



INTRODUCTORY LESSON

WHAT DO
HISTORIANS
DO?

Introductory lesson: What do historians do?

Subject	History/Social Studies
Topic	What do historians do?
Key idea	Historians study sources to understand the past. Their interpretations change as they find new sources and come up with new ideas.
Key concepts	Historian Source Inscription Theory
Level	Lower secondary
No. of periods/lessons	1 period (1 period is approximately 50 minutes)
Facilities needed	Sources and handouts for distribution
Prerequisite knowledge	No prerequisite knowledge is required.

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	ATTITUDES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe about the sources that historians use. 2. Explain the kinds of questions historians ask. 3. Describe what a source can tell us about people and leaders in the past. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practice analysing multiple sources by engaging in an open-ended process of inquiry. 2. Engage in cooperative group work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cultivate openness to multiple perspectives. 2. Demonstrate comfort with historical uncertainty.

Section	Lesson Development	Resources	Rationale
Introduction [5 minutes]	<p>1. Hook: Asking a historian's questions</p> <p>1.1 Show students Source 1 (photo only) and pass around copies of the image if necessary.</p> <p>1.2 Ask students what they think this is, who they think wrote this, and when.</p> <p>1.3 Elicit responses from at least two students to write down on the board.</p> <p>1.4 If the students are hesitant to guess answers to these questions, model some answers for them. <i>For instance, 'I think people from ancient times created this, because I don't see this type of writing in use today.'</i></p> <p>1.5 Emphasize that any guesses are welcome, and encourage them to explain <i>why</i> they make those guesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source 1: Stone inscription 	<p>This hook activity will capture the students' attention and engage them in answering historians' questions.</p>
Development [25 minutes]	<p>2. Teacher talk (10 mins):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historians use written material as 'sources' to write history. Historians are like detectives: they look for clues, or evidence, to find out what happened in the past. There are many kinds of sources historians can use, in addition to photographs of art and architecture. What other sources can you think of? Elicit responses from students, and write their ideas on the board. <i>For example, stone inscriptions; texts written on bamboo, palm leaves, or paper; chronicles describing kingdoms; letters and diaries written by ordinary people; oral histories; oral traditions; newspaper articles; government records.</i> Sources commonly used to write Southeast Asian history include: Inscriptions on stone; texts on bamboo and palm leaves; descriptions of early Southeast Asia written by foreigners; texts from a later period that discuss earlier times; stories, myths and legends from the present but describing the past as a means of understanding history; films, videos and photographs and news footage for more contemporary history. Other types of sources may have existed, but they may have been destroyed over time. Historians use these sources to create theories, or educated guesses, about the past. Historians' jobs are especially difficult when they are studying ancient times, as we will do in these lessons. Why is it sometimes more difficult to study ancient times? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher's note 1: Historians and sources 	<p>The teacher talk will give students the information they need to complete the group work.</p> <p>The group work will enable them to practice analysing a source by engaging in an open-ended process of inquiry.</p>

Section	Lesson Development	Resources	Rationale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the whole class, and elicit responses from students. There are many answers, but some answers students might give are: <i>Many sources have been lost or destroyed over time. No one still alive today can remember ancient times. Stories people have passed down through generations might not be reliable. There may be several sources describing an event or a person but presenting different versions or stories. Most people in ancient times could not read or write, so they could not record their experiences.</i> • Today you will be detectives, but you will have a challenging job: you will use sources to try to figure out what happened and what life was like for people, a long, long time ago. In other words, you will learn to be historians. <p>Points to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historians often read descriptions of Southeast Asia written by Chinese, South Asian, West Asian, or European people. These foreign sources are valuable because often, they were contemporary with these events. They provide basic information and a sense of chronology that would be lacking otherwise. However, these sources are written from the point of view of a foreigner, so they might not show how these people thought about themselves. • Ancient stone inscriptions from Southeast Asia usually tell the stories of achievements by kings, queens and important peoples. Rulers wanted their good deeds to be written down and remembered for a long time, so they had them inscribed in stone. • Sometimes ancient people began writing texts or telling stories, and passed them down to be continued by future generations. • In ancient times, people wrote on bamboo or palm leaves because paper was not available. For example, many Buddhist texts are written on palm leaves. <p>3. Group work (15 mins):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Divide students into small groups of four people. 3.2 For each group, ask students to assign roles, including a facilitator to keep the discussion moving, a recorder to write down the group's answers, a reporter to share answers with the class, and a timekeeper to make sure the task is completed in the given time. 3.3 Hand out copies of Source 2 and Source 3 to the groups. 3.4 The groups work together for ten minutes to answer the questions on Handout 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source 2: Translation of an inscription • Source 3: Mural paintings • Handout 1: Being a historian 	

