Preface

Why History?
The professional historian and the student of an introductory course often seem to pass each other on different tracks. For the professional, nothing is more fascinating than history. For the student, particularly one in a compulsory course, the whole enterprise often seems a bore. The introductory text is designed to help the student understand and share the fascination of the historian. It will also remind professors of their original attraction to history, before they began the specialization that has made their interpretation of the pattern of human development. It teaches the necessity of seeing many sides of issues. It helps make a more integrated and comprehensive interpretation of the past. Joining with their colleagues in the humanities, historians delight in hearing and telling exciting stories that recall heroes and villains, the low born and the high, the wisdom and the folly of days gone by. This fusion of all the social sciences and humanities gives the study of history its range, depth, significance, and pleasure. Training in historical thinking provides an excellent introduction to understanding change and continuity in our own day as well as in the past.

Professional historians consider history to be the king of disciplines. Synthesizing the concepts of fellow social scientists in economics, politics, anthropology, sociology, and geography, historians create a more integrated and comprehensive interpretation of the past. Joining with their colleagues in the humanities, historians delight in hearing and telling exciting stories that recall heroes and villains, the low born and the high, the wisdom and the folly of days gone by. This fusion of all the social sciences and humanities gives the study of history its range, depth, significance, and pleasure. Training in historical thinking provides an excellent introduction to understanding change and continuity in our own day as well as in the past.

Why World History?
Why specifically world history? Why should we teach and study world history, and what should be the content of such a course?

First, world history is a good place to begin for it is a new field for professor and student alike. Neither its content nor its pedagogy is yet fixed. Many of the existing textbooks on the market still have their origins in the study of Western Europe, with segments added to cover the rest of the world. World history as the study of the inter-relationships of all regions of the world, seen from the many perspectives of the different peoples of the earth, is still a virgin territory.

Second, for citizens of multicultural, multiethnic nations such as the United States, Canada, South Africa, and India, and for those of the many other countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia which are moving in that direction, a world history course offers the opportunity to gain an appreciation of the national and cultural origins of all their diverse citizens. In this way, the study of world history may help to strengthen the bonds of national citizenship.

Third, as the entire world becomes a single unit for interaction, it becomes an increasingly appropriate subject for historical study. The new reality of global interaction in communication, business, politics, religion, culture, and ecology has helped to generate the new academic subject of world history.

Organization and Approach
The text, like the year-long course, links chronology, themes, and geography in eight units, or Parts, of study. The Parts move progressively along a time line from the emergence of early humans to the present day. Each Part emphasizes a single theme—for example, urbanization or religion or migration—and students learn to use them all to analyze historical events and to develop a grasp of the chronology of human development. The final chapter employs all the themes developed in the first seven Parts, understanding history over the long term and in its own times. Geographically, each Part covers the entire globe, although specific topics place greater emphasis on specific regions.

New to the Fourth Edition
Every aspect of the book’s program has been exhaustively reviewed and revised for this new edition. The last twelve chapters have been reorganized for clarity and readability and in response to reviewer comments, and the final two chapters dealing with the modern world have been extensively reorganized and rewritten. Chapters One and Five now open with introductions before the first heading, making all chapters consistent in this edition. Excessive details have been trimmed and many headings reorganized for greater clarity and consistency. Where discussions continued from one chapter to another in the third edition, they have now been consolidated: for example, the Cold War is now discussed in one chapter only, rather than in three; the Soviet Union, too, is addressed in just one chapter.

The pedagogical features were carefully examined, and a completely new and more colorful design makes it easy for students to find Key Topics, Glossary words and special features, such as the “How Do We Know?” boxes. The author has rewritten several Part openers as bridges from one section to the next. Two new How Do We Know? boxes based on the works of art help students learn the skills to make the most of the many illustrations in the book.

Content Changes
Within each Part, materials have been updated, revised, and added. Examples of some of the more notable changes and additions include: A discussion of the fossils of early hominids discovered in Chad; additional materials on early urbanization in India and Africa; new evaluations of the decline of the Roman Empire; consideration of the Gnostic gospels and their significance in understanding early Christianity; the assimilation of Islam into African empires in the tenth through the fifteenth centuries. The third edition Part Five, on world trade, and Part Six, on migration and demography, have been restructured. Part Five is now a single unit on the movement of goods, ideas, and people, while Part Six is devoted to social revolutions. The Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries gets more emphasis. The modern world has been placed into a wider context, more clearly setting the stage for the events that began to unfold in the late eighteenth century around the world. As noted, the twentieth century is now given expanded coverage, and divided into two chronological periods, each with its own theme.

