



Lesson One: Introduction to History

Vocabulary

Words

History	(noun): the study or description of past events
Historical	(adjective): of or concerning history
Historic	(adjective): famous or important in history
Historian	(noun): student of, or expert in, history
Temporal	(adjective): of or limited by time
Narrative	(noun): description of events
Framework	(noun): set of principles or ideas
Interpretation	(noun): explanation or understanding of something
Evidence	(noun): facts, signs, or objects that make you believe something is true
Record	(noun): written account of facts, events, etc

- There is a slight difference between saying something is ‘historical’ and saying something is ‘historic’:
 - Generally, when we say something is “historical”, we mean that it has a relation to history.
Examples → I like reading historical novels.
 - We need to investigate the historical context of this phenomenon.
 - Who is your favourite historical figure?
 - Generally, when we say something is “historic”, we are implying that it has a degree of importance or that it is famous by virtue of its historical significance.
Examples → The first moon landing was a historic moment for humanity.
 - This country is home to many historic cities.
 - Martin Luther King's historic speech was entitled “I have a Dream”.



Anything related to history is *historical*, but only something that has a historical significance (importance) is *historic*.

Expressions

“ <i>history repeats itself</i> ”	the patterns in which historical events play out tend to happen time and time again in similar ways
“ <i>go down in history</i> ”	when events, dates, or figures “go down in history”, it means that they are so important that they will be remembered
“ <i>change the course of events</i> ”	if a thing makes a deep impact on something or influences it in a drastic way, that thing changes the initial trajectory of events

Grammar

Adjectives

- Adjectives go before a noun.
→ This is a historical novel. (NOT ~~This is a novel historical.~~)
- Adjectives don't change before a plural noun.
→ These are historical novels. (NOT ~~These are historicals novels.~~)
- We also use adjectives after the verb ‘to be’.
→ This novel is historical.

Word Building

- Notice how in the vocabulary section, you encountered the following words:

history

historical

historic

historian

- Let’s take the word ‘historian’ and see how it was built:

We started with the word ‘history’, we dropped the ‘y’, and we added ‘-ian’:

history → histor → historian.



We omitted the ‘y’ from ‘history’ to make ‘historian’ for the sake of spelling.

- ‘Historian’ is the name of a profession. When we deal with professions:
 - We often add ‘-er’ / ‘-or’ to a verb.
 - write : writer / act : actor
 - We often add ‘-ian’ / ‘-ist’ to a noun.
 - music : musician / science : scientist

Text

History is a kind of research or inquiry concerned with the past. The delimitations of this form of thought are set by people who have two main qualifications. They need to have experience of said form of thought and they need to reflect on that experience, meaning they must be both historians and philosophers. History deals with past events and what historians seek to do is to explain these events by reconstituting what happened in the past. In order to do so, historians interpret evidence. In the interpretative process, they need to select certain facts and reject others, and they must also fill in the gaps found in records by making deductions of facts. The reason historians proceed by the interpretation of evidence is that, from one hand, there are far too many historical facts to include in their explanations and from the other hand, there are not enough facts to permit a plausible explanation of a given event. All these efforts made by historians give history the value that it holds today which is teaching us what man has done and thus what man is, in addition to contributing to other sciences through its cataloguing operations.

Further Reading

Becker, Carl L. “What are Historical Facts?”. *The Western Political Quarterly*, vol. viii, no 3, 1955, pp. 327-340.

Sources

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—Latham-Koeing, Christina, et al. *English File*. Fourth edition, Oxford University Press, 2019.

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—“What’s the difference between ‘historic’ and ‘historical’?”. Merriam-Webster, <https://merriam-webster.com>.

—White, Hayden. “Interpretation in History”. *New Literary History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1973, pp. 281-314.