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	<p>3.5 Explain that it is all right if students do not understand all the words or images in their sources. They don't have to be sure of their answers, they can just make their best guess. Circulate among the groups to help them if they get stuck.</p> <p>3.6 The groups report back to the class on their answers to the questions. Ask the first group that analysed the source how their answers were similar to or different from the answers of the second group that analysed it.</p>		
<p>Closure [15 minutes]</p>	<p>4. Reflection – Checking answers (10 mins):</p> <p>4.1 Students complete Handout 2. They can share what surprised them most with the class.</p> <p>5. Concluding teacher talk (5-10 mins):</p> <p>5.1 Summarize the lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just as you all had different ideas about the sources, historians often disagree. • They discuss the issues and try to find more evidence to support or change their theories. • Historians' interpretations change as they find new sources and come up with new ideas. <p>5.2 Ask final questions for discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of relationship do you think the leader had with the people in this case? <i>Possible answers: fearful, distant, strained, etc.</i> • If you were the leader during these times, what would you want people to read about you? <i>Possible answers: Depends on students.</i> • What happens to history when there are no surviving written sources? How can we understand the past, in these cases? <i>Possible answers: We have to study objects, art, and bones.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout 2: What historians believe • Teacher's note 2 	<p>Handout 2 will enable teachers to know if the students have met the lesson objectives.</p> <p>The concluding talk will allow students to consolidate their understanding of the topic and allow for some final discussion questions.</p>
<p>Assessment Teacher can assess whether students have met the lesson objectives by observing them during group work and by considering their responses to Handouts 1 and 2. If teacher wanted to quiz students, she or he could ask them the definitions of 'theory', 'source', and 'evidence', as well as on the details of what historians believe about Source 1.</p>			

Teacher's notes, sources and handouts

Glossary

Historian:	a person who studies history.
Source:	material historians examine during research.
Inscription:	writing on stone, metals or bricks and is a type of source historians examine.
Architecture:	building made of brick, stone, wood or bamboo.
Chronicle:	as a source this is a written document or book telling a story of kings and their achievements.
Theory:	an idea about what happened in history.
Oath:	a very powerful promise.

Teacher's note 1: Historians and sources

- Historians use written material as 'sources' to write history.
- Historians are like detectives: they look for clues, or evidence, to find out what happened in the past.
- There are many kinds of sources historians can use, in addition to photographs of art and architecture. What other sources can you think of?
 - Elicit responses from students, and write their ideas on the board. *For example, stone inscriptions; texts written on bamboo, palm leaves, or paper; chronicles describing kingdoms; letters and diaries written by ordinary people; oral histories; oral traditions; newspaper articles; government records.*
- Sources commonly to write Southeast Asian history include:
 - Inscriptions on stone.
 - Texts on bamboo and palm leaves.
 - Descriptions of early Southeast Asia written by foreigners.
 - Texts from a later period that discuss earlier times.
 - Stories, myths and legends from the present but describing the past as a means of understanding history.
 - Films, videos and photographs and news footage for more contemporary history.
- Other types of sources may have existed, but they may have been destroyed over time.
 - Historians use these sources to create theories, or educated guesses, about the past.
 - Historians' jobs are especially difficult when they are studying ancient times, as we will do in these lessons.
 - Why is it sometimes more difficult to study ancient times?
 - Ask the whole class, and elicit responses from students. There are many answers, but students might answer:
 - *Many sources have been lost or destroyed over time.*
 - *No one still alive today can remember ancient times.*
 - *Stories people have passed down through generations might not be reliable.*
 - *There may be several source describing an event or a person but presenting different versions or stories.*
 - *Most people in ancient times could not read or write, so they could not record their experiences.*
 - Bonus Question: Ask students what some of the challenges might be to future historians studying our current times. Elicit answers that might include: our wide variety of sources, uncertainty about what to believe, etc.
- Today you will be detectives, but you will have a challenging job: you will use sources to try to figure out what happened and what life was like for people, a long, long time ago. In other words, you will learn to be historians.