Throughout the book increased prominence has been given to issues of gender, and every chapter now ends with a What Difference Does It Make? section. In updating the book to cover the events of contemporary history, new materials have been added to reflect new developments. These include: breakthroughs in applications of genetic information; new interpretations of the significance of gender; rapidly increasing urbanization; China’s return to world power status; the increase in religious militancy; globalization in economics and culture; increasing sub-nationalism, guerrilla warfare, and numbers of refugees; and the continuous elaboration of the World Wide Web as a means of communication, and containerization as a means of transportation.

Chapter-by-Chapter Revisions
Chapter One, on human origins, has been arranged to clarify chronology, eliminate repetition, and make the information clearer for students. A new opener introduces the subject of the chapter, and the sections on Homo erectus, African paleoanthropology, and the earliest human culture have been updated.

Chapter Two includes an updated section on Achievements in Literature and Law.
Chapter Five, on early empires, has been thoroughly reorganized and revised for clarity and chronology; new chapter and section introductions have been written; and much internal repetition has been eliminated. A new "Do We Know?" box, "Gender Relations in Ancient Greece: Voices from the Vases," adds a feminist perspective on male-female relationships as presented through art. The sections on Egyptian art, the Greek polis, and the Peloponnesian War have been expanded.

Chapter Six, on Rome, has been completely revised and restructured to clarify chronology and generally make the text read more clearly. A new section on Roman engineering has been added.

Chapter Nine contains a new How Do We Know? box on "The Buddha Imagined in Art," which examines the development of Buddhist philosophy through representations of the Buddha and scenes from his life.

Chapter Eleven ends with a rewritten Turning Point on Religion and Trade. This presents a smooth transition from the life with religion at its core to the increasing importance of trade in ordinary people's lives. The text goes into more detail about the various religions' attitudes to trade, making a natural progression from Part Four to Part Five.

Part Five is retitled "Global Trade: The Beginning of the Modern World." The introduction to this section has been expanded and written to give more attention to the traders and navigators who went before Columbus, in enlarging global trade.

Chapter Twelve now begins in 1300, rather than 1100, to accord with many adopters' preferences. This makes a better starting point for the modern world, for those students who are only studying the last 500 years. The Trade with China now has its own section, rather than being included in the general discussions of Asian trade, and the section on Indian Ocean trade has been reorganized to incorporate a discussion of Arab traders.

Chapter Thirteen has been thoroughly revised, and is now called "The Opening of the Atlantic and the Pacific," better to connect the major regions of the world. There is a new How Do We Know? box, "Eurocentric History?", to introduce and analyze this section. The sections on European exploration have been combined for clarity. The Renaissance is now treated in a single, unified section with all the relevant material under one heading. There is more material on towns, trading, and economic changes in Europe at that time, to put the Renaissance into context, and there is also a new section on "Economic and Social Changes in Europe."

Chapter Fourteen has been completely revised. There is a new chapter opener, and the text now includes a stronger introduction to the notions of capitalism and mercantilism. At the end of the chapter, the material on trade systems in Asia and elsewhere has been unified under one heading, including a revised section on "Russia's Empire under Peter the Great," with a new map covering all of Russia.

Chapter Fifteen now includes a new section on Russian expansion into Siberia, and the material on African slave trade has been expanded.

Chapter Sixteen has been entirely reorganized to make the material chronological and to create a more fluent structure, with more developed section headings. There is now a dedicated section on the Scientific Revolution, while the Enlightenment material has been unified. The discussion of Hobbes and Locke now serves as a preliminary to England's civil war and revolution. The sections on South America have been completely reorganized to make clear their role in world revolution.

Chapter Seventeen now contains a unified treatment of Marx and Engels in just one section. The structure of the chapter has been reorganized to consolidate discussions of both labors' and capital's perspectives into their own sections. In addition, the emphasis has shifted slightly away from the U.S. and Britain to labor movements in the rest of Europe and worldwide.

Chapter Eighteen has a new chapter introduction and clarified, improved definitions of nationalism and imperialism, the chapter's main theme. In particular, the sections on African nationalism have been reorganized, with Islamic revival now given due emphasis in that section, and the sections on European powers in China and Southeast Asia rewritten. The Turning Point after this chapter, on "The Olympics and International Politics," has been updated to include the 2008 Beijing Games.

