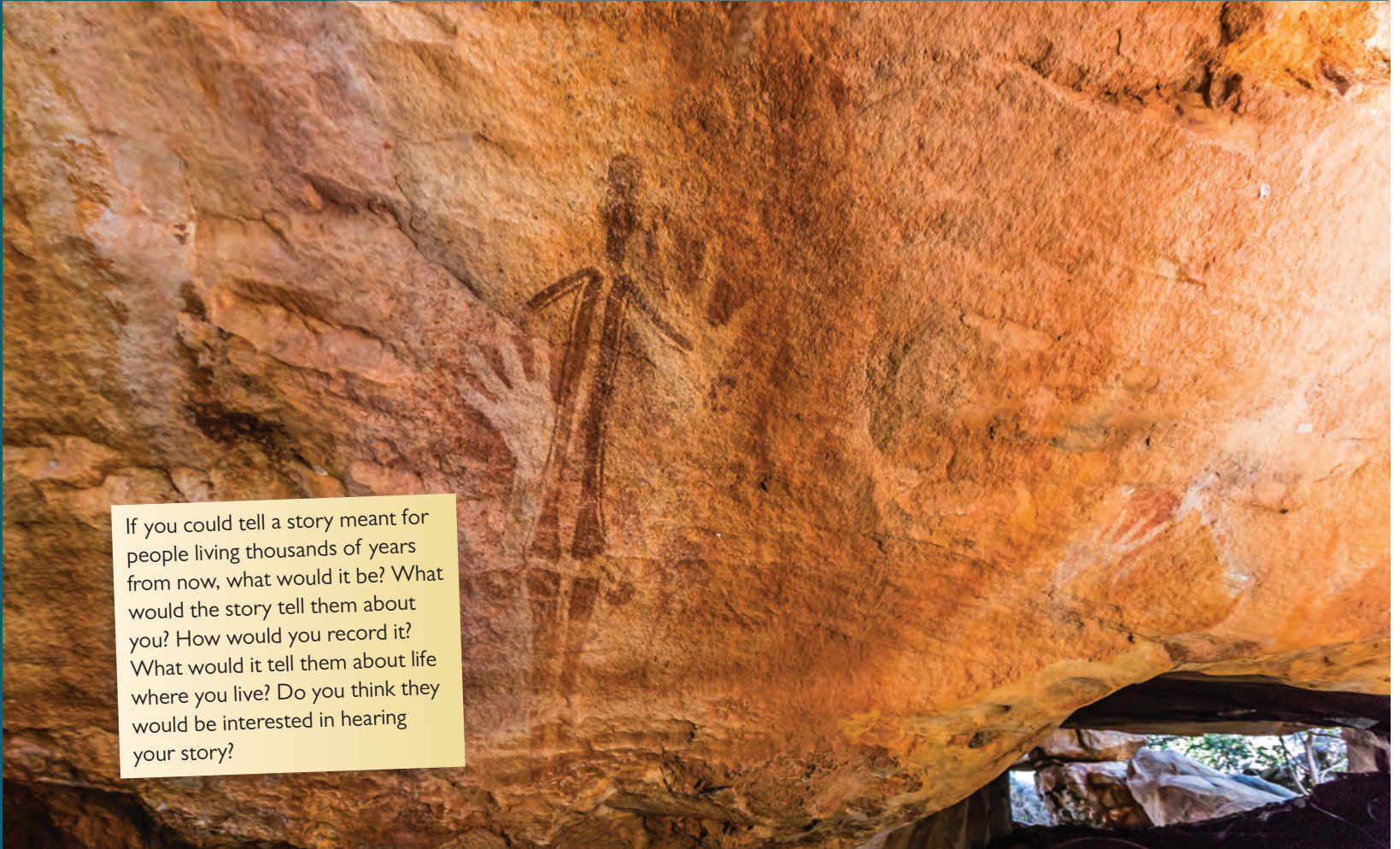


The Human Story

How are we connected to the past?



If you could tell a story meant for people living thousands of years from now, what would it be? What would the story tell them about you? How would you record it? What would it tell them about life where you live? Do you think they would be interested in hearing your story?

▲ The Gwion Gwion rock paintings in Northern Australia are thought to be at least 5000 years old. Who were the people who created this painting? Why did they create it? What ideas do you think they wanted to express? What does it say to us today?

Keep notes of your responses to the questions in this section. You could also record important parts of your discussions with classmates.

