. The belief in reincarnation, karma, and dharma also provides the religious justification for the existence of the rigid social ***hierarchy*** or ranking structure known as the ***Caste System*** in which during a person's life it is impossible to move up or down within the social class. This is called social mobility and the caste system does not allow for this movement within the social class system. Social historians explore relationships with family, friends, god(s), nature, and the subjects (people) that are governed by rulers, as well as the rulers themselves. In China, Confucianism has an effect on families in which ***filial piety*** (respect for your parents and ancestors) are the basic moral values in the family unit. In China, the ***mandate of heaven*** is an ***ideology*** (belief) in which the ruler receives their right to rule from the gods. Once they lose the mandate of heaven, they either die or are overthrown and another ruler will take their place.

Religion can have an adverse or negative effect on a nation or people. During the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution challenged the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. It was Copernicus who defined a new ***heliocentric*** view of the universe in which the sun is at the center of the universe. The church said that in the Bible, God created the earth and then the universe. This would define the geocentric view of the universe in which the earth is at the center. Copernicus' theory was not published until after his death, but Galileo proved his theory correct and was put on trial. He was convicted by the church for heresy (going against the church) and placed under house arrest for the rest of his life. It wasn't until 1992 that Pope John Paul II called the actions against Galileo regrettable and unjust. In addition, the Scientific Revolution prompted the questioning of the church in other areas of society. In 1517, Martin Luther, a German monk, protested the actions of the church by posting a list of grievances or problems on a German cathedral door. This list is known as the 95 Theses (statements). This action began the ***Protestant Reformation*** in which new religions based on Christianity developed. This ended church unity throughout Europe. During the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church held all the power over society and monarchs (Kings & Queens), but once the Protestant Reformation takes hold across Europe, the growth of Absolute monarchies or powerful kings and queens begins. This is called the Age of Absolutism in which kings and queens rule with total power given to them from God.

Social historians often study ***gender*** roles which are social constructs (made up by people and not scientific) and develop ideas about the behavior, actions, and roles that a particular sex (male/female) performs. These roles are defined as a part of ***masculinity*** (maleness: the properties characteristic of the male sex) or as part of ***femininity*** (the trait of behaving in ways considered typical for women). Each of those roles may switch their socially constructed or defined roles such as a male having feminine traits. One constructed view in masculine societies is that women stay at home and take care of the children, but if a man stays at home with the

children, he is considered to have feminine traits. The female role might be working and providing the main income for the family, which would be a masculine trait in that same society. Gender roles usually determine if a society is ***patriarchal*** (led by male lineage or line of heredity) or ***matriarchal*** (led by female lineage or line of heredity).

Political

Our second category, ***political*** aspects of history include anything that has to do with government such as the systems of rule (communism, dictatorship, totalitarianism, democracy, theocracy, monarchy, feudalism, absolute monarchy, oligarchy, constitutional/limited monarchy, and republic), the military, and laws. Politics are everywhere, in your school, at your place of work, and the most likely place, in the ***bureaucracy*** (the administration portion of government). Plato, the Greek philosopher said it best, "man is a political animal". He understood that everything we do is somehow related to politics. Politics is usually about an ideology (belief), such that one group of people believe that their beliefs are better for the people being governed (ruled) than others.

There are many different types of governments throughout history and around the world. One of the first political systems was ***democracy*** (rule by the people, usually as equals). Democracy was the system of government put in place during Ancient Greece in Athens. While many democracies may have occurred elsewhere, Athens is famous since most of the philosophers wrote about how the system worked for the good of the people, however, not everyone was equal. Generally, men who were free and not slaves, and owned property were allowed to vote. Today, many countries use the system of democracy for their people albeit with usually more equality than ancient Athens.

