25SCHOOLS
FREE LEARNING NOTES FOR ZAMBIA

FORM 1

History

Introduction to History

Lesson notes for learners · Competence-Based Curriculum

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History is the study of past events and how they shaped the world we live in today. You meet it when an elder tells how your village began, when you ask why Zambia celebrates Independence Day on 24th October, and when you hear the story of Mosi-oa-Tunya, the Victoria Falls.

AFTER THESE NOTES YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO

- Explain why we learn history and why past events matter today
- Describe and interpret the history of your own area
- Classify history into its types or branches
- Judge how far a source of historical information can be trusted
- Use digital resources such as websites and videos to learn about the past

KEY WORDS

History	the study of past events and how people lived, worked and changed over time
Local history	the history of a small area such as a village, a town, a school or a chiefdom
Source	anything that gives us information about the past
Primary source	evidence made at the time of the event, or by someone who was there
Secondary source	an account written later by someone who was not there, using other evidence
Oral tradition	history passed by word of mouth from one generation to the next
Credibility	how far a source can be believed and trusted
Bias	favouring one side, so that the account is not fair

1 Why we learn history

History helps us understand who we are. Zambia has its own government, flag and laws because of events in the past. Learning these events explains why things are as they are today.

History also teaches lessons. When we study how people solved problems, or failed to solve them, we can make wiser choices. It builds identity and national pride, and it helps people of different groups understand one another and live in peace. It trains us to ask questions, weigh evidence and give reasons for what we say.

2 Local history

Local history is the history of the place where you live: a village, a town, a school, a church or a chiefdom. It answers questions such as: Who first settled here? How did this place get its name? Why was the school built here?

To interpret local history means to find out what a local event or tradition meant and why it happened. Use evidence such as stories from elders, old buildings, photographs, school records and traditional ceremonies. For example, the Kuomboka ceremony of the Lozi people of Western Province tells us how the Lozi lived with the yearly flooding of the Zambezi plain.

3 Types or branches of history

History is large, so it is divided into branches. Each branch looks at the past from a different side. To classify history means to place an event or study under the right branch.

Political history studies governments, leaders and struggles for power, such as the fight for independence. Economic history studies how people earned a living and traded, such as copper mining. Social history studies how people lived: family, customs, health and education. Religious history studies beliefs and how they spread. One event can belong to more than one branch.

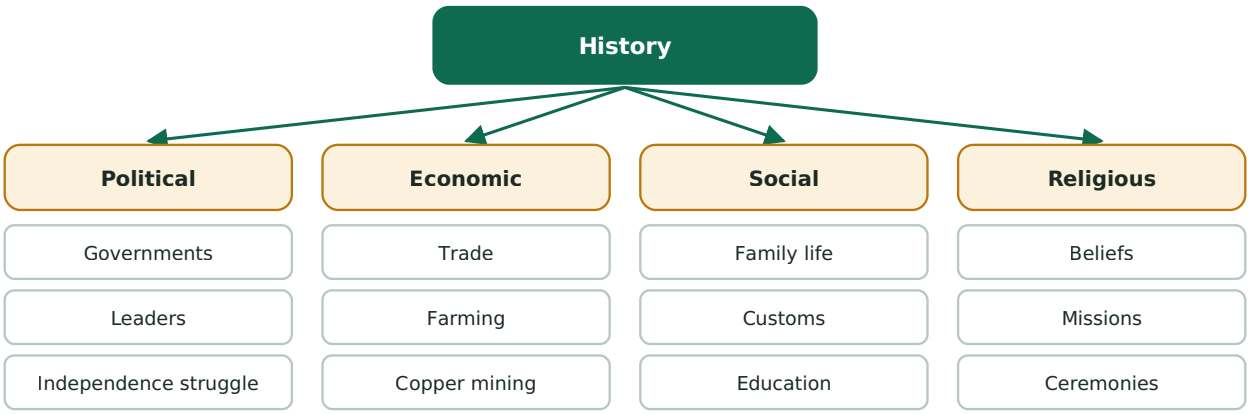


Figure 1. Four branches of history and what each one studies

WORKED EXAMPLE

Under which branch of history would you place a study of how the Copperbelt mines changed people's jobs and incomes?

The study is about jobs, incomes and mining.

These concern how people earn a living and produce wealth.

That is the concern of economic history.

Answer: economic history.

