

# Lesson 3: How does doing history differ from getting history?

Unit 1  
Grade 4

# Warm Up

If someone asked you to find out what Africa was like in the year 1491, how could you find out?



We are going to learn about the ways historians and others who are interested in the past learn what happened long ago.



Focus on these questions while you read:

- How is getting history different from doing history?
- Is one approach better than another? Explain why.
- What do historians do regardless of which approach they use?
- Read it aloud or have students read independently.

#### Resource 1: How We Learn About the Past

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There are two main ways to learn about what happened in the past.

##### How Do We Learn by “Getting History?”

The first and most common way to learn history involves reading, watching, or listening to what historians have already learned. For example, you might listen to a teacher tell you something about the past, or read a history book, or watch videos about things that happened long ago. Can you think of any history books or videos that describe events or people who lived in the past?

Getting history can be a great way to learn about the past. Many historians have done excellent research and found out what happened in the past, and other historians have checked their conclusions to make sure that they are credible or believable. It can save us a lot of time to read about what historians have already learned. For example, if a historian has already found that George Washington was our first President, or that Delaware became the “First State” in 1787, it saves us a lot of time to accept that and make better use of our time researching things that we do not know about

Still, there can be a problem with the “getting history” approach. The problem is that some people assume that everything that they read or hear about in history books or films are all facts. But that is not true. For example, the same book that states that “George Washington was our first President” might also state that “George Washington was our greatest President.” The first statement is a fact; the second statement is an interpretation or opinion.

Why is this important? Because we recognize that something we read or hear is an interpretation, it is good to do some checking to see if there might be evidence to prove that the interpretation is wrong or that there might be a better interpretation.

Remember when you did the History Bag activity? You looked at things in your partner’s bag to come up with an interpretation about your partner. But your partner was able to tell you which parts of your interpretation were correct and which ones were not. If some of history is interpretation, you should have opportunities to see if you can come up with better interpretations that are supported by stronger evidence.

So, let’s see what an example of “getting history” looks like. Read the information in the block.

# Show me what you know

Resource 2: Checks for Understanding

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which of the following BEST describes the main idea of the readings?
  - a. human life started in Africa
  - b. doing history is better than getting history
  - c. what we read in history books are facts about the past
  - d. getting history and doing history are valuable ways to learn about the past
  
2. The author of the reading uses the word "corroborate." Which of the following BEST describe what people who draw conclusions about the past should do?
  - a. check to see who drew the conclusion
  - b. check to make sure the conclusions are believable
  - c. check to see when the person drew the interpretation
  - d. check to see if the conclusion is a fact or an interpretation
  
3. History is a bunch of facts. Do you agree or disagree? Use an example from the reading to support your conclusion.

Agree or disagree (circle one). Your example

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