The Ancient Romans invented a system of government called a republic. This is a government in which the people elected representatives to voice their concerns rather than directly electing the ruler. In other words, a ***republic*** is a government in which the people rule through their representatives. In 27BCE, Rome became an ***empire***, which is a collection of nations or peoples ruled by a single authority and controlled politically, and/or economically, and/or socially. The head of state of an empire is an emperor. The Roman Empire lasted for over 426 years. Towards the end, the empire had split in two. In 330CE, one-half become the Western Roman Empire and the other half the Eastern Roman Empire which was renamed the Byzantine Empire by historians. It lasted over 1000 years, ending in 1453 with the fall of Constantinople (its capital), to the Ottoman Turks.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, there was a period known as the Dark Ages in Western Europe while the Byzantine Empire was strong. There was no central government, not much trade, and the Roman Catholic Church kept everyone together as a central unifying authority, but the local authority became the kings and nobles (landowners). In the late 12th

century (1100s), the Roman Catholic Church became involve in a holy war in the Middle East. The Muslims took control of many of the Christian sites such as Jerusalem, where Jesus Christ died and the birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem. This area in the Middle East is known as the ***Holy Land*** or the ***Levant***. The Pope (leader of the Roman Catholic Church) called for a ***Crusade*** or holy war against the Muslims to take back Jerusalem and other holy sites. In order to have enough fighting men for the holy war, kings and nobles asked knights to fight for them. In exchange, the knights would receive payment in the form of land. This would be a political system known as ***feudalism*** in which land is exchanged for military service. During the Middle Ages, England was much different than the other European areas. The king was accused of abusing his power by the nobles or barons as they were called and they went to war with the king. They surrounded him and his army at Runnymede. The king was forced to sign a document called the Magna Carta which protected the rights of the barons/nobles and placed limits on the power of the king. This created a form of government known as ***constitutional/limited monarchy***.

In 2003, the United States along with other countries invaded Iraq. Eventually within a few short years, Iraq became a democracy. Before they were a democracy, they were ruled by Sadaam Hussein who was a ***dictator*** or one person rule over a country. His rule was a form of ***totalitarianism*** which meant that he had total control (politically, socially, and economically) over the people. He could put people in prison without cause, make his own laws, and execute people on his word. The people under his total control had very few rights. They had rights only if he determined they did. This is the complete opposite of what John Locke said during the time period known as The Enlightenment. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Locke wrote that people have ***natural rights*** given to them by God and/or nature. One of Locke's contemporaries (exists at same time), Rousseau believed that a non-written ***social contract*** existed between the ruler and the governed (people). Once a ruler breaks this contract he has lost his right to rule. This is similar to the mandate of heaven in China previously discussed. But this is the opposite of an ***absolute monarchy*** in which the ruler is from a ***dynasty*** (family of rulers) chosen by God to rule. This theory of governmental rule is called ***divine right*** in which the ruler is chosen by God. The natural rights mentioned by Locke and Rousseau are the basis for most democracies and republics today. After the overthrow of Sadaam Hussein, Iraq moved toward democracy with the help of the United States and other countries. This is called ***democratization***, which means to make a country a democracy. Today, Iraqi people have a sense of ***nationalism*** (pride and devotion to their country) to become a democracy and voted in elections for a ***parliament*** or legislature which is a law making part of government. The people, including women, elect their president by voting. Their government is ***secular*** which means it is non-religious. Only a few countries in the Middle East are democracies or republics. Most governments in the Middle East are theocracies (theocracy), which means that they are governments with laws given to them by God. Since they are Islamic countries, Islamic law is the basis for their system of laws that govern the people. Saudi Arabia and Iran both have theocratic governments.