The human story is a huge tapestry made up of the countless stories of billions of people. It stretches back to the beginning of human life on Earth. Each of our lives is one thread in that tapestry. When we start to follow our own thread, it reaches back, further and further, to a long-ago world. When we study the past, we are learning about our place in the human story.

What Is Your Story?



Why Do We Study the Past?

If you were to make a collage of images representing the human story in modern times, what would you want to show? In what ways have we stayed the same? In what ways have we changed?



▲ What do you see in these images that looks familiar? What looks strange? What would you like to know more about? Discuss and share what you are thinking and wondering about with your classmates.

Learning from the Ancient World

What do you know about the ancient world? What do you wonder about the ancient world?

What comes to mind when you think of the ancient world? It can seem like a place full of mysteries. It might be easy to think that the people of the ancient world had nothing in common with the people of today.

But when we look at the past, we can see that it is a lot like the present. No matter who we study, in whatever place and at whatever time, we can find the same elements.

People

All humans are members of the same species. They share similar features and behaviours. All humans belong to a culture, or even several cultures, which help form their identity and worldview. People share their cultures through language and customs. How would you describe what you have in common with other people?



Place

All humans live in a place in the world. How they interact with their physical environment determines their way of life. How do the different places where humans live create diversity? What is your place in the world? How do you interact with your physical environment?



Social Organization and Governance

All humans live in groups, starting with their family. Families organize themselves into larger societies. Within the group, individuals have different roles and responsibilities. Why do people organize and govern themselves? What groups do you belong to?



Beliefs and Worldviews

All humans have beliefs. Their beliefs help them understand how they fit into the world, and explain themselves and their way of life. Why do people have beliefs? Do people need belief systems? What are your beliefs?



Tools and Technological Innovations

All humans use resources in their environment to invent, create, and build things that help them meet their basic needs, solve problems, and thrive in their environment. How do tools and technology reflect our environment? What kinds of technology do you consider to be part of your way of life?



Interactions with Others

Humans come into contact with each other through trade, travel, conflict, and cooperation. People's interactions affect their ways of life and their ability to thrive. Why do the ways people interact play such a large role in their history? What have you learned or adopted from other cultures?



Looking at the Past: Worldviews

A **worldview** is how you see the world and everything in it. Your worldview is formed by your values and beliefs, your experiences, and what you learn from families, friends, and communities.

Worldview shapes how we interpret and understand the world. It includes perspective and point of view. It can be influenced by our own personal preferences and opinions, or the opinions we share with a group. Whether or not you are aware of it, this can also include bias.

It is important to remember that worldview can change over time. When we experience new things or become aware of the perspectives of other people, we can increase our understanding of the world.

A **worldview** is a collection of beliefs, values, and assumptions about life, people, and the world. It is the basis for how we see the world and the choices we make.

How can understanding worldviews help us understand the past?

What Can Worldviews Help Us Learn About the Past?

Our worldview creates meaning by answering some important questions.

- Who are we?
- Where do we come from?
- Why do we live the way we do?
- Where have we come from? Where are we going?
- Why is the world the way it is?
- How do I know what to believe?



This is one example of shared worldviews. How do these worldviews help answer the questions above?

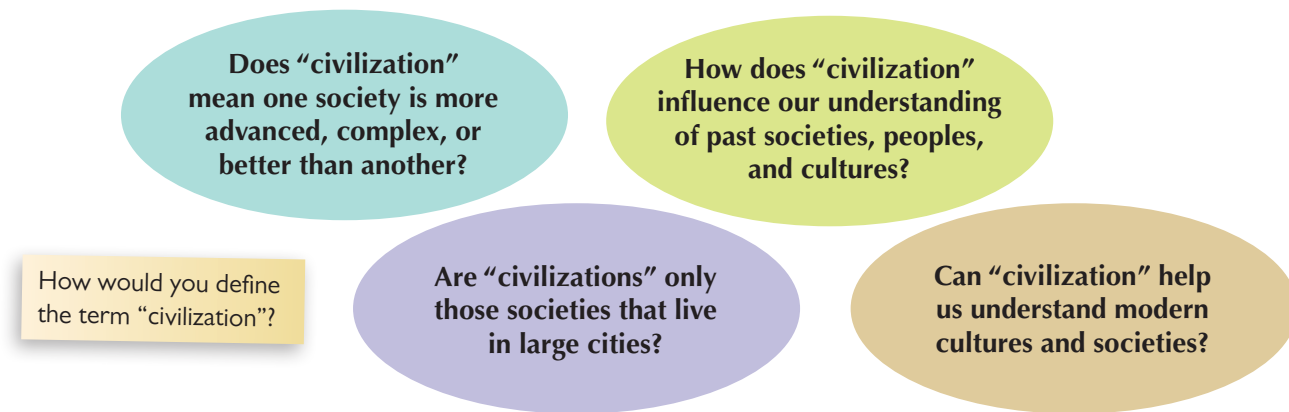
◀ While each First Nation, Metis and Inuit society is unique and diverse, First Peoples also share some common worldviews. These include the belief that people should respect the world and that the past and future are always with us in the present.

