

# Why History?

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## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the craft of history. That is, you will learn to use some of the tools and methods historians use to make sure they are not just studying past events but studying them critically. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. The Study of History
2. Gathering and Analyzing Information



## BEFORE YOU START

Why do you think information and news are important to understanding the world around us?

## 1. The Study of History

The study of history requires us to think critically and read carefully. In the first few challenges of this course, we will focus on the techniques of finding and analyzing historical sources, which form the foundation for thinking like a historian. Then we will move on to using a critical thinking process to build a case with evidence from those sources.

While we are studying history, we'll encounter many examples of people in the past using the same skills that we are learning in this course. By looking at how people used problem solving, communication, technology, and agility skills in the past, we can get inspiration and ideas for how we can use those skills today.

As we go, we will encounter many pieces of history that hold lessons for today's workplace and today's world. We will read about how people in the past relied on different methods of communicating, employed technology, demonstrated agility, or used good problem solving techniques to get ahead. Through the examples in this course, we will also see how the skills combine and enhance each other. For example, communication and technology competencies can make us better and more successful problem solvers, and agility can help us adapt to new technology.



**Learning about history holds lessons for today's workplace.**

History is a great way to develop and practice skills that will be important in the workplace. Understanding how people in the past addressed challenges can help us overcome our own challenges today. As you work through the information and assignments, you will gain a better understanding of who you are and how you can best use the skills in this course in your personal and professional life.

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## 2. Gathering And Analyzing Information

The starting point for the study of history is to carefully select and analyze sources of information. Understanding a historical source is not always straightforward. Whether it's a letter, a newspaper article, a cartoon, or any other document, each historical source was created by an individual. It shows us the past through that person's perspective—and that means the source might be unreliable or biased, its description of events inaccurate or even intentionally false. This doesn't mean we shouldn't trust primary sources, but that we should approach each one with care. This is why historians use a collection of multiple sources written from different perspectives to understand a time or event.

Historians must be careful readers and even detectives, finding and analyzing the right information to answer questions and solve historical mysteries. They must examine sources closely and consider who created them, when, and why. Because they have to think so carefully and creatively to figure out the past, historians are great models of critical thinking and problem solving skills. By learning how to research and think like a historian, you'll be developing skills that will help you write better assignments for your classes and propose better solutions in the workplace and in other parts of your life.

One thing that we can be sure of is that information has the power to have real-world consequences. Throughout history, major events have been influenced by misinformation. We'll look at a few of these examples on the next page.



### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned what the **study of history** entails and why it is constructive. Specifically, you learned that it confers information about how people in the past used the skills of communication, problem solving, technology, and agility to affect their world. Historians **gather and analyze information** about the past through a critical lens, so the study of history also requires the application of these same skills, all of which are useful in the modern workplace.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: Strategic Education, Inc. 2020. Learn from the Past, Prepare for the Future.