

ACTIVITY 3A

WHICH EVENTS WOULD YOU PLACE ON THE TIMELINE?

In this activity, you will learn about timelines. You will also learn the dates of some major events in the history of North America.

Important Words: As you read this section, look for the following:

- ◆ **Timeline**
- ◆ **Generation**
- ◆ **Chronological Order**
- ◆ **Century**
- ◆ **B.C./A.D.**
- ◆ **Millennium**
- ◆ **B.C.E./C.E.**
- ◆ **Single-Tier Timeline**
- ◆ **Decade**
- ◆ **Multiple-Tier Timeline**

To help you find these terms, the ◆ symbol will appear in the margin where the term is first explained.

◆ People who study history often look at key events and why they happened when they did. To “see” relationships among several events, historians sometimes use a timeline. A **timeline** allows us to see the span of time between events and the order in which these events have occurred. Let’s begin this activity by reviewing the characteristics of a basic timeline.

TIMELINES AND THEIR MAIN PARTS

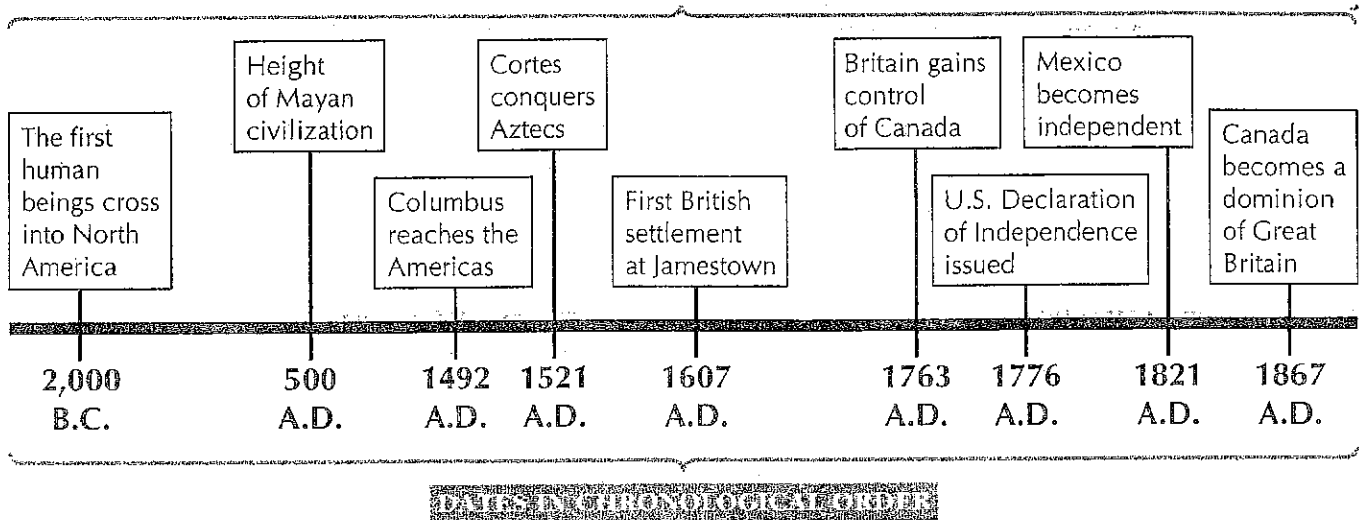
◆ A timeline is a type of graph. It shows a group of events arranged along a line in **chronological order**. “Chronological” order means the order in which the events actually happened. A timeline of a typical school day might look like this:

ACTIVITIES OF MY TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY									
7:00	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00
Wake-up for school	Take bus to school	Morning classes begin			Lunch period	Afternoon classes begin		Take bus home	Start doing homework

A timeline can cover anything, from a short period like your day at school, to several thousand years. To understand a timeline, first look at its main parts — its **title**, the **events** and the **dates**:



MAJOR EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF NORTH AMERICA



TITLE

The title tells you the topic of the timeline. For example, in the timeline above, the title is: "Major Events In The History Of North America." This means that the timeline lists key events that have taken place in the history of North America.

EVENTS

Events on the timeline are related to the title. Each event is an example of the general topic. For instance, if the title of a timeline were "Wars in the 20th Century," each listed event would be about a war that happened in the 20th century.

