**History**

History is systematically collected information about the past. History studies the past in human terms. When used as the name of a field of study, history refers to the study and interpretation of the record of humans, families, and societies. Knowledge of history is often said to encompass both knowledge of past events and historical thinking skills. Traditionally, the study of history has been considered a part of the humanities. However, in modern academia, history is increasingly classified as a social science, especially when chronology is the focus. Because history is such a broad subject, organization is crucial. While several writers have written universal histories, most historians specialize. There are several different ways of classifying historical information: chronological (by date), geographical (by region), national (by nation), ethnic (by ethnic group), topical (by subject or topic).

Some people have criticized historical study, saying that it tends to be too narrowly focused on political events, armed conflicts, and famous people and that deeper and more significant changes in terms of ideas, technology, family life and culture warrant more attention. Recent developments in the practice of history have sought to address this. Historians obtain information about the past from various kinds of sources, including written or printed records, coins or other artefacts, buildings and monuments, and interviews (oral history). For modern history, primary sources may include photographs, motion pictures, and audio and video recordings. Different approaches may be more common in the study of some periods than in others, and perspectives of history (historiography) vary widely.

Historical records have been maintained for a variety of reasons, including administrative (such as censuses, tax records, commercial records), political (glorification or criticism of leaders and notable figures), religious, artistic, sporting (notably the Olympics), genealogical, personal (letters), and entertainment. The historical method comprises the techniques and guidelines by which historians use primary sources and other evidence to research and then to write history.

Historians often claim that the study of history teaches valuable lessons with regard to past successes and failures of leaders, military strategy and tactics, economic systems, forms of government, and other recurring themes in the human story. From history we may learn factors that result in the rise and fall of civilizations, the strengths and weaknesses of various political, economic, and social systems, and the effects of factors such as trade and technology.

One of the most famous quotations about history and the value of studying history, by Spanish philosopher, George Santayana, reads: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The German Philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel remarked in his *Philosophy* *of History*that "What history and experience teach us is this: that people and government never have learned anything from history or acted on principles deduced from it." This was famously paraphrased by the British statesman, Winston Churchill, who said "The one thing we have learned from history is that we don't learn from history."

An alternative view is that the forces of history are too great to be changed by human deliberation, or that, even if people do change the course of history, the movers and shakers of this world are usually too self-involved to stop to look at the big picture.

Yet another view is that history does not repeat itself because of the uniqueness of any given historical event. In this view, the specific combination of factors at any moment in time can never be repeated, and so knowledge about events in the past can not be directly and beneficially applied to the present.

The process of historical analysis is a difficult one, involving investigation and analysis of competing ideas, facts, and purported facts to create coherent narratives that explain "what happened" and "why or how it happened". Modern historical analysis usually draws upon most of the other social sciences, including economics, sociology, politics, psychology, philosophy and linguistics. An important part of the job of many modern historians is the verification or dismissal of earlier historical accounts through reviewing newly discovered sources, recent scholarship, or through parallel disciplines such as archaeology.

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