4 Sources of history

We know about the past only through sources. Primary sources come from the time of the event: a letter, a photograph, an old coin, a tool, or the words of a person who was there. Secondary sources are written later, such as a textbook that uses primary sources to tell the story. Sources are also grouped as oral (spoken), written (documents) and archaeological (remains and objects).

Not every source can be trusted equally. To assess credibility, ask: Who made it? Was the writer present? When was it made? Why was it made? Does it agree with other sources? A person may be biased. A good historian compares several sources before reaching a conclusion.

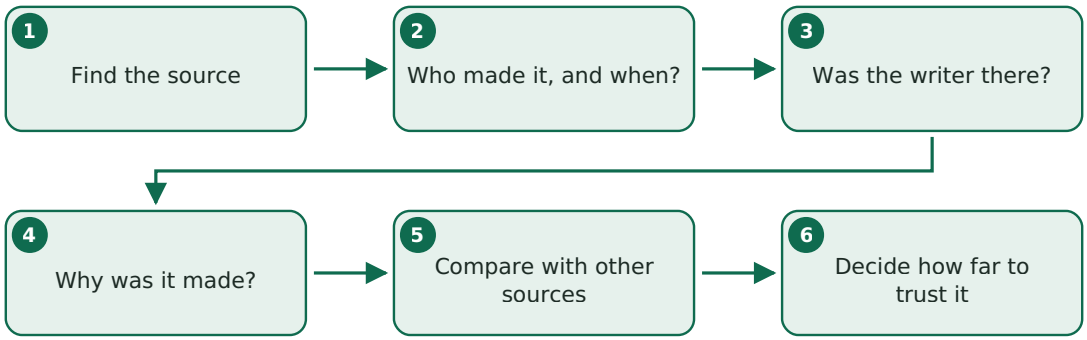


Figure 2. Steps for judging how credible a source is

WORKED EXAMPLE

A man tells you about a battle that happened 50 years before he was born. A soldier who fought in it wrote a diary that week. Which is more credible?

The man was not present and heard the story from others.

The soldier was present and wrote at the time.

The diary is a primary source made close to the event.

Answer: the diary is more credible, though it should still be compared with other sources.

5 Using digital resources to learn about the past

Digital resources are information found on phones, computers and the internet. They include websites, online libraries and museums, videos, recorded interviews, digital photographs and maps. They let you see places and records far from your school.

Digital sources need the same checking as any other. Anyone can post information online, so look for the author, the date and whether it matches trusted books and sites. Prefer official sites of museums, universities and government bodies. Note where you found the information so you can show your source.

TRY THIS

Interview an elder at home or in your community about the history of your village or area. Write down three facts they give. Say whether each fact is a primary or a secondary source, and name one other source (such as a school record or a building) you could use to check it.

REMEMBER

- History is the study of past events; it explains the present, teaches lessons and builds identity.
- Local history studies the past of a small area and is interpreted using elders, objects and records.
- The main branches are political, economic, social and religious history.
- Primary sources come from the time of the event; secondary sources are written later.
- Credibility is judged by asking who made the source, when, why, and whether other sources agree.
- Digital resources are useful but must be checked for author, date and reliability.

? Check yourself

1. Give two reasons for learning history.
2. What is local history?
3. Name two kinds of evidence you can use to study the history of your village.
4. Which branch of history studies governments and the struggle for independence?
5. State the difference between a primary source and a secondary source.
6. Is a textbook a primary or a secondary source?
7. List three questions you can ask to judge whether a source is credible.
8. Why must we check information found on the internet?

ANSWERS

1. Any two: it explains how the present came about; it teaches lessons from the past; it builds identity and national pride; it helps people understand each other; it trains us to weigh evidence.
2. The history of a small area such as a village, town, school or chiefdom.
3. Any two: stories from elders, old buildings, photographs, school or church records, traditional ceremonies.
4. Political history.
5. A primary source comes from the time of the event or from someone who was there. A secondary source is written later by someone who was not there.
6. A secondary source.
7. Any three: Who made it? When was it made? Was the writer present? Why was it made? Does it agree with other sources?
8. Anyone can post information online, so it may be wrong or biased. We must check the author, the date and whether trusted sources agree.

Written by 25Schools to follow the Form 1 History syllabus of the Zambian competence-based curriculum. Free for learners to read, download and share. More notes and quizzes at 25schools.com.