Chapter Nineteen has been reorganized to eliminate repetition and to make it easier for students to follow. New chapters and section introductions have been written, and there is a more fluent structure for the text and the methods historians use to practice their craft.

Chapter Twenty now subtitled To Hell and Back, has a new introduction. It contains an expanded discussion of fascism and ultra-nationalism, and improved discussion of the governments in Italy, Germany, and Japan. Each chapter begins with a new section on "Economic and Social Changes in Europe this Time," and the section on "Economic and Social Changes in Europe that Time," and the section on "Economic and Social Changes in Europe this Time," and the section on "Economic and Social Changes in Europe that Time," and the section on "Economic and Social Changes in Europe this Time,

Chapter Twenty-one has a new introduction. The entire examination of the Cold War is now located in this chapter, and it has been rewritten to more clearly demonstrate the relationship between Cold War maneuvers and the politics of newly independent states. The chapter is now in clearer chronological order within each subsection. A new section entitled "1968: Revolt Against Authority," surveys the protest movements of this period around the world. Finally, the discussion of the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War has been moved here from later in the book.

Chapter Twenty-two shows an improved structure and chronology. There is additional material on the position of women in Chinese society and on the Indian struggle for independence.

Part Eight is entirely restructured to explore the applicability of the historical themes we have studied to the understanding of contemporary history, the events through which we ourselves are living. The last two chapters revisit the seven themes. Historians always claim that a knowledge of the past is useful, indispensable, to understanding the present. The rewritten Part Eight tests that belief. It demonstrates ways in which the seven themes developed so far can be used to understand more clearly trends in the contemporary world, from cloning, to the globalization of economics and culture, to the significance of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, to the election of America's first African-American president. The chapters revisit the seven themes of the book: In Chapter Twenty-three, evolution; in Chapter Twenty-four, trade, revolution, and technology; plus an additional theme, identity. The chapters are updated to the present—including the election of Barack Obama—and they encompass new material on globalization; a new section on gender; a discussion of micro-finance; and new material on refugees and global culture.

Special Features

This edition retains all the pedagogical features of the previous edition, highlighted in a new design to make each feature clearly identifiable immediately. The Key Topics at the beginning of each chapter are now placed in a shaded box in the margin, rather than under the main title. The questions at the end of each chapter are now called Asking Questions, to encourage students to consider their own reading as well as the author's. Key Terms are also highlighted in boxes to make them easy to pick out and distinguish from picture or map captions, and there is a summary of each chapter's Key Terms at the end of the chapter. Each of these features is designed to make the text more accessible to students. Collectively, these materials provide a rich, comprehensive, and challenging introduction to the study of world history and the methods and key interpretations of its historians.

• The Introduction to the book describes the key themes of the text and the methods historians use to practice their craft.
• The introduction to each of the eight Parts now includes more specific key references to the chapters that follow.
• Each chapter begins with a list of Key Topics that provide an overview of the chapter.

Key Terms in each chapter are set in bold face in the text, with a fuller definition given in the margin. The Key Terms are listed at the end of each chapter for easy reference, and collected in the Glossary at the end of the book.
Turning Point essays, some completely new for this edition, illustrate visually the connections between one part and the next. In some cases, the Turning Points tell their own story as well, notably in the bridge into the twenty-first century that uses the modern Olympic Games to illustrate and introduce many of the issues that are to follow. Turning Point Questions ask students to consider the material that has been presented.

Each chapter text ends with a discussion of legacies to the future, namely, What Difference Does It Make?

Each chapter concludes with Asking Questions to help students to re-examine the material. The questions are also useful for classroom debates and could serve as essay topics.

New Layout and Design

Readers will notice a brighter, clearer design. There's added color to engage the interest, and a clearer distinction between the various types of box and charts, plus a slightly squarer, more compact page size that is easier to handle. In the Source boxes, colored type has been used to mark the difference between the text of the historical source and the author’s discussion of it.

Maps and Illustrations

To aid the student, extensive, clear, and informative charts and maps represent information graphically and geographically. There are more than 20 new and amended maps in this edition, some quite innovative, such as a map of greenhouse gas emissions. A wide range of illustrations, most in color, supplement the written word. For the fourth edition we have added more than 80 new illustrations.

Support Materials for Instructors and Students

The World’s History comes with an extensive package of supplementary print and multimedia materials for both instructors and students, many of which are available free to qualified adopters.