Let's look at a question about the past with worldview in mind.

What Is a Civilization?

How does your worldview shape what you think about ancient humans, societies, and cultures?

The term "ancient civilization" is often used when we refer to a society or group of people who lived a long time ago. In the past, historians believed that a "civilization" was a more advanced society. However, the idea of what a civilization is has changed over time. What do you think of when you hear the word "civilization?" Consider these questions based on what you know about worldviews, perspectives, and bias.



Within all societies there are common key elements or features that are maintained over long periods of time. Look at these examples of complex ancient societies—both of which continue today. Discuss the questions about civilization above by using these two societies as examples.

▼ Every society and culture shows what it means to be human. What similarities can you see here?

Key Element	Haida (12 500 BCE–present)	Ancient Egypt (3100–332 BCE)
History, how knowledge is shared (education)	Knowledge passed down through oral tradition and stories from Elders to both males and females	Learning available to certain social classes
Geography or significance of place	Communities on inlets, bays and waterways; access to rich variety of natural resources	Cities built on major rivers, such as the Nile; agricultural resources
Economics (trade)	Nation to nation trade, international trade with European explorers	Hierarchy of wealth dependent on class structure; trade with other societies
Political (governance and rules)	Hereditary chief and matriarchs in each village/community	Pharaoh as sole ruler; class structure determines power
Anthropology (language, traditions, and technology)	Haida, or <i>X̱aayda Kíl</i> , is the ancestral language of the Haida people; fishing weirs, ocean-going canoes	Written records dated from about 3400 BCE; structures, shipbuilding
Sociology (family structures, belief systems)	Males and females had roles and worked together for the prosperity of the community as a whole	Roles and responsibilities based on social class; distinct roles for male and female

How Do We Study the Past?

Every study of the past starts with a question. These thinking concepts can be used as starting points for questions about the past.

Establish Significance

How do we decide what is important to know about the past? When we examine the significance of an event or a person, we reveal what matters to us. To someone else, the same event or person may not be significant.

How can our choice of what we find significant be a matter of perspective?

The horse evolved over millions of years, but it is only within the past 10 000 years that horses were domesticated by humans. Domestication meant that horses had become tame enough to live with and be managed by humans.

Historians believe that horses were first domesticated in the area now known as Kazakhstan. How it happened may never be known, but it probably followed the same process as with other domesticated animals, such as dogs, camels, and goats. Over time, domesticated horses were introduced around the world. They became essential parts of human warfare, transportation, hunting, and work.



Modern-Day Kazakhstan



▲ Top: A stone carving showing a procession with horses in the ancient city of Persepolis (550 BCE). Bottom: A modern rider at the Tsuut'ina Nation Rodeo. Could the stories of the people in these images be significant? In what ways? to whom?

- What makes the domestication of animals such as horses significant? What impact did horses have on the lives of ancient people?
- Who might not consider the domestication of horses significant?
- How significant are horses today? Are they used in similar ways? What does this tell you about their significance?
- What do you consider significant in your life? Why is it significant? Who does it affect? What lasting effect has it had?

If you could choose a single object or story that says the most about your life, what would it be? What would it tell someone about you? about the world you live in?

Use Evidence

When we study the past, we try to reconstruct the human story by using evidence. This can include oral histories, artifacts, maps, petroglyphs, carvings, dwellings, or monuments, and many other sources. Each piece of evidence can help fill in the picture—or create new questions that need answers.



▲ A woman writer in ancient Rome waits for inspiration (above). Secwepemc Elder Lawrence Michel tells a story (right).

