



# Lesson Two: Studying History

## 1) Notions involved in Studying History

- Understanding what history is, how it evolved, and its major currents is essential to contextualize one's learning.
- The work of history happens in the mind. It develops through reading and reflection, ultimately manifesting in written or spoken form.
- History is primarily a book-based discipline. It involves reading broadly and deeply.
- Expressing views on the past without supporting evidence can be problematic. This is why reading and studying are crucial.
- Engaging with historical sources is vital. This involves not only books, articles, and written primary material, but also landscapes, architecture, and archaeological artefacts.

## Questions to Ask about Primary Sources

- (i) who wrote the document?
- (ii) why (for what purpose) did they write the document?
- (iii) what is the document's historical context (e.g. wartime or peacetime).
- (iv) what was the document's function?
- (v) who/what was the document's intended audience?

## 2) The Skills of History Students

If one chooses to study history, it is safe to assume that they have a liking to it. That is a good starting point, but as a student of history, one has to acquire a set of skills and hone them one by one. Students of history have to develop their efficiency, accuracy, and understanding so that they can read and write better, make coherent summaries, and come up with original ideas. To read better, for instance, they have to employ a structured approach to reading where they choose the reading strategy that best suits them. In writing, they have to be able to balance the opinions of others with the interpretation of the material at hand. Over time,

history students gain the ability to assess evidence and conflicting interpretations, in addition to gaining experience in assessing past examples of change.

### **3) Your History Modules**

#### **The History and Civilisation of the Ancient Maghreb**

- By “civilisation” we mean a human collective that is distinguished by governance in accordance to certain standards. Its members voluntarily consent to said governance and have the right to security, personal freedom, and property.
- By “ancient” we mean the historical period beginning with the earliest known civilizations and extending to the fall of the western Roman Empire in A.D. 476.

#### **The Cultural History of Algeria**

- By “cultural history” we mean history that focuses on the social, intellectual, and artistic aspects of forces in the life of a people or a nation.

#### **The Prehistory of North Africa**

- By “prehistory” we mean the period before written history.

#### **The Origins of Algerian History**

- By “origins” we mean rise, beginning, or derivation from a source.

#### **Research Techniques and Methodology**

- By “methodology” we mean a body of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline.

#### **Europe in the Middle Ages**

- By “the middle ages” we mean the period of European history from about A.D. 500 to about 1500

#### **The Beginnings of Islam and the Umayyad State**

- By the “Umayyad State” we mean the dynasty of caliphs based in Damascus that ruled from A.D. 661 to 750.

#### **Natural Geography**

- By “natural geography” we mean the study of the natural physical characteristics of Earth.

## **The History of the Islamic Maghreb and Andalusia**

- By “Andalusia” we mean region of southern Spain including the Sierra Nevada and the valley of the Guadalquivir River.

### ***Further Reading***

—Sulaiman, Kabuye Uthman. “Concept of Civilisation: Meaning and Characteristics”. *IQRA Journal*, vol. 01, no. 01, 2021, pp. 26-37.

### **Sources**

—Bowden, Brett. “The Ideal of Civilisation: Its Origins and Socio-Political Character”. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2004, pp. 25-50.

—Jeremy Black and Donald D. MacRaid. *Studying History*. Second Edition, Macmillan Press, 2000.

—Merriam-Webster, <https://merriam-webster.com>.

—Stearns, Peter N. *Why Study History*. American Historical Association, 1998.