Digital Transparency Masters provide instructors with full color PDFs of all the maps, charts, and graphs in the text for use in the classroom. These PDFs can be printed to acetate for use with overhead projectors. Available for download from the Instructor’s Resource Center.

PowerPoint Presentations include key points and terms for a lecture on the chapter, as well as full-color slides of selected important maps, graphs, and charts within a particular chapter. The presentations are available for download from the Instructor’s Resource Center.

Popular Valuepacks for The World's History

Titles from the renowned Penguin Classics series can be bundled with The World’s History for a nominal charge. Please contact your Pearson Arts and Sciences sales representative for details.
Connections: Key Themes in World History, Series Editor Alfred J. Andrea. Concise and tightly focused, the titles in the popular Connections Series are designed to place the latest research on selected topics of global significance, such as disease, trade, slavery, exploration, and modernization, into an accessible format for students. Available at a 50% discount when bundled with The World's History.

Acknowledgments for the Fourth Edition

Each edition, every evolution of the text, brings new, indispensable colleagues who make the enterprise what it continues to become. This revision began once again at Laurence King Publishing in London, under the guidance of Lee Ripley, moved then to Kara Hattersley-Smith, and then to Clare Double and, under her supervision, to the illustrators, designers, proofreaders, and other personnel who have added their suggestions, based on a wealth of experience, and kept the project on task. Freelance editor Margaret Manos of New York and New Hampshire read the text—old and new—with great sensitivity and worked wonders in reorganizing, clarifying, streamlining, and improving readability. She sifted through the many external reviews and focused their key comments and criticisms into improving the revision process. She frequently sharpened perspectives, especially on issues of feminism and European and American history. In some important cases she helped select artwork that added insight and aesthetics to the arguments of the book. At Pearson, Charles Cavaliere continued to exercise the quiet, overarching supervision of the entire project, with his enduring concern for accuracy and elegance of presentation, integrity of perspective, and marketability of the final product.

Kara Hattersley-Smith, Editorial Manager, assures me that this transatlantic venture has proceeded smoothly, aided by Clare Double, Senior Editor, Ian Hunt, Designer, and Claire Gouldstone, Picture Researcher. Without them, there would be no fourth edition, and I am grateful for their patient and firm guidance and wise diplomacy.

I have also benefited immensely from the kindness of the many students (especially my own students at Temple University), colleagues, and teachers who have used this book and took time to share with me their advice and suggestions. I thank them all and hope that they will see the benefits of their good counsel in this edition.

One element that has not changed in this new edition is the mental image I keep before me of my own children—albeit at a younger age, since by now their knowledge in so many fields surpasses my own—and of my students. I write for them.

Grateful acknowledgments are also extended to the following reviewers of the fourth edition: Jeff Burton, Macon State College; Nupur Chaudhuri, Texas Southern University; Peter Dykema, Arkansas Tech University; Nancy Fitch, California State University; David L. Longfellow, Baylor University; Maxim Matusевич, Seton Hall University; Louis M. McDermott, California Maritime Academy.

The author and publisher would like to thank Philip J. Ethington for supplying the map on p. 815.

About the Author

Howard Spodek received his B.A. degree from Columbia University (1963), majoring in history and specializing in Columbia’s newly designed program in Asian Studies. He received his M.A. (1966) and Ph.D. (1972) from the University of Chicago, majoring in history and specializing in India. His first trip to India was on a Fulbright Fellowship, 1964-66, and he has spent a total of some seven years studying and teaching in India. He has also traveled widely throughout the United States, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. He has been a faculty member at Temple University since 1972, appointed Full Professor in 1984. He was awarded Temple’s Great Teacher award in 1993.

Spodek’s work in world history began in 1988 when he became Academic Director of a comprehensive, innovative program working with teachers in the School District of Philadelphia to improve their knowledge base in world history and facilitate a rewriting of the world history program in the schools. Immediately following this program, he became principal investigator of a program that brought college professors and high school teachers together to reconsider, revise, and, in many cases, initiate the teaching of world history in several of the colleges and universities in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Those projects led directly to the writing of the first edition of the current text (1997).