This painting of a woman in Pompeii is almost two thousand years old. What does it tell us about the woman? What does it tell us about the culture she lived in? What questions does it leave you with?

Stories told by First Nations Elders have been passed down for more than 2000 years. What can we learn from oral histories? What questions are you left with?

Discuss and share your ideas with a classmate.



- How do we know a source of evidence about the past is reliable?
- Is the evidence adequate to support the conclusions reached?
- Why might different people interpret the same piece of evidence in different ways?
- What methods are used today to discover more evidence about the past?

Identify Continuity and Change

When we identify what has changed and what has stayed the same, we gain a deeper understanding of how humans have always been dealing with the same problems and what has changed as a result. Some periods of change act as turning points, sending people or entire nations in a new direction.

Which aspects of life have remained the same since ancient times? Which have changed?

The people of the Katzie First Nation, near Vancouver, have depended on what is now called the Pitt and Fraser rivers since time immemorial. For thousands of years, they built large beds from stone in order to grow and harvest wapatos. This nutritious plant, much like a potato, grew in wet, marshy ground. When Europeans arrived and began to settle in the area, the marshy fields were gradually lost. Wetlands were drained to create fields or blocked off from the river. Other plants, such as the common potato, replaced the wapato in the diet of First Peoples.

However, knowledge of the wapato and how to harvest the plant was not completely lost. In 2016, the Katzie First Nation announced the discovery of archeological evidence of wapato cultivation in Pitt Meadows, near Vancouver. Members of the Katzie First Nation are once more growing, gathering, and cooking wild wapato.

They continue to rely on the rivers even as their traditional territory has become home to millions of people.

- What has changed for the Katzie First Nation since the days of their wapato gardens? What has stayed the same?
- What do you think was the turning point that marked the beginning of change for the Katzie First Nation?
- What does the harvest of the wapato tell us about continuity in the lives of the Katzie people?
- How do you see continuity and change in your own life? What turning points can you see?



▲ What does the discovery of the ancient wapato gardens tell us about the continuity of life for the Katzie people?

Describe a family or community tradition that you participate in.

Analyze Causes and Consequences

What creates change in your life?

When we look at changes in the past, we often ask, “Why?” What set a change in motion? Often, the answer is that there was more than one cause. There may also have been multiple, short- and long-term, intended, and unintended causes.

In the same way, we can ask, “Then what?” What happened as a result of the change? Often, we find that a change had more than one consequence. Some may have been short-term and others long-term consequences.

What we see when we analyze reasons behind changes is that the past is a long chain of cause and consequence. The consequence of one change becomes the cause of a new change.

What are a couple of events in your life that had immediate and long-term consequences? Describe what happened and the results.

The Great Wall of China is one of the most impressive structures ever built. It stretches almost 9000 kilometres across the northern border of China. It became a symbol of China’s identity as one of the longest-lasting civilizations in history.

The earliest portions of the wall were built almost 3000 years ago when what is now China was a collection of kingdoms. The rulers of those kingdoms built walls and watchtowers to protect their territory from invasion.

Around 200 BCE, Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, united the different kingdoms of China. He ordered the building of a massive defensive wall that would connect the existing walls and watchtowers. Hundreds of thousands of workers were forced to work on the wall.

Over the centuries, Chinese rulers expanded, repaired, and maintained the wall. The cost was very high, including the lives of thousands of workers. Just feeding the workers took a huge part of the country’s food supply. However, the wall continued to protect China from invasions. It also allowed the emperor to control trade into and out of China.

- What causes led to the building and expansion of the wall? How did these causes change over time?
- What intended and unintended consequences did the wall have?
- What were the short- and long-term consequences?
- What has caused you to make certain decisions? What were the consequences?

▼ Today, some parts of the wall are crumbling or have vanished under drifting desert sands. Other parts are popular tourist sites.



Explore Perspectives

How can we understand what it was like to live in the ancient world? We have so few details about what the people thought, believed, and cared about. For most of the people of the ancient world, we have no details at all. We rely on what we know now to imagine what they knew then. How accurate can we be? The best we can do is try to put ourselves in the situation of the people of the past and to imagine what life was like for them. We can try to see beyond our own values, beliefs, and experiences to appreciate the values, beliefs, and experiences of people from a very different time and place.

