## Topic 1  What is history?

### Objectives

| Knowledge | 1. To introduce the meaning of history  
2. To examine the reasons of referring to history  
3. To introduce the concept of the time line, the use of dates and difference between BC and AD |
| --- | --- |
| Skills | 1. To construct time line  
2. To use a chart to construct an overview  
3. To make judgement and inference  
4. To express opinions |
| Attitude | 1. To encourage students to discover for themselves what history is in daily life  
2. To encourage students to understand the life of people in the past in their historical situation. |

### Teaching Flow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Teaching Objectives</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | Introduction | Brainstorming | Introduction of an overview of the focus of this chapter  
Let students have a clear learning focus |
| 2 | Question to ponder | A question & brief introduction | How does History relate to our daily life? |
| 3 | Task 1 | Data based questions | History and daily life |
| 4 | Task 2 | Data based question and Extended activity | To help students learn history through daily life: newspaper reading |
| 5 | Task 3 | Data based question and Extended activity | Tools for talking about the past: constructing time-line, the demarcation of AD and BC |
| 6 | Conclusion | Summary chart | Revision | Summary of the issues discussed in this topic |
A task is presented: "History in Daily Life I—Why do we talk about the past?" The source is a conversation between two students. The conversation goes as follows:

A: I can’t find my keys.
B: Where did you put them?
A: I don’t remember. I last had them yesterday when I came in.
B: Did you put them down somewhere?
A: I had them in my hand. I really don’t understand.
B: Think about what happened.
A: Well, when I came in, the telephone rang. Did I put them near the phone?
B: Let me see; no, they aren’t there.
A: I answered the phone. It was a wrong number. When I put the phone down, I went into the kitchen.
B: What did you do in the kitchen?
A: I washed my hands.
B: So you weren’t holding the keys in your hand any more. Have you checked the kitchen table?
A: Yes, but they aren’t there.
B: Well, if you didn’t put them by the phone or on the kitchen table, why don’t you look in your pockets?
A: Yes, oh, yes, they’re there. Why didn’t I think of that earlier?

A question to ponder is presented: "How does History relate to our daily life?"
Refer to Source A and answer the following questions:

1. What words in the conversation indicate time?
   
   Suggested answers:
   a. word related to the sequence of events, such as “when”, “then”;
   b. time pointers, such as “yesterday”

2. Arrange the following parts according to chronological/time order, using ‘1’ to indicate the earliest happening, and ‘6’ the latest happening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Parts of the story</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Parts of the story</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A went into the kitchen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The telephone rang.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A talked to B about losing his keys.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>The man found his keys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yesterday A came in</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Today the man found that he had lost his key.</td>
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3. Why did B ask A about what happened in the past?
   
   Suggested answer: To help him to recall his memory

4. Did the questions help?
   
   Suggested answer: yes, they did.

5. Refer to this story. Does ‘talking about history’ help in our daily life?
   
   Suggested answer: Free answer. (This is a practice of making inference.)

6. With your life experience, tell your partner one situation where you find talking about history is useful and meaningful.
   
   Suggested answer: Free answer. (This is a practice of making inference and expressing the recall of memory and opinions)
Task 2: History in Daily Life II: learning history through newspaper clipping

Source B
Study the headlines on the front page of the Daily World of July 2, 2007, a newspaper published in Hong Kong.
1. Is there any event reported on the front page that is not related to history?
   Suggested answer: No.

2. Then how are these events related to history? Select 1-2 events and give a brief explanation.
   Suggested answer: Free answer.

3. Newspaper is one of the very important sources in studying history. Do you agree? Give 1-2 reasons to support your view.
   Suggested answer: Historical knowledge is not static and unchanged. Just the opposite, history knowledge is changing because of the new viewpoints based on some new findings, such as new archaeological discoveries, or discovering new primary sources. Thus, newspaper should be an important source in studying history. It can help students draw parallels between history and the living world, and obtain the latest viewpoints and information.

**Extended activity: Newspaper clipping**

Read newspapers frequently. Select one interesting story or news that can help you know more about history, then accomplish the following tasks:

a) Write a short summary on the content of the news;
b) Write a paragraph to explain what “new” historical knowledge you have learnt from this selected piece of news, and how this “new” knowledge gives you a new view and changes your original understanding of the particular historical event/figure.
Task 3: Tools for talking about the past

1. Refer to Source A again.
   a. Draw a time line in the following box to show the different part of the story according to chronological/time order, from the earliest to the latest. (This is a practice of skill of constructing time line.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Add time indicators</th>
<th>Mark the line</th>
<th>Fill in happenings</th>
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   Suggested answer:

   Yesterday
   - A came in.
   - The telephone rang.
   - A went into the kitchen.

   Today
   - A found that he had lost his keys
   - A talked to B about losing his keys.
   - A found his keys.

   b. Compare Source A and the time line you have drawn, which is a more convenient and concise reference of the record of the story? Explain your answer.
   Suggested answer: Free answer. (This is a practice of making judgement and expressing logical thinking.)
2. How long did the history of the story in Source A last?
   Suggested answer: One day

3. What happens when the history to be covered is very long?
   Suggested answer: Free answer.

To know more

Nowadays, historians use the Christian calendar to count time. It starts with the birth of Jesus Christ.

Not every society
In China, years were counted from the first reign of an emperor:
  Qianlong from 1st year to 60th year
  Followed by Jiaqing from 1st year to 25th year, etc.
In the West, the Church was very influential in deciding on the shape the calendar should take. It is not surprising there that it counted from what it believed to be the most important event of all, the birth of Jesus Christ.

Think about it

This should raise the question why the Church was so influential in the West, and, if it was so influential, what else did it do besides deciding on the calendar? These are questions we shall address in later topics.

Extended activity: Different ways of talking about the past

Different countries and cultures have different ways of counting the time. Through internet search and library tour, explore different ways of talking about the past. Give a short presentation to show what you have found. Write a short summary on the content of the news.
In this topic, we answer the question what is history by seeing how and why people talk about the past. We think there are three ways by which they talk about the past: they refer to events, they use words which indicate time relations and they refer to specific times. They do this because past events relate to what they do.

Any reference to the past is a description of history. We refer to history all the time. To talk about the past accurately, we can compile time lines. Time lines make use of calendars. The demarcation AD and BC in describing time are standard for use in Western history.

**Summary Chart:**

- **Learning history**
- **History and daily life**
  - History is around us
  - Reading newspaper is one of the important ways to learn history
  - History is useful to solve the daily problems
- **Tools for talking about history**
  - Constructing Time-line
  - The demarcation of AD and BC