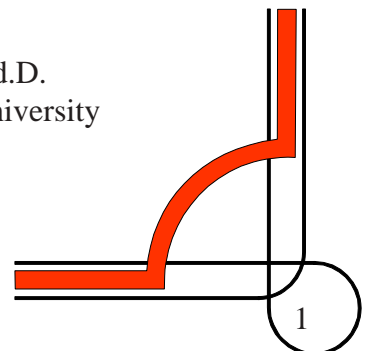




**Patterns for Understanding the  
History and Culture of Nations**

by Lynda Rogerson, Ed.D.  
Colorado Technical University

(Revised November 2001)



# Seven Frames of History

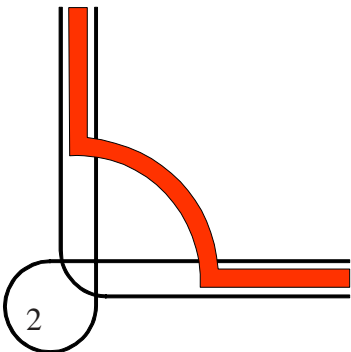
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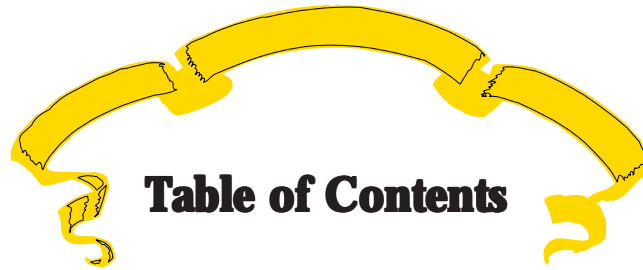
**Our age is such a period of transformation. Only this time the transformation is not confined to Western society and Western history. Indeed, one of the fundamental changes is that there is no longer a “Western” history or a “Western” civilization. There is only world history and world civilization.**

**Peter F. Drucker, 1995. *Managing in a Time of Change*. P. 75.**

Note:

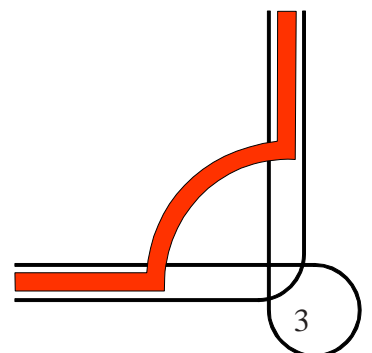
The ideas and concepts presented in this document are intended to stimulate your thinking. They are not intended to replace any textbook or to defend any one way of thinking. The manner in which the relevance and importance of various events, situations, facts or points of view are presented is often dependent upon which “frame” or “point of view” is used in making the presentation. As life long learners, it is important to keep asking questions and to recognize various points of view when they are presented. It is also important to explore and ask questions about those points of view and consider what they may have to teach us.





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# Seven Frames of History

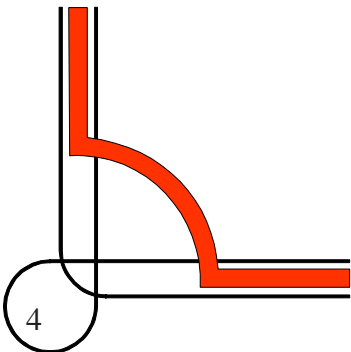
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NOTE: The pages that are referenced at the end of each section are from the following textbook:

McKay, John P. , Bennett D. Hill, John Buckler, and Patricia Buckley Ebrey. 2000. A History of World Societies, Volume II Since 1500 (5th ed). NY: Houghton Mifflin ISBN 0-395-94491-0

Other Textbooks you might find useful include:

Geography  
Humanities  
Western Civilization  
American History





### Introduction

How do you remember your first history classes—a blur of meaningless facts, dates, and names of people long dead and battles long forgotten? History doesn't have to be like that. It can be a rich tapestry of intrigue, excitement, danger, tragedy and comedy all rolled up into stories of people and their times. Knowledge of history can provide a basis for decision-making in business, politics, and interpersonal relationships.

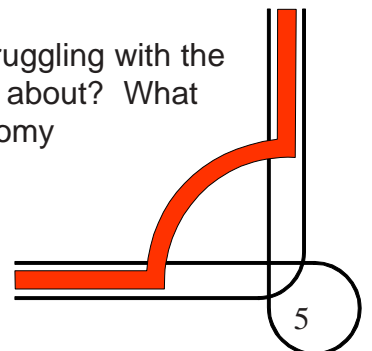
### What can be learned from studying History?

So why would we even want to explore and understand these long ago people and events? Our world is fast becoming smaller and smaller. Each day, the internet and the e-commerce world break through national and geographic barriers in a way that brings us face to face with people who think, behave, and react very differently than we expect. Negotiating business deals or working in multicultural teams can have disastrous results if our expectations of behavior and communication patterns don't match those of the people with whom we are interacting.

Knowing “who” people are, how their culture was formed, what their expectations and customs are and how they came to be is very important in today's world. Knowing that the British Crown controlled India and Hong Kong for almost 100 years, or that the French “owned” Southeast Asia, or that America has had a very strong “interest” in Japan since 1945 are important keys to understanding the relationships between the countries, the attitudes of the people and the national goals of various countries. Knowing that the Japanese once had designs on Manchuria, or that Vietnam was a cross-roads for many cultures helps us to recognize the biases that might be difficult to circumvent in business deals.

