

Lesson 1: The Personal Historian: What Is History and Why Do I Matter?

Materials Needed:

- Notebook or blank paper (at least 3 sheets)
 - Pen/Pencil and optional colored markers
 - Access to one small personal item (e.g., an old toy, a favorite book, or a recent photo)
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I. Introduction (5 minutes)

Hook: You Are History!

Educator Prompt: Imagine a historian 500 years from now wanted to study *you*. What are the three most important things they would need to know to understand your life, your interests, and your time? Write them down quickly.

Learning Objectives (Tell Them What You'll Teach)

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Define 'history' and 'personal history,' realizing that history is not just about the past, but about the present and future.
2. Identify and categorize two different types of historical sources (Primary and Secondary).
3. Create a preliminary outline for your own personal history timeline, focusing on key life milestones.

Success Criteria: You have successfully completed this lesson when your timeline outline includes at least five major personal milestones and you can correctly define Primary and Secondary sources using your own life examples.

II. Content Presentation & Modeling (I Do) (10 minutes)

What is History? (The Big Idea - I)

History isn't just dates and names of dead kings. It's the story of humanity, told through evidence. Your history—your personal story—is the most immediate and accessible piece of that giant puzzle.

Definition Review:

- **History:** The study of past events, particularly relating to human affairs.
 - **Personal History:** The events, experiences, and circumstances that define an individual's life.
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The Historian's Tools: Primary vs. Secondary Sources

To tell a story accurately, historians rely on sources. We need to learn how to spot the difference:

1. **Primary Source:** A firsthand account or original artifact created during the time period being studied. (E.g., A diary, a photograph taken by you, a voice recording, a letter.)
2. **Secondary Source:** An account written or created later by someone who did not directly witness the events. It analyzes or summarizes primary sources. (E.g., A textbook, a biography, a documentary about your life.)

Educator Modeling: I (the educator) show a personal item (e.g., a high school yearbook or a childhood trophy) and explain: "This yearbook is a **Primary Source** because it was created by me and my classmates at the time. It shows the style and activities directly. If I later wrote an essay *about* this yearbook, that essay would be a **Secondary Source**."

III. Guided Practice (We Do) (15 minutes)

Activity 1: Source Detective (Culture & Social Structure - C, S)

We are going to analyze your personal item to practice identifying sources and connecting them to bigger ideas.

Instructions (Step-by-Step):

1. Retrieve the small personal item you gathered (old toy, photo, letter).
2. **Question 1 (Source ID):** Is this item a Primary Source or a Secondary Source? Why? (It should be a primary source because you experienced or owned it.)
3. **Question 2 (Social Structure):** What does this item tell us about your earliest social structure—your family or friends—at the time it was important? (E.g., "This toy shows I spent time with my sibling," or "This photo shows a family vacation.")
4. **Question 3 (Culture):** What does this item reveal about the "culture" of you, specifically (your interests, hobbies, values) at that age?

Check-In (Formative Assessment): Discuss Cora's answers, ensuring she correctly identifies the item as a primary source and can articulate its connection to her early social life.

Activity 2: Beginning the Blueprint of Me (Timeline Outline)

Every historian starts with a framework. We will create the outline for your personal history timeline.

Instructions: On a new sheet of paper, sketch a long horizontal line (your timeline). Identify at least five major milestones in your life so far. They must be spaced chronologically (the correct order).

Example Milestones: Birth, First Memory, Starting Kindergarten, Learning a new skill (like swimming or coding), Moving to a new place, Turning 10.

IV. Independent Practice (You Do) (15 minutes)

The Personal Time Capsule Challenge (Ideas & Technology - I, T)

Now, refine your timeline outline and think about how technology influences your personal history.

Instructions:

1. Take your five (or more) milestones from the previous activity.
2. For each milestone, write down one sentence explaining **why** it was important.
3. **The Tech Connection:** Next to three of your milestones, identify one piece of technology that existed at that time and influenced the event. (E.g., "Age 6: Broke my arm. Technology: The X-ray machine used by the hospital.")
4. **Final Sketch:** Sketch the timeline clearly, marking the milestones and sources you would need to prove those events happened (e.g., Birth Certificate, school report card, photo album).

Choice/Autonomy: Cora may choose to draw small symbols or use colors to represent different stages of her life on the blueprint.

V. Conclusion & Recap (5 minutes)

Closure and Takeaways (Tell Them What You Taught)

Educator Question: If history is the story of humanity, what is the most important lesson you learned today about the importance of *your* story?

Review the Objectives:

- Can you define History and Personal History? (Yes/No)
- Can you tell the difference between a Primary Source and a Secondary Source? (Yes/No)
- Do you have a basic outline for your own timeline? (Yes/No)

Summative Assessment Check

The educator quickly reviews the "Blueprint of Me" sketch, checking that the milestones are sequential and that at least two source types (Primary/Secondary) are mentioned for potential verification.

Flow to Next Lesson

Next time, we move beyond just you and look at the first crucial social structure in your history: your family. To prepare, think of two people in your family (grandparent, aunt, cousin, etc.) that you could potentially interview about their lives.