Howard Spodek has published extensively on urbanization in India, including Urban-Rural Integration in Regional Development (1976); Urban Form and Meaning in South-East Asia (editor, with Doris Srivivasan, 1993); and a wide array of articles, including analyses of working women’s organizations. In addition he wrote and produced the documentary film, Ahmedabad (1983). He has written on his experiences with world history faculty at the college and high school levels in articles in The History Teacher (1992, 1995). He has received funding for his research, writing, teaching, and film from Fulbright, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the American Institute of Indian Studies, and the Smithsonian Institution.
Themes and Turning Points

Most readers of this textbook have probably not taken many courses in history. Few are (thus far) planning to major in history, much less become professional historians. A lot therefore rides on this single text. It must present a general introduction to world history that interests, engages, and even fascinates the reader through its subject matter, its narrative, and its analysis. It must open the eyes, minds, and hearts of students who come to this course believing that history is only about the past, and mostly a matter of learning names, dates, and places. It must introduce them to the methods and “habits of mind” of the historian. It must demonstrate how knowledge of the contents and methods of world history—and of this book in particular—will broaden their horizons and also have practical usefulness.

“Usefulness” is not always associated with the study of history. Indeed, in everyday conversation, the phrase “that’s history” means that an event is no longer significant. It may once have been important, but it is not now. From this point of view, “history” is a record of people and events that are dead and gone. For the historian, however, the opposite is true. The past has made us who we are, and continues to influence who we are becoming. In this sense, the past is not dead, just as people whom we have known personally and who have influenced our lives are not “dead,” even though they may no longer be with us. This text will highlight ways in which the past continues to have profound effects on the present and future. It will help us understand who we have become.

History does not provide specific answers to today’s problems, but it does provide examples and case studies that help us improve our thinking. Generals study past wars to understand how modern battles may be fought; economists study past periods of growth and recession to understand how we can encourage the former and avoid the latter. Understanding the ways in which families and relationships have functioned in the past helps us find ways to make our own families and relationships more satisfying today.

World history gives us the largest possible canvas on which to carry out these studies. We cannot, however, study everything that ever happened. We must choose what to include and what to exclude. We must choose strategies that maximize our ability to understand our lives today in the context of the whole range of human experience.

In this text we choose two fundamental organizing principles as our framework for the study and teaching of world history. First, we choose a series of eight chronological turning points, each of which changed the patterns of human life. Second, we explain the importance of each of these changes in terms of the new themes they introduced into human experience. These two elements—chronological turning points and interpretive themes—go together.

This text is organized around seven turning points and themes. Others might also have been chosen, but these turning points represent some of the most important transformations in human life. The thematic analysis of these turning points encourages students to grapple with the origins and continuing presence of eight of the most significant themes in life: the biological and cultural qualities that make humans the special creatures that we are; the settlements we create and live in; the political power that we assemble and sometimes oppose; the religious systems through which many people find meaning in their individual lives and communities; the movement of trade and people that has linked the peoples of the world ever more closely, sometimes in cooperation, sometimes in competition, and sometimes in conflict; the political, industrial, and social revolutions, especially of the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries; the continuing technological developments that
continue to reshape our world; and the quest for personal and group identity, so prevalent in our own times. 

Because real life does not fit neatly into exact chronological periods, there will be significant overlap among the turning points. Readers may argue that the themes are also not limited to single chronological periods. For example, political regimes, religious systems, and economic organizations appear at all times in history. This argument is, of course, correct. “Everything is related to everything else,” and in reality each chronological period will include several themes. We have chosen, however, to highlight particular themes in historical periods so that students will understand these themes more thoroughly and learn to employ them as tools of analysis in forming our own understanding of the world.

### Chronological Turning Points and Part Themes

**PART ONE.** The emergence of the first humans. Biological and early cultural evolution, to 10,000 B.C.E. 
**THEME:** Historians and anthropologists search for and interpret artifacts and records to determine what is human about humans.

**Turning Point:** The Agricultural Village. New technological systems—both simple and complex—are instituted to improve or threaten human life.

**Turning Point:** From Past to Present to Future. The application of historical themes to an understanding of our own time and place.

**Global Scope**

The scope of this text, and of each turning point and theme within it, is global. For example, the study of the Industrial Revolution in Europe includes its funding—in part—from the wealth that poured into Europe from its New World conquests of people, land, gold, and silver; and from African slave labor; its global extensions in the form of imperialism in Asia, Africa, Australia, and Latin America; and the interactions of colonizers and colonized in response to the new opportunities and challenges.

