

**Subject : Junior Cycle History**  
Teacher : Niall Lenehan

LESSON 2

**The Nature of History:  
The Historian and the  
Archaeologist**

**Links to Strand One**

**1.4** demonstrate awareness of historical concepts, such as source and evidence; fact and opinion; viewpoint and objectivity; cause and consequence; change and continuity; time and space.

**1.5** investigate the job of the historian, including how s/he finds and uses evidence to form historical judgements which may be revised and reinterpreted in the light of new evidence

**1.6** debate the usefulness and limitations of different types of primary and secondary sources of historical evidence, such as written, visual, aural, oral and tactile evidence; and appreciate the contribution of archaeology and new technology to historical enquiry

**1.7** develop historical judgements based on evidence about personalities, issues and events in the past, showing awareness of historical significance

**1.8** investigate a repository of historical evidence such as a museum, library, heritage centre, digital or other archive or exhibition.

**Learning Intentions**

1. Understand the role of a historian.
2. Understand the different types of sources that historians use and where they are kept.
3. Be able to identify strengths and weaknesses of these source.
4. Understand how an archaeologist finds and excavates a site.

**Why do we study History?**

Studying history enables us to **develop better understanding of the world in which we live.**

**By understanding the past, we can prepare ourselves better for the future.**

Studying history helps to develop our historical **skillset**: Analyse critique, argue, assess and understand.

**The Job of a historian**

- A historian is somebody who studies events from the past.
- Historians gather evidence from a variety of sources to try and piece together information.
- They try to understand why certain events happened and what the result of these events were.
- They do this by finding and studying evidence from the past.

**Historical Sources****Written Sources:**

Any piece of written information that helps us find out about the past.

**Examples:**

The Book of Kells

Newspapers



### Artefacts:

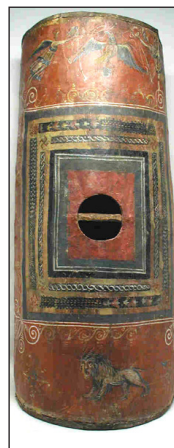
An artifact is an object that was used by past generations.

### Example:

Sword

Bowl

Shield



### Primary Sources

Primary source refers to sources that come directly from the period of time being studied.

### Examples:

Newspapers

Journals

Letters

Artefacts

Photographs



### Secondary Sources

Secondary source refers to sources to come indirectly and after the period of time being studied.

### Examples:

School history textbook

Websites

Podcasts

Films

Biographies

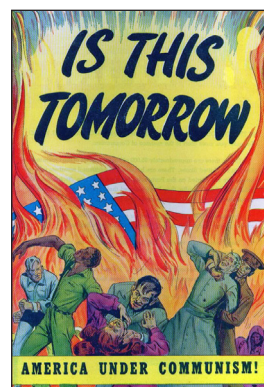


### Analyzing Sources

Historians must be able to identify if a source is reliable or not. Unreliable sources may be biased or prejudiced.

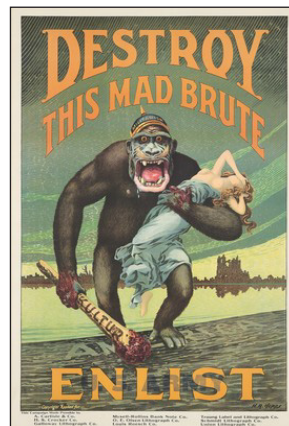
**Bias** refers to deliberately selecting evidence to strengthen their own case and weakening others.

**Prejudice** refers to making up your mind before you know what will happen.



**How is this source biased?**

**Propaganda** is information that is designed to influence the attitudes of the public. It is usually biased or prejudiced towards something

**How are they trying to influence public attitudes in this propaganda poster?****Archives and Museums**

- **Artefacts** from the past are usually stored in **museums**.

**Example:** National Museum of Ireland.

- Written documents from the past are usually found in **libraries or archives**.

**Example:** The National Archives & Trinity college

**A Primary Source: The Book of Kells**

The Book of Kells is a **manuscript (handwritten source)** from Early Christian Ireland.

**Where is it stored?**

It is kept in the archive at **Trinity College in Dublin**.

**What can we learn from it?**

It is the most famous of the medieval illuminated manuscripts for the intricacy, detail, and majesty of the illustrations.

It tells us that the monks from this era were extremely **skilled writers and illustrators** and that they placed a huge importance on detailed artwork.

Illustrations from the Book of Kells



## Historical Eras

- **BC (Before Christ) or BCE (Before Common Era):** The years before the birth of Jesus Christ.
- **AD (Anno Domini) or CE (Common Era):** The years after the birth of Jesus Christ
- **Prehistory:** 3 million years ago to 3000 BC.
- **Ancient history:** 3000 BC–476 AD
- **Medieval Age:** 476–1492
- **Early Modern period:** 1492–1800
- **Later Modern period:** 1800–1945
- **Contemporary period:** 1945–present.

## Recap Exercise 2.1

**Q1.** Explain why it is important to study history.

**Q2.** What is meant by a primary source? Give an example.

**Q3.** What is meant by a secondary source? Give an example.

**Q4.** What is bias?

**Q5.** What is the difference between an artifact and a museum? Give an example of both.

**Q6.** Name three historical eras and give their dates.

Exam Prep – We will do the first one in class together.

**IRISH ARCHIVES RESOURCE**  
Acmhainn Chartlainne na hÉireann

Search About Us Contributor Login Resources Family History Links Contact Us

**Welcome to the Irish Archives Resource web portal**

This portal will link you to archival collections throughout the island of Ireland. Archives are the documents and records that relate to people, places, organisations, and events. You can use this portal to locate archives relating to your area of interest or research topic.