One of the most famous dictators in history is Adolf Hitler. He led Germany in the 1930s out of an economic depression and used ***militarism*** which is a military buildup, to unite his people after their defeat in World War One. He took Italy's Benito Mussolini's political system of ***fascism*** (extreme nationalism, extreme militarism, socialism, and totalitarianism) and made it his own. He used propaganda (marketing national ideas) to unite his people against the communists and the Jews. From early in his days as Der Fuhrer (the leader), he began policies based upon ***Social Darwinism*** which is the theory that individuals, groups, and people are subject to the same Darwinian laws of natural selection. Although Darwin's ideas were used by social scientists they created a new interpretation led by the Englishman Herbert Spencer who invented the phrase "Survival of the Fittest". With this theory, Hitler wanted to create a master race of Germans called the Aryans. He used ***propaganda*** (the spreading of ideas to promote a a positive or negative point of view) via speeches on the radio, or in Nazi films such as The Eternal Jew, to convince the Germans that the Jews were evil and needed to be rounded up and displaced from their homes. This extreme ethnocentric or Nazi point-of-view would lead to the death of over 12 million people known as the Holocaust. Hitler and the Nazis pursued a policy of ***genocide*** against the Jews which is the systematic killing of all the people from an ethnic group, religious group, or people from a specific nation. Not only did the Nazis kill 6 million Jews, but 5 million gypsies (Roma & Sinti), Jehovah Witness, homosexuals, communists, and political prisoners. In 1939, Great Britain attempted a policy of ***appeasement*** which attempted to stop Hitler from expanding the Third Reich (3rd Empire) by giving him land in exchange for peace. It did not work, and Hitler invaded Poland in 1939 with a tactic called ***blitzkrieg*** or lightening war and World War II began. It wasn't until 1941 when Germany created the Final Solution to the Jewish Question in which all of the known Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps to be systematically killed. Germany was defeated in World War II, by the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union.

The end of World War II caused the United States and the Soviet Union to become the world's two superpowers. A Cold War began regarding ideologies of communism verses capitalism, communism verses democracy, and totalitarianism verses freedom. In order to keep the Soviet Union from expanding their ***spheres of influence*** or concept in which a state or organization has significant cultural, economic, military, or political influence, the United States created a policy of ***containment*** to stop (contain) the spread of communism. Some countries such as India, Egypt, Indonesia, and the former Yugoslavia followed a policy of ***non-alignment*** in which they did not take any side, either the United States or the Soviet Union. Shortly after World War II, a nationalistic movement known as ***Zionism*** became popular to create a Jewish state in the Middle East. In 1948, the state of Israel was founded partly as a reaction to the Holocaust genocide by the Germans during World War II. After World War II many African nations became independent and free of colonial rule. In South Africa, the white government had a policy of ***Apartheid*** in which segregated (separated) the races (blacks from whites). It was Nelson Mandela who at first used a violent approach to obtain freedom for blacks. After he was arrested and jailed he called for a non-violent approach called ***civil disobedience.*** He was

imprisoned for twenty-seven years. The United Nations and its member nations formed after World War II placed sanctions (policies) against South Africa and restricted it from trade and isolated the nation. Eventually this caused the reversal of the Apartheid policy and the release of Mandela. He went on to become South Africa's first black president. This non-violent approach was also used by Mahatmas Gandhi in India to free them from British rule. In 1947, India became an independent country. In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed because it could not compete with the United States economically and socially. The Soviet leader, Gorbachev, tried to have the government be more open and give more freedoms. He called this policy ***Glasnost***, but it did not work, and the fall of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War.

Economic

Our third category which defines history is ***economic*** and within this category historians explore systems of trade such as; barter, traditional, mercantilism, manorialism, capitalism, socialism, and laissez-faire (free market) capitalism. The first economic system developed was bartering or ***barter*** or trade without money. This system allowed people to exchange an item for another or for several others. This is the most simplistic form of trade. Money is never used in this system. Money is not trade, it is a tool used for trade just as credit cards, or bank cards are used today. The next economic system that develops is the traditional economy. In a traditional economy people used ***agriculture*** which is another word for farming. They also used a system called ***subsistence*** agriculture in which people produced just enough for their needs. Once the Neolithic Revolution took place, a change from hunting and gathering to farming and herding occurred. This allowed people to leave their ***nomadic*** (moving from place to place) lifestyle and live in permanent villages. Once people started to settle in one place, in order to farm efficiently, people used a technology called ***irrigation*** which is a system to bring water to support crops. Eventually a ***surplus*** developed which is more than you need, so people would trade their excess product. This led people to split tasks into smaller tasks completed by different people. This is called job specialization. As civilization moved from a ***rural*** (countryside) to an ***urban*** (city-like) environment, trade developed on a wider scale. Trade routes such as the Roman Empire (collection of nations or peoples ruled by a single authority) trading with China through the Silk Road, and ***commerce*** (conducting business) between cities in the Mediterranean Sea brought empires and cultures together via cultural diffusion. Ancient Greece traded with Mesopotamia and Egypt. Alexander's Greece eventually conquered them along with areas as far as India. On the death of Alexander, his empire split into many different areas ruled by each of his former generals. The spread of Greek culture after the death of Alexander is called ***Hellenism***. Since the empire was split up, this allowed the new power, Ancient Rome, to dominate and take over most of the known world around the Mediterranean.