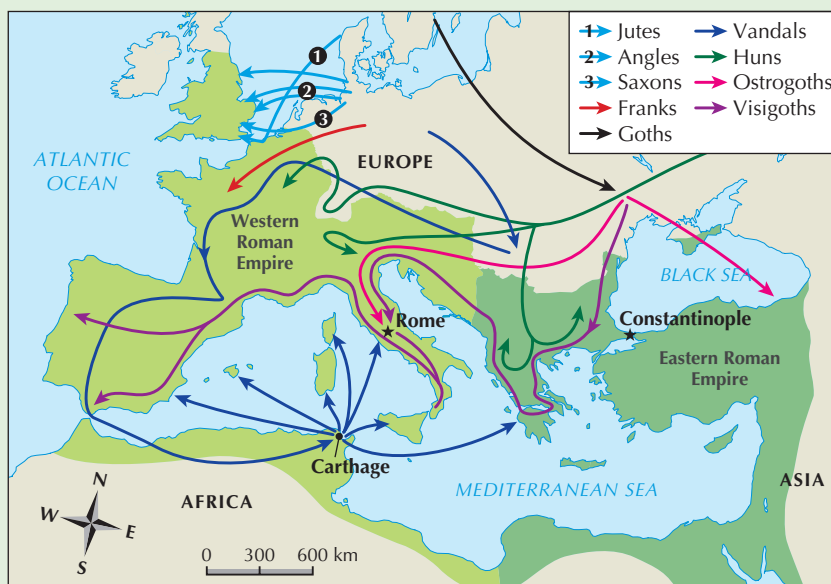
How can we understand what life was like in the past?

Describe a time when you were unfairly treated or when you felt misunderstood. Was this partly a matter of perspective? What might the other person have been thinking? How does understanding different perspectives affect possible conflicts?

For 400 years, there was a mass movement of people throughout what is now Europe. The migrants were Germanic and Slavic peoples from what is now northern and eastern Europe, including the Goths, Vandals, and Huns. Some Romans and Greeks considered these people to be uncivilized. Some blamed the migrants for the later collapse of the Roman civilization.

This map shows the migrations as large-scale “invasions.” Today, historians use the term *Migration Age* to describe this period. They now understand that the migration was a slow change that took place over hundreds of years. Sometimes it created conflict. Many migrants settled peacefully, however, and became farmers. They gradually adopted Roman customs.

Invasions of the Roman Empire, 100–500 CE



▲ What perspective does this map represent?

- How do the terms *invasion* and *migration* reflect different perspectives?
- The word *barbarian* comes from a Greek word describing someone who did not speak Greek. Later, the word became a stereotype to describe a person as primitive or uncivilized. Do these labels necessarily reflect the truth? What would have been the perspective of the migrants?
- Can you describe any other large-scale migrations? What are different perspectives on these migrations?

How can we judge decisions and events in the past?

What are some examples from the world today that you think are unjust or unfair? What can you do to raise awareness and make a difference?

Understand Ethical Judgments

When we study the past, we discover that the problems of the past are the same problems we deal with today. But how they were solved can be very different. From our 21st-century perspective, we look to see whether the solutions were ethical. In other words, were they fair? Were people treated in the way that we consider just? What can we learn from those decisions that will help us create a better world?

Many civilizations of the ancient world practised slavery. People could become slaves when they were taken captive during war, through debt or poverty, through crimes, or simply by being born to slaves.

Slavery and human trafficking still happen today, but this is generally viewed as wrong or criminal. Why do we no longer legally allow one human to own another? How can slavery occur in other forms?



▲ Left: This carving from the Karnak Temple Complex in Egypt shows slaves carrying a funeral boat. Right: A young woman takes part in a protest against human trafficking in Trafalgar Square, London, England.



- Why do we now consider slavery a crime?
- Should we look at slavery in the ancient world as different from slavery today?
- Some cities and monuments of the ancient world were built by slaves. Did slavery have value in spite of its high human cost?
- What would it take to ensure that no one lived or worked as a slave today?

What Is Your Story?

How are *you* connected to the past? Where do you fit in the human story?

Think about your own story. What memories stand out? What significant events or changes have happened in your life? What has stayed the same and what has changed?

Like a historian, you probably know some details, such as when and where you were born, who you have lived with, and what some of the major events of your life are. You may have to do research to find out other information. Your task, like a historian's, is to find the missing pieces.

Use the diagram below as a starting point to build your story. You could use your responses to the questions in this section to help organize your story. Share your story in any way you choose.

