



What Is History?

Intro to History



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Grade Level	8th – 12th Grade	Time Frame	1 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	50 minutes
Course	Oklahoma History, U.S. History, World History		

Essential Question

What is history? Why is history important?

Summary

This short, introductory lesson is great for beginning the year in any history class from 8th-12th grade. Students will create their own definition of history and then compare it to quotes about history and the term's dictionary definition. Students then will reexamine their own definition, modify as needed, and discuss what the dictionary definition left out. Students will also justify why what was left out is important to include in any understanding of history. This lesson includes optional modifications for distance learning. Resources for use in Google Classroom are included.

Snapshot

Engage

Students create their own definition of history.

Explore

Students look at quotes about history to add to their working definitions.

Explain

Students compare their definitions of history with the dictionary definition.

Extend

Students discuss the importance of learning and understanding history.

Evaluate

Students write a Two-Minute Paper about the definition and importance of history.

Attachments

- [History-Quote-Magnetic-Statements-What-Is-History.docx](#)
- [History-Quote-Magnetic-Statements-What-Is-History.pdf](#)
- [History-Quotes-Sheet-What-Is-History - Spanish.docx](#)
- [History-Quotes-Sheet-What-Is-History - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [History-Quotes-Sheet-What-Is-History.docx](#)
- [History-Quotes-Sheet-What-Is-History.pdf](#)
- [I-Think-We-Think-We-Re-Think-Graphic-Organizer-What-Is-History - Spanish.docx](#)
- [I-Think-We-Think-We-Re-Think-Graphic-Organizer-What-Is-History - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [I-Think-We-Think-We-Re-Think-Graphic-Organizer-What-Is-History.docx](#)
- [I-Think-We-Think-We-Re-Think-Graphic-Organizer-What-Is-History.pdf](#)
- [Lesson-Slides-What-Is-History.pptx](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- History Quotes Magnetic Statements (attached)
- I Think, We Think, We Re-Think Graphic Organizer (attached; 1 per student)
- History Quotes Sheet (attached; 1 per student)

Engage

Before beginning the lesson, place history quotes, found in the **History Quote Magnetic Statements** attachment, around the room.

Display **slide 3** of the **Lesson Slides**. Read aloud the two guiding questions for the lesson and tell students to keep them in mind as they move through all of the activities. Tell the students they're going to start with the first guiding question, "What is history?"

Pass out the **I Think, We Think, We Re-Think Graphic Organizer** to each student. Display **slide 4**. Ask students to think about how they would define the term *history*. Give them a few minutes to get their thoughts in order, and then ask them to write down their definitions in the "I Think" column of their graphic organizer. This is a modification of the [I Think/We Think](#) instructional strategy.

Display **slide 5**. Have students find an [Elbow Partner](#) and share their definitions. Ask partners to come to a consensus and create or modify a definition together. Have students write this shared definition in the "We Think" column of their graphic organizer.

Optional Modification for Distance Learning

Notes on integrating online distance learning into this lesson are included in each phase. To integrate distance learning with this phase of the lesson, you can either digitally distribute the attached History Quote Magnetic Statements handout or create a digital bulletin board such as [Padlet](#) and post the quotes for students to view in separate columns. Additionally, you can upload the attached I Think, We Think, We Re-Think Graphic Organizer to a collaboration space such as Google Docs, creating a separate copy for each group to work in together. [Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.](#)

Explore

Display **slide 6** and have students use the [Magnetic Statements](#) instructional strategy. Have students walk around the room, looking at each of the different history quotes posted. Ask them to choose a quote that most attracts them or that they most agree with and then stand next to it.

Teacher's Note

Each quote should have at least two or three students standing by it, thus creating a small group. If there are any quotes that have just one student, you can talk to them, ask them to join another group, or let them share out independently during the whole group discussion.

Ask students within each quote group to share what attracted them to this quote and why they chose it. Give groups 5–10 minutes to discuss, depending on how large the groups are, and tell them to be prepared for a whole-class share out.

Ask members of each group to share out why they chose their particular quote.

Optional Modification for Distance Learning

To integrate distance learning with this phase of the lesson, instead of having students walk around the room, you can invite students to post their choices to designated areas of the digital handout you created in the previous phase (Google Docs or similar) or "like" the quote to form groups (Padlet or similar). Then, have students share why they chose that quote below it. Alternatively, you might choose to assign students to small groups, and have students choose their quotes and respond to them in a digital document together with their groups. [Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.](#)

Explain

Display **slide 7**. Pass out copies of the **History Quotes Sheet** and ask students to return to their original elbow partner. Tell students to read through each quote on the page and put an A next to each quote that they agree with and a D next to each quote that they disagree with. Ask them to think about the quotes and if any of them might make the students want to change or add to their definition of history. Circulate around the room and help partners decipher any quotes that they might not understand.

Show the students the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of history displayed on **slide 8**. Ask the partners to compare their definitions to the dictionary definition. You might tell students to think about what might be missing from either the dictionary definition or their personal definition. Discuss as a class by having partners compare and contrast their definitions with the dictionary definition.

Display **slide 9**. Ask partners to think about everything that has been talked about in class up to this point (original definitions, magnetic statements, the quote sheet, the dictionary definition, and all student discussion). Ask partners to decide upon and rewrite their final definition of history in the "We Re-Think" column of their graphic organizer. This final definition can be used as a formative assessment for the lesson and can be turned in.

Optional Modification for Distance Learning

To integrate distance learning with this phase of the lesson, students can download copies of the attached History Quotes Sheet and respond individually. Additionally, to have students work collaboratively, you might have each student send their sheet to a partner and discuss it. [Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.](#)

Extend

Display **slide 10**. Read the Santayana quote to the students: *"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."* Ask students to think about a historical event that stands out in their minds as something significant or important to know. Ask them to share the event with their partner and explain to them why every citizen should know about this event. After sufficient time, ask some of the partners to share out in a whole-group discussion.

Optional Modification for Distance Learning

To integrate distance learning with this phase of the lesson, you can have students create a short digital slideshow or poster about their chosen event, then do a short presentation to share with the class. [Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.](#)

Evaluate

Display **slide 11** and have students use the [Two-Minute Paper](#) strategy. Tell students to think back to the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of history. Ask them what the dictionary definition left out. Tell them that for the next two minutes, they should write about what the dictionary left out, and what should be included in the definition of history. In their paper, they should explain why this additional information is important to include in the definition of history.

Optional Modification for Distance Learning

To integrate distance learning with this phase of the lesson, you might have students complete the Two-Minute Paper strategy in a digital document. To integrate a time limit, you can require the assignment to be due a short time after it is assigned or impose a word limit. [Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.](#)

Resources

- History. (n.d.). In Merriam-Webster's online dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/history>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow Partner. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I Think/We Think. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/141>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Magnetic Statements. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/166>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Two-Minute Paper. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/152>