Rome survived for over one thousand years, but the Fall of the Roman Empire, ushered in the Dark Ages in Europe. The absence of permanent government and widespread trade caused many hardships among the people. A new form of economics developed called ***manorialism*** which is a ***self-sufficiency*** (able to provide for oneself without the help of others; independent).

The community was located around a manor (house) or castle, a church, a village, and farmland. This allowed people to rely only on themselves with very little trade occurring. After a period of four hundred years, the Dark Ages changed to become the Middle Ages as trade and society slowly recovered. During this time, people formed ***guilds*** which are associations of merchants or craftspeople in order to create a living for their families and to trade with villagers and surrounding areas. Once the political situation in the Middle Ages changed, and Pope Urban II of the Roman Catholic Church issued a Crusade to take the Holy Land back from the Muslims, many aspects of Medieval life changed dramatically and improved further. Western Europe was no longer isolated from the Middle East and the Byzantine Empire. The increase in Asian and Middle Eastern goods such as spices, silk, cotton and other products starts a ***revolution*** (major change) in European society. The demand for these goods sparked a ***Renaissance*** (rebirth) of Greek and Roman culture which was stored in the former Eastern Roman Empire also known as the Byzantine Empire. When the Crusades passed through the crossroad of trading known as Constantinople of the Byzantine Empire, the Europeans began to re-acquire the knowledge of the former Roman Empire. The increase in trade created a need to keep track of the exchanges of money caused Italian city-state bankers to create letters of credit. This was called the Commercial Revolution. Because of the creation of material wealth, a new way of thinking occurred in the Renaissance called ***humanism*** which is a focus on the individual or worldly things rather than God. The effects of this thinking was widespread and led to the Scientific Revolution in which people are figuring out the laws of nature and questioning their surroundings. The combination of the plagues and economic hardships during the Dark and Middle Ages allowed people to question their faith and a natural turn to science assisted them in figuring out the world around them without God.

The Islamic Ottoman Empire which conquered the Christian Byzantine Empire was located on the crossroads of the trade to The East. This created a problem for the people of Europe to trade with the East. The need for new ways to reach India and the Spice Islands started the Age of Exploration. Portugal led the way, around the African continent, but that was still too long of a journey. In 1492, King Ferdinand of Spain and his wife Queen Isabella gave Christopher Columbus support to go westward to find a new way to reach India. Columbus went west and discovered the Americas for Europe. The discovery of the New World created a desire of raw materials and new markets. This was called the Columbian Exchange. The Americas are named after the explorer Amerigo Vespucci and with ***cartography*** (mapmaking) he proved that Columbus did not reach the outskirts of India but rather had discovered the New World. Shortly after these initial voyages, new business markets emerged and the economic system of mercantilism was born. ***Mercantilism*** is the belief that a country's wealth is measured in the amount of gold and silver it had, and the New World had plenty of both. Spain became very wealthy as conquered much of the Americas, especially the Caribbean, Central and South America. In the process, several American civilizations were destroyed. The Aztec, Maya, and Inca were conquered and came under Spanish Christian rule. Once all of the gold and silver was taken from the Americas, the system of Mercantilism changes to a system of having more

exports (the sending of goods to another country for sale) than ***imports*** (the bringing in of goods from another country for sale). Once this trade between the Old World (Europe) and the New World (Americas) begins the Age of Imperialism begins.