### Social Science Methods, Comparative History, and the Study of Values

#### Comparative History and the Methods of the Social Sciences

The global, interactive, and comparative format of this text provides a method for understanding the world. The methods of the social sciences are embedded in the structure of the book. Because each part is built on comparisons among different regions of the world, the reader will become accustomed to posing hypotheses based on general principles and to testing them against comparative data from around the world.

This method of moving back and forth between general theory and specific case study, testing the degree to which the general theory and the specific data fit each other, is at the heart of the social sciences. For example, in Part Two we will explore the general characteristics of other systems in order to see how well the general theory holds up through case studies of various cities around the world. In Part Three we will seek general theories of the rise and fall of early empires based on comparisons of China, Rome, and India. In Part Four we will search for commonalities among religious systems through a survey of five world religions. In Part Eight we begin with an analysis of new issues of political and cultural identity and then examine their significance in a series of brief case studies in different regions of the world. These comparisons enable us more clearly to think about and to understand the workings of cities, empires, and religions not only of the past, but also of our own time and place.

#### Multiple Perspectives

The text highlights the importance of multiple perspectives in studying and interpreting history. The answers we get—the narratives we write—are based on the questions we ask. Each part suggests a variety of questions that can be asked about the historical event that is being studied and a variety of interpretations that can emerge in the process of answering them. Often there is more than one “correct” way of understanding change over time and its significance. Different questions will trigger different research; different answers. A very real question is, research; a very real question is, “How do we even begin to ask those questions?”

In Part Five we ask about the stages and processes by which Western commercial power began to surpass that of Asia. This question pre-supposes the fact that at earlier times Asian power had been superior and raises the additional questions why it declined and why European power advanced. In Part Six we ask how the Industrial Revolution affected and changed relationships between men and women; this question will yield different research and a different narrative from questions about, for example, women’s contributions to industrialization, which is a useful question, but a different one.

### History and Identity

History is among the most passionate and bitterly contentious of disciplines because most people and groups locate part of their identity, to social science methodology. The methods of the social sciences are embedded in the structure of the book. Because each part is built on comparisons among different regions of the world, the reader will become accustomed to posing hypotheses based on general principles and to testing them against comparative data from around the world.

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#### Evaluating Values

This form of analysis will also introduce a study of values. In order to understand the choices made by people from the past, we must understand the values that informed their thinking and actions. These values may be similar to, or quite different from, our own. In order to understand the interpretations intro-duced by later historians we must understand the histori-ans’ values as well. These, too, may be similar to, or different from, our own. Historians usually had personal perspectives from which they viewed the past, and those perspectives influenced their interpretations. Finally, in order for students to readers to form their own understand- ing of the past, and to make it more useful in their own lives, they must also see how their own values influence their evaluation of past events.

For most of the past century, social scientists spoke of creating “value free” disciplines. Today, most scholars believe that this is impossible. We cannot “value free.” On the contrary, we must attempt to understand the values that have inspired historical actors, previous his-torians, and ourselves. Coming to an understanding of the values of others—historical actors and historians who have studied them—will help readers to recognize and formulate their own values, a central part of a liberal arts education.
INTRODUCTION: THE WORLD THROUGH HISTORIANS’ EYES

The colonial imprint on historical knowledge emerged in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a false perspective, a Eurocentric view of world history created at a time of European domination. Even where Europeans never ruled, European knowledge was often accepted as modern knowledge, including aspects of the Eurocentric historiography. (Curtin, p. 54)

Instead, Curtin continues, a proper historiography must show the African past from an African point of view. For Africans, to know about the past of their own societies is a form of self-knowledge crucial to a sense of identity in a diverse and rapidly changing world. A recovery of African history has been an important part of African development over recent decades. (p. 54)

Religious and ethnic groups, too, may seek to control historical records. In 1542, the Roman Catholic Church established an Index of Prohibited Books to ban writings it considered heretical. (The Spanish Inquisition, ironically, stored away many records that later scholars used to recreate its history and the history of those it persecuted.) More recently, despite all the evidence of the Holocaust, the murder of six million Jews by the Nazi government of Germany during World War II, a few people have claimed that the murders never took place. They deny the existence of such racial and religious hatred and of its consequences, and ignore deep-seated

history that patriarchy, a system of male-created and male-dominated institutions, has subordinated women. From available data and their interpretation of them, they attempt to weave a persuasive argument that will win over others to their position.

Some will not be persuaded. They may not even agree that women have been subordinated to men, but argue that both genders have shared in a great deal of suffering (and joy) throughout history (see Parts One and Seven).