**Start Exploring**

- Archaeology
- Archives of Private Clubs & Societies
- Archives of Religious Institutions
- Art Archives
- Business Archives
- Central Government
- Folklore
- Health & Hospital
- Landed Estate Papers
- Legal Records
- Literary Papers
- Local Government Archives
- Military
- Other/Not Specified
- Personal & Family Papers
- Photographic
- Political
- School Records
- Scientific
- Theatre
- Trades Unions
- University & Higher Education



a. What are archives, according to this website?

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b. What is the web address of the Irish Archives Resource?

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c. If you were to use this website to find sources on the history of education in Ireland, which two headings under 'Start Exploring' would be the most relevant to your work?

1. 

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2. 

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d. What is the difference between an archive and a museum?

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e. Give the name and location of one archive, museum, library, exhibition or heritage centre which you investigated as part of your Junior Cycle history course.

Name: 

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Location: 

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f. Name an item from this archive, museum, library, exhibition or heritage centre, and explain how evidence from this item added to your knowledge of history.

Item: 

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How it added to your knowledge of history: 

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## The work of an Archaeologist

- Archaeology is the **study of things that people have left behind from prehistoric times** (the time before written records were kept).

### These things can include:

Bones, Coins, Tools, Weapons, Buildings etc.



An archaeologist uncovering skeletal remains

### How do archaeologists find a site?

Archaeologists use the following methods to discover areas of archaeological interest:

- **Aerial photography** – crop marks

Crop marks can tell us if there is a building or wall under the ground.

- **Geophysical surveys** – metal detectors

This can help us to find artefacts near the surface of the ground.



- **Field walking**

Walking a site to see if any objects or artifacts exist on the surface.

- **Local knowledge**

Old maps or evidence from local people can help to identify a site.

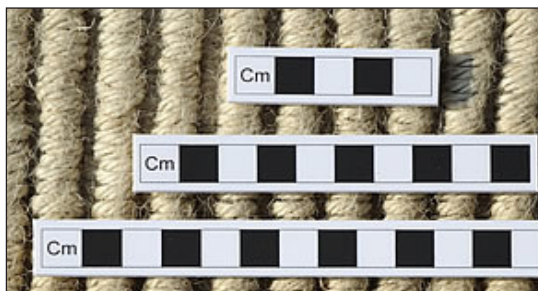
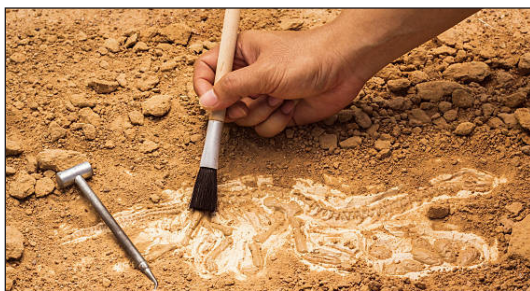
### Excavating a site

Archaeologists use a number of different tools to excavate a site.

- **Trowel** – used to remove small objects.
- **Sieve** – used to separate the soil from an object.



- **Small brushes/toothbrushes** – used to clean objects.
- **Photographic scales** – used to judge the size of an object.



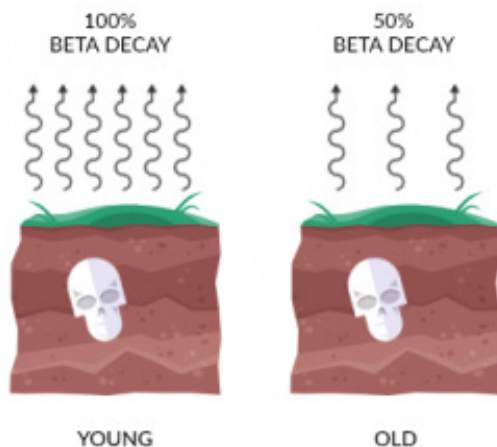
### Carbon Dating

Carbon dating is a method used to tell the **age of an artefact**.

When a living thing such as a tree, a plant or a human die, **the amount of Carbon it in decreases**.

This can help us to determine how old something is.

Carbon dating is **accurate for up to 50,000 years**.





**Exam Prep**

Archaeological discoveries add to our knowledge of history. Use the account and photographs below to answer the questions which follow.

In June 2020, a 12-year-old Roscommon student found a five-and-a-half meter long logboat in a local lake. Water levels had dropped after several weeks of dry weather, and the boat was lying in less than half a meter of water.

Archaeologists from the Underwater Archaeology Unit of the National Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland inspected the site. The boat was recorded, drawn, and photographed before being carefully placed back in the water to keep it waterlogged and protected.

There is an early medieval crannog just 100m away in the lake, and it is possible that the logboat dates from the medieval period. It could be much older; longboats have been used on Irish lakes and rivers since the Stone Age (8000-4000 BC).



a. How did weather conditions contribute to the discovery of the logboat?

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b. Name the two organisation that sent archaeologists to examine the logboat.

1.

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c. What is being done with the logboat in the two photographs?

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d. If the logboat dates from 4000 BC, approximately how old is it?

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e. Name and explain one method that archaeologists could use to date the logboat.

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f. This logboat was an accidental discovery. What are two ways in which archaeologists identify sites for planned archaeological excavations?

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### Homework

**Q1.** Imagine you are an archaeologist excavating a site in your local area. Write an account of how you would find and excavate the site.