DATES

Timeline dates are arranged in chronological order — from the earliest date to the latest. The earliest date is usually on the left side of the timeline. The rest of the events are placed to the right of it, in the order in which they happened. Timelines may also be drawn vertically (*up and down*) instead of horizontally (*from left to right*). In that case, the earliest event is usually placed at the bottom of the timeline. The rest of the events are placed above it, in the order in which they happened.

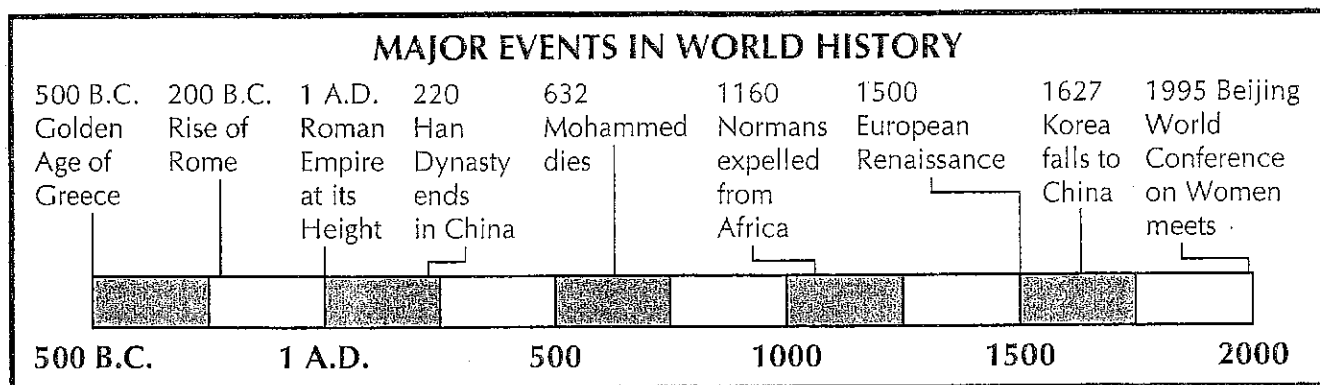
THE MEASUREMENT OF TIME

MEASURING THE PASSAGE OF TIME

In most of the Western world today, dates are based on when it is believed Jesus Christ was born. These dates are divided into two groups: B.C. and A.D. The dividing point is the birth of Christ.

- **B.C.** (Before Christ) refers to any time before his birth. Sometimes B.C. is shown as **B.C.E.** — Before the Common Era.
- **A.D.** refers to time after the birth of Christ. A.D. stands for the Latin phrase *anno Domini* — "in the year of our Lord." Sometimes A.D. is changed to **C.E.** — meaning in the Common Era.

Writers always add B.C. or B.C.E. to a date if an event happened before the birth of Christ. However, they usually do not bother to write A.D. or C.E. if the date of the event is *after* his birth. For example, if the year is 1996, we generally write 1996 — not 1996 A.D. Look at the timeline that follows:



Notice that as time passes, B.C. dates go from higher numbers (500 B.C.) to lower numbers (200 B.C.). A.D. dates go from lower numbers (1) to higher numbers (1500 and 1995). To measure the number of A.D. years from one date to another, simply subtract the smaller from the larger date. If it is 1995, how long ago was 1500? By subtracting 1500 from 1995, we arrive at 495 years ago.

1995	(1,995 years since the birth of Jesus)
– 1500	(1,500 years since the birth of Jesus)
<hr/>	
495	Years ago

To measure dates from B.C. to A.D., however, you must *add* the dates. Thus, 200 B.C. was 2,195 years before 1995 A.D.

1995	(1,995 years since the birth of Jesus)
+ 200	(200 years before the birth of Jesus)
<hr/>	
2195	Years ago

TIME PERIODS

To fully understand timelines, you must also know about time periods.

- **Year.** For short time periods, a timeline may be divided into one year intervals.
- ◆ ➤ **Decade.** For longer time periods, you can divide a timeline into decades. A decade refers to a ten-year period.
- ◆ ➤ **Generation.** A generation describes the period of time between the birth of parents and the birth of their children. Usually this is a period of 25 to 30 years.
- ◆ ➤ **Century.** For even longer time periods, timelines are divided into centuries. A century is a 100-year period.
- ◆ ➤ **Millennium.** Timelines are sometimes divided into even longer periods of time. A millennium is a period of 1,000 years. The “third” millennium will begin in the year 2001.