Imperialism is when one country takes over another country or area (politically, socially, and/or economically). There are two ages of imperialism. One which occurs in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the New Age of Imperialism during the 18th and 19th centuries when countries in Europe began taking over other lands and areas all over the world as colonies. This was called ***colonialism***. The Industrial Revolution fueled the need for raw materials for factories. The Industrial Revolution is the major change from home made goods by hand to machine made goods in factories. This change occurs in the mid to late 1700s and begins a time of great ***industrialization*** (change to industrial methods of production such as the use of factories). The economic system which is discussed by Adam Smith in 1776 in his book "Wealth of Nations" explains ***capitalism*** in which the means of production are privately owned and for profit. He promoted ***Laissez-Faire economics*** in which governments should have a non-interference or hands-off policy in the economics of their country. This creates a ***market economy*** which is an economy based upon free trade (hands off) and supply and demand of products and services.

In the mid-1800s, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote "The Communist Manifesto" in which they argued for a new system of economics and government. The system known as communism was suggested as a better system than capitalism because the workers would benefit from their labor rather than the factory owner. He insisted that the ***bourgeoisie*** or the middle class would be taken over by the proletariat or workers as long as the workers of the world united against them. ***Marxism*** or ***communism*** as it is better known is the belief that people would be equal politically, socially, and economically.

A new modified economic system soon developed as governments looked to keep their hands-on their economies. These policies led to the economic system of ***socialism***, in which the government controls the means of production (land, labor and capital) in many instances. It can be mixed with instances of capitalism as found in some modern nations (France, Russia, China, Venezuela). In the 1980s, the Soviet Union's (Union of Soviet Socialist Republic or USSR) communist leader Mikhail Gorbachev created the policy ***Perestroik***a which was the restructuring or reforming the economic and political system his country in order to compete with Europe, the United States, and the rest of the world. This strategy of ***modernization*** which is to make your country or society more modern caused the Fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. It was replaced with its former name of Russia and exists today. Modern economics has caused an ***interdependence*** which is that nations/countries are more dependent on each other. This is also known as globalization or making the world tied together by trade. The era of globalization exists today and each country in the world is affected by the actions of the larger countries' economies.

Geography

The final category of history is geography which is the relationship between people and the earth. ***Physical geography*** is the study of the relationship between people and the physical features of the earth such as mountains, river valleys, deserts, oceans, ***peninsula*** (land surrounded by three sides of water), and ***archipelago*** (chain of islands). Geography affects the way people live, and it can determine how successful or unsuccessful a country or nation becomes in the world. This is called ***geographic determinism***. Some examples are that river valleys created the world's first civilizations (Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and India). The Himalayan Mountains help protect India and China from invasion and cultural diffusion and have periods of ***isolationism***. This is the belief that a country has policy of abstaining from political, social, or economic relations with other countries. Another good example of geographic determinism is the island of Great Britain. This island allowed the British Empire to become the strongest in the world due to the many deep ports which allowed them to have the ability to build ships for trade and create a strong navy. The island of Great Britain had many coal deposits directly on the surface which allowed them to start the Industrial Revolution by burning the coal to make steam which then produced energy for machines in factories. Some geographic features such as deserts can expand and cause problems for countries. This is known as ***desertification*** or the making or expansion of a desert. The Sahara desert in Africa is the largest desert in the world and is still expanding causing people to move or create new technology to manage this negative effect. Another example of geographic determinism was the need to increase agriculture and the food supply by utilizing new technologies for the world's growing population. In the 1960-70s, the ***Green Revolution*** occurred in which technology assisted in producing more food for the world. In India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, ***monsoons*** or seasonal winds that bring rain determine when they can farm and when their rainy or dry seasons arrive. All of these geographic elements affect the people of the world every day and can have either positive or negative effects.

Conclusion

Now, you have journeyed through the social, political, economic, and geographic aspects of history. All of these categories define history. They are the basic ways students, historians, and society look at historic events and places. By understanding how these terms and events are connected you will develop a more defined insight into the world and all of the possibilities we as humanity face. John Adams an American Founding Father said it best, "There are two creatures in this world, those with the commitment and those who require the commitment of others" It is our responsibility as individuals to explore the world, make it a better place for those less fortunate, and benefit from its human diversity and natural wonders. Let your journey begin.