The historical debates over the origins and evolution of gender relationships evoke strong emotions because people’s self-image, the image of their group, and the perceptions others hold of them are all at stake. And the stakes can be high.

Control of Historical Records

From earliest times, control over the historical records and their interpretation has been fundamental to control over people’s thoughts. The first emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang (r. 221–207 B.C.E.), the man who built the concept of a united China that has lasted until today attempted to destroy all knowledge of the past:

He then abolished the ways of ancient sage kings and put to the torch the writings of the Hundred Schools in an attempt to keep the people in ignorance. He demolished the walls of major cities and put to death men of fame and talent. (deBary, I: 229).

So wrote Jia Yi (201–168 B.C.E.), poet and statesman of the succeeding Han dynasty. Shi Huang wished that only those that were not.

It is not for us to describe their miserable vicissitudes [in persecution] ... just as it is not a part of our task to leave on record their faction-fights and their unnatural conduct towards each other, prior to the persecution. That is why we have decided to say no more about them than suffices for us to justify God’s Judgment ... We shall rather set forth in our whole narrative only what may be of profit, first, to our own times, and then to later times. (MacMullen, p. 6).

Historical Revision

Interpretations of events may become highly contested and revised even after several centuries have passed. Colonial governments seeking to control subject peoples sometimes argued that the conquered peoples were so backward that they benefited from the conquest. Later historians, with more distance and more detachment, were often less kind to the colonizers. Some 1,900 years ago the historian Tacitus was writing bitterly of the ancient Romans in their conquest of England: “Robbery, butchery, rape, the liars call Empire; they create a desolation and call it peace.” (Agricola, 30)

In our own era, the many nations that have won their freedom from colonialism echo similar resentments against their foreign rulers and set out to revise the historical record in keeping with their newly won political freedom. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India (1947–64), wrote in 1944 from the prison cell in which he had been imprisoned for his leadership of his country’s independence movement:

British accounts of India’s history, more especially of what is called the British period, are bitterly resented. History is almost always written by the victors and conquerors and gives their viewpoint; or, at any rate, the victors’ version is given prominence and holds the field. (Nehru, p. 288)

Philip Curtin, historian of Africa and of slavery, elaborates an equally critical view of European colonial accounts of Africa’s history:

African history was seriously neglected until the 1950s ... The colonial period in Africa left an intellectual legacy to be overcome, just as it had in other parts of the world ... The colonial imprint on historical knowledge emerged in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a false perspective, a Eurocentric view of world history created at a time of European domination ... Even where Europeans never ruled, European knowledge was often accepted as modern knowledge, including aspects of the Eurocentric historiography. (Curtin, p. 54)

The leaders of the Russian Communist revolution brutally refashioned the historical record to suit the wishes of the winners. After Lenin’s death in 1924, his second-in-command Leon Trotsky (pictured sitting on the podium in the left-hand picture) lost to Josef Stalin the bitter power struggle that ensued. Not only was Trotsky banished from the Soviet Union, but so was his appearance in the official archives (see document picture below).
problems in the relationships between majority and minority populations. The significance of the voyages of Columbus was once celebrated uncritically in the United States in tribute both to “the Admiral of the Ocean Sea” himself and to the courage and enterprise of the European explorers and early settlers who brought their civilizations to the Americas. In South America, however, where Native American Indians are more numerous and people of European ancestry often form a smaller proportion of the population, the celebrations have been far more ambivalent, muted, and meditative. In 1992, on the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus’ first voyage to the Americas, altogether new and more sobering elements entered the commemoration ceremonies, even in the United States. The negative consequences of Columbus’ voyages, previously ignored, were now recalled and emphasized: the death of up to 90 percent of the Native American Indian population in the century after the arrival of Europeans; the Atlantic slave trade, initiated by trade in Indian slaves, and the exploitation of the natural resources of a continent until then little touched by humans. The ecological consequences, which are only now beginning to receive more attention, were not all negative, however. They included the fruitful exchange of natural products between the hemispheres. Horses, wheat, and sheep were introduced to the Americas; potatoes, tomatoes, and corn to Afro-Eurasia. Unfortunately, the spread of syphilis was one of the consequences of the exchange; scholars disagree on who transmitted this disease to whom (see Part Five). Thugs sometimes gain control of national histories. George Orwell’s satirical novel Animal Farm (published in 1945) presented an allegory in which pigs come to rule the farm. Among their many acts of domination, the pigs seize control of the historical records of the farm animals’ failed experiment in equality and impose their own official interpretation, which justifies their own rule. The rewriting of history and suppression of alternative records by the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union between 1917 and 1989 reveals the bitter truth underlying Orwell’s satire (see Part Seven). Although the American experience is much different, in the United States, too, records have been suppressed. Scholars are still trying to use the Freedom of Information Act to pry open sealed diplomatic archives. (Most official archives everywhere have 20-, 30-, or 40-year rules governing the waiting period before certain sensitive records are opened to the public. These rules, which are designed to protect living people and contemporary policies from excessive scrutiny, are the general rule everywhere.)