Teacher's note 1: Historians and sources (continued)

Points to consider:

- Historians often read descriptions of Southeast Asia written by Chinese, South Asian, West Asian, or European people. These foreign sources are valuable because often, they were contemporary with these events. They provide basic information and a sense of chronology that would be lacking otherwise. However, these sources are written from the point of view of a foreigner, so they might not show how people thought about themselves. Historians need to keep this in mind when they use and interpret these sources.
- Ancient stone inscriptions from Southeast Asia usually tell the stories of achievements by kings, queens and important peoples. Rulers wanted their good deeds to be written down and remembered for a long time, so they had them inscribed in stone.
- Sometimes ancient people began writing texts or telling stories, and passed them down to be continued by future generations.
- In ancient times, people wrote on bamboo or palm leaves because paper was not available. For example, many Buddhist texts are written on palm leaves.

Teacher's note 2

- Just as you all had different ideas about the sources, historians often disagree.
- They discuss the issues and try to find more evidence to support or change their theories.
- Historians' interpretations change as they find new sources and come up with new ideas.
- Final questions for discussion:
 1. What kind of relationship do you think the leader had with the people in this case?
 2. If you were the leader during these times, what would you want people to read about you?
 3. What happens to history when there are no surviving written sources? How can we understand the past in these cases?

Source 1: Stone inscription



Source:

Kartapranata, G. commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Telaga_Batu_inscription.JPG

Source 2: Translation of an inscription

Part of the Telaga Batu Inscription, an Oath of Loyalty to the King of Srivijaya:

'You all: the son of kings, ministers, regents, commanders, lords, nobles, viceroys, judges, ... *murddhaka**, chairman of the workers, supervisors, commoners, weapons experts, ministers, soldiers, construction workers, *karma*, ... clerk, architect, skippers, merchants, captains, ye king's servants, king's slaves, all people, will be killed by the spells of your oath if you are not loyal to me.'