The way we identify centuries may seem confusing at first. The "20th Century" means the 100 years from 1901 to 2000. The 1990s, therefore, belong to the 20th century. Let's see why. Our dates are based on when it is believed Jesus Christ was born. The first 100 years after the birth of Christ were the years 1-100. This was the "first century." Look at the following groups of years to see more:

1-100	First Century	1701-1800	Eighteenth Century
101-200	Second Century	1801-1900	Nineteenth Century

CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

What is the present century, 1901-2000? _____

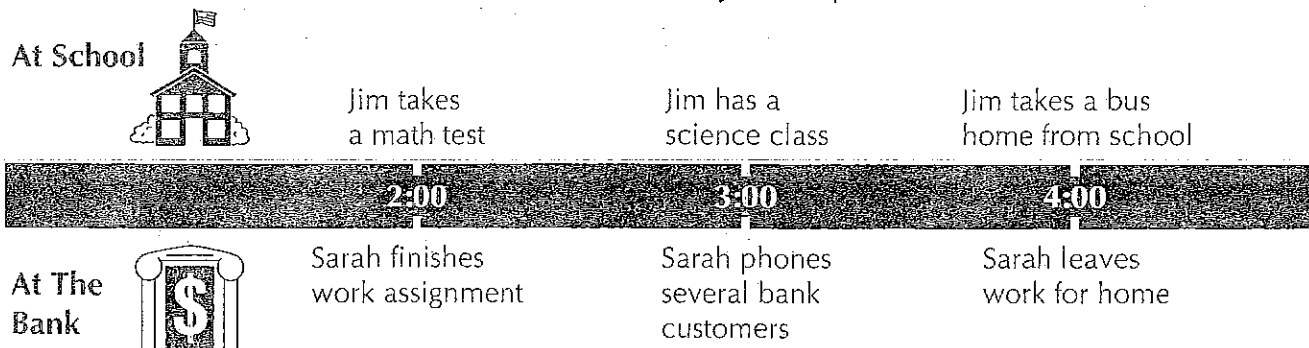
What will the next century, 2001-2100, be called? _____

Note: Many people consider the 1st century to run from 1-99 A.D. As a result, later centuries such as the 20th century, would run from 1900-1999.

MULTIPLE-TIER TIMELINES

The type of timeline we have just reviewed is sometimes called a **single-tier timeline**. A single-tier timeline contains a single line with dates and events in chronological order. You may want, however, to review events in two or more places at once. In this case, a **multiple-tier timeline** might be useful. This is a timeline with more than one line of events occurring within the same time period. Assume you created a timeline about events in Jim's day and for Jim's mother, Sarah, at the same time.

AFTERNOON EVENTS FOR JIM AND HIS MOM



Notice that this multiple-tier timeline shows two events occurring at the same time, but in different places. Also, notice that both Jim and Sarah are doing *different* things in *different* places, but at the *same* time. While Jim is at school at 2 p.m., Sarah is finishing one of her work assignments.

A multiple-tier timeline can also be used to show what is going on with two different groups of people at the same time, or in two or more different subject areas:

KEY EVENTS IN UNITED STATES HISTORY: 1991-1994

Government



Bill Clinton
elected
president

U.S. Congress
passes North
American Free
Trade Agreement

Republicans
win control of
U.S. Congress

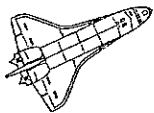
1991

1992

1993

1994

Science



First photo
ever taken of an
asteroid in space

Advances
made in laser
technology

Astronauts conduct
key experiments
on crystals in
outer space

Notice that in this multiple-tier timeline, the general category "Key Events In United States History" has been divided into two smaller sub-categories: government and science. These sub-categories are usually called "fields" on a multiple-tier timeline. Also notice that every field does not have to show an important event occurring for every date on the timeline. Science in 1992, for example, has been left blank on the timeline.

CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

What sub-categories (fields) might you use for a multiple-tier timeline about:

History of the World: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

History of Major World Sports: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

DRAWING A MULTIPLE-TIER TIMELINE

One way to make sure you understand multiple-tier timelines is to create one of your own. Select any **two** countries. For each country selected, find three important events in its history that took place after 1900. Use these events to complete the multiple-tier timeline below. To find this information, you might look in a history book from that country, a world almanac, or an encyclopedia article about the country.

Write each item in its correct place on the timeline. Follow the example of the multiple-tier timeline above, to help you.

TITLE: _____ : 1900 to _____

Country _____

Dates →

Country _____