What Do We Know? How Do We Know It? What Difference Does It Make?

So, historical records are not simply lists of events. They are the means by which individuals and groups develop their interpretations of these events. All people develop their own interpretations of past events; historians do it professionally. Because interpretations differ, there is no single historical record, but various narrations of events, each told from a different perspective. Therefore the study of history is intimately linked to the study of values. To construct their interpretations, historians examine the values—the motives, wishes, desires, visions—of people of the past. In interpreting those values, historians must confront and engage their own values, comparing and contrasting these values with those of people in the past. For example, they ask how various people viewed slavery, or child labor, or education, or art and music in societies of the past. In the back of their minds they compare and contrast those older values with values held by various people today and especially with their own personal values. They ask: How and why have values changed or remained the same through the passage of time? Why, and in what ways, do my values compare or contrast with values of the past? By learning to pose such questions, historians will be better equipped to discover and create their own place in the continuing movement of human history. This text, therefore, consistently addresses three fundamental questions: What Do We Know? How Do We Know It? What Difference Does It Make?

Even when historians agree on which events are most significant, they may differ in evaluating why the events are significant. One historian’s interpretation of events may be diametrically opposed to another’s. For example, virtually all historians agree that part of the significance of World War II lay in its new policies and technologies of destruction: nuclear weapons in battle and genocide behind the lines. In terms of interpretation, pessimists might stress the continuing menace of these legacies of terror, while optimists might argue that the very violence of the war and the Holocaust triggered a search for limits on nuclear arms and greater tolerance for minorities. With each success in nuclear arms limitation and in toleration, the optimists seem more persuasive; with each spread of nuclear weapons and each outbreak of genocide, the pessimists seem to win. The study of history is thus an interpretation of significance as well as an investigation of facts. The significance of events is determined by their consequences. Sometimes we do not know what the consequences are; or the consequences may not have run their course; or we may differ in our assessments of the consequences. This play between past events and their current consequences is what historian E.H. Carr had in mind in his famous description of history as “an unending dialogue between the present and the past.” (Carr, p. 30)

Tools

The study of history requires many tools, and this text includes most of the principal ones:

- Primary sources are accounts that were produced at the time an event occurred. Those who produced them were eyewitnesses with direct knowledge of what happened. The core of historical study is an encounter with primary materials, usually documents, but including other artifacts—for example, letters, diaries, newspapers, photographs, and artwork. Every chapter in this text includes representative primary materials.
- Visual images, a strong feature of this book, complement the written text, offering non-verbal “texts” of the time. These are often central pieces of evidence. For example, in Chapter Nine we illustrate the influence of Hinduism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia through the temple architecture of the region.
- Maps place events in space and in geographical relationship to one another.
- Chronological timelines situete events in time and sequence.
- Brief charts supply summaries as well as contextual information on topics such as religion, science, and trade.
Asking Questions

- Please review the seven themes and turning points selected here. From what you already know of world history, do these seem well chosen? Would you select different or additional themes and turning points for your account? If so, which ones and why?
- Examine how one of the values in which you believe has come from historical experience, either your own experience or that of relatives and friends, or the experience of groups to which you belong.
- When you tell other people about yourself, what “records” from your past do you highlight? Which ones do you leave out of the story, or even conceal? Are there any that you would like to destroy? Can you destroy them? How does the audience you are speaking to affect your choice of “records”?

Suggested Readings

Basic, Comprehensive, Introductory Materials

More Specialized Materials
Dunn, Ross. The New World History: A Teacher’s Companion (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2000). Excellent selections both on what the new world history ought to be, and what it is as major historians write it.

INTRODUCTION: THE WORLD THROUGH HISTORIANS’ EYES