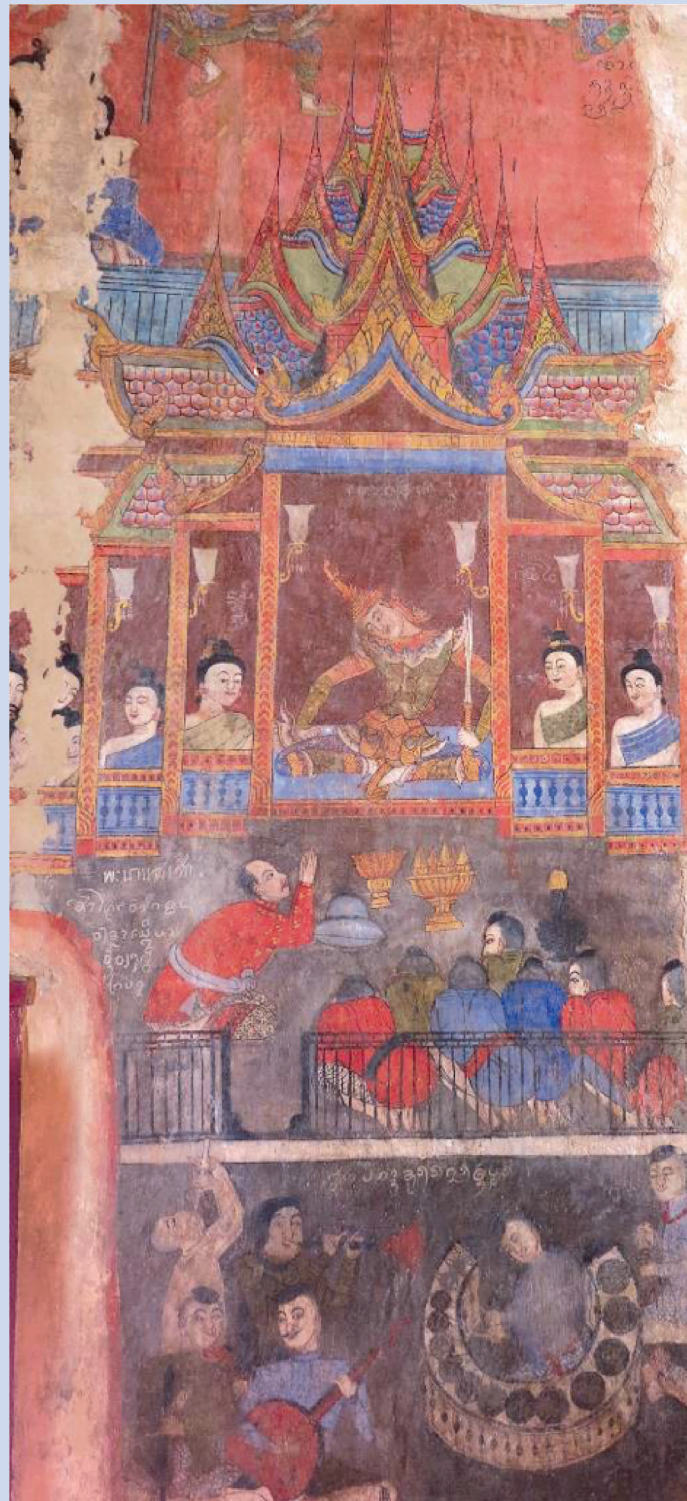
**murddhaka* & *karma*: historians have not been able to translate these occupations.

Source:

De Caspari, J.G. 1956. *Selected inscriptions from the seventh to the ninth century A.D (Prasasti Indonesia 2)*. Bandung.

Source 3: Mural paintings

Mural paintings from Wat Phumin, Nan province, Thailand.



Source:
Achilles, Vanessa.

Handout 1: Being a historian

Work with your group to guess the answers to the following questions:

1. What is this source?

2. Who do you think wrote or created this source?

3. Why do you think they wrote or created this source?

4. What can you learn about history from looking at this source?

5. What questions do you have about this source?

Handout 2: What historians believe

History is a story of the past written in the present. Historians tell this history using sources of information from the past. By learning about the past, we can better understand the present, and think about the future.

Read the information below. Underline one point that is similar to what you had guessed, and circle one point that is different from what you had guessed.

The oath of loyalty to the King of Srivijaya

Most historians believe this stone inscription was written in the seventh century CE. They arrived at this conclusion based on the alphabet used. It was written in a language called Old Malay. We do not know who carved the writing on the stone, but the message suggests that it was probably ordered by the ruler. The inscription was found in Palembang, Indonesia, which is the site of the ancient kingdom of Srivijaya. Most historians believe this text is part of an oath of loyalty to the ruler of Srivijaya who wanted his people to promise not to violate his rules.

Srivijaya was one of many kingdoms to emerge in Southeast Asia since around the first century CE. According to historians it was an important port with traders from different parts of Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Middle East.

Wat Phumin mural paintings

Wat Phumin is located in Nan province in Thailand. The temple was constructed in 1596. The ruler of Nan commissioned the temple's restoration and the painting of the murals during the second half of the nineteenth century. The murals were painted shortly after the King of Siam ceded part of the Nan territories to the French in 1893. They were done by local artists. They mostly have an education purpose: depicting the lives of Buddha as well as the culture and everyday life of the Tai Lue people. Tai Lue people are seen in various areas of the city: at the gate, by the river, at the temple and palace, etc. They are weaving, playing 'petanque', music, nursing children or riding elephants. Some of the murals represent foreign warships, leading to think that the murals were also possibly a social and political commentary of the recent events.