Understanding religious and cultural values of various peoples is also critical. From American perspectives, people should “ignore” someone's religious preferences and just get on with the matter at hand. For the Kosovars and the Bosnian Serbs, that is absurd. The religion is the basis of life; the war and distrust between the Christians and the Muslims goes back centuries. How did it all begin? That's what we learn in history.

The Irish Republican Army, despite its efforts to yield to peace is still struggling with the potential threat of violence and terrorism. Why? How did all that come about? What are they struggling to obtain? How does that struggle impact the economy of Northern Ireland? And, why is there a “Northern Ireland?”



## Seven Frames of History

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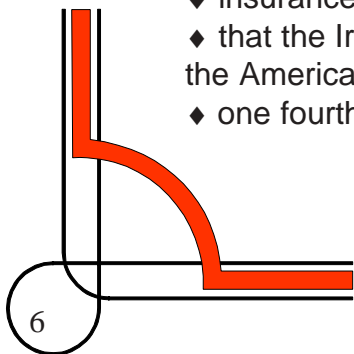
We can't go six months without hearing in the news of the massive starvation of people in Africa. Who are these people, why are they starving? There is surely enough food to ship over there. Who are their leaders and how could they let such a tragedy occur? Knowing the tribal histories of the African countries, how they came to be colonized by the English, Dutch, French, and German governments lends some light on their behavior in today's world. Even more important is the question, why, after being mostly independent countries for over half a century, are these peoples still struggling economically, politically, and socially?

Did you know that Nova Scotia was settled by the French? Did you know that the "Acadians," as those people were called, were dispersed across Canada and the United States by a British governor named Charles Lawrence, who decided that "something had to be done?" One man's decision shaped the destiny of a whole people. He assigned Captain John Winslow to deport over 2500 Acadian French Catholics out of Nova Scotia. These people were scattered throughout the English colonies in the late 1750s. Later some were transported back to France and then sent to Louisiana by the French government. Today we see the remnants of them as the Cajuns and Acadians of Louisiana! Nova Scotia has been English ever since.

Lawrence's behavior and decisions sound despicable in light of our current American cultural preferences. But at the time, they were deemed the most "efficient" means to "solve a problem." This decision also reflects the relationship between people and government: People were subject to the whims of the government. The story of this relationship is threaded throughout history. Even in countries where the government is supposed to be "for the people and by the people," governments exercise power over them that can destroy the context and continuity of their lives. Similar tactics were employed by the American government, during the 1800s, in relation to the Native American peoples of the western region. How do we protect the rights of people to live where they wish? How do we protect people from the whims of the government? At what point has the government gone too far in its effort to exercise its responsibility? And, as citizens, what role do we, as individuals play?

Did you know that French Emperor Napoleon III controlled Mexico in the 1860s? Or that Cuba was "rescued" from the Spanish in the Spanish-American War of 1898? Did you know that Portugal colonized Brazil? What was the impact of these "foreign" cultures on the people living there? What long term effects has that had on that country's economy, culture, and government? How have these experiences shaped the consciousness and the world view of the people involved? Here's another list-- Did you know that.....

- ◆ insurance and banks were invented in the 1400s?
- ◆ that the Iroquois Confederacy provided important insights for those developing the American form of government?
- ◆ one fourth of all America people (including African Americans) have Irish ancestry?



## Seven Frames of History

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- ◆ one fifth of the Swedish people lived in America by 1920? How did that happen?
- ◆ some of the heroes of the American Revolution were French and Prussian?
- ◆ the Erie Canal and the Missouri River were the major “thoroughfares” of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century?
- ◆ Constantinople (Istanbul) was a major trade center throughout the Middle Ages?

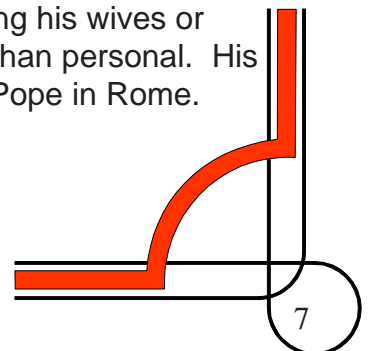
The study of history provides some answers--but for the most part, it creates questions on the part of the researcher. Not only is it important to understand the shaping events and decisions of our past, but it is also important to understand how people thought and what their motives were for doing the things that they did.

There is a tendency on the part of students who are approaching history as a new subject area, to get bogged down in the many details. What they end up with is a perspective of historical events, people, and situations that is similar to a mouse’s perspective of the field! Every tiny detail is of immense importance, and thus everything becomes overwhelming. The whole process becomes too much tiresome, and irrelevant, and time consuming work--the same as the mouse trying to remove every rock and every little clump of grass to clear a path. Now, if an eagle were to fly over, before she targeted the mouse for her afternoon snack, she would observe that the mouse was trying hard to make a new path only a few feet away from one that had been long established.

One of the more efficient ways to study history or to make sense of the happenings, and the personalities of the past is to ask broad questions; questions from an eagle’s perspective. Two very important questions that can be applied are:

- ◆ What was the **purpose** of this action on the part of a person, a government, or a group?
- ◆ What was the **impact** of this action on the people, the government, the country or a group, or on another individual?

The first question about purpose, sets the stage to explore motives, situations, personalities, characteristics of the environment, of the society and culture, of the political and economic realities of the time. It also helps you to put into perspective some of the new philosophies, trends, discoveries, and other ideas that impact the way that people behave at any point in time. Henry VIII didn’t divorce his wives simply because he didn’t care for these women. His motives were much more complex. Marrying the daughter of a king from another country was one way of establishing alliances. Having sons was also a way of ensuring the succession of a dynasty in England. Henry VIII was sonless. He was also caught in a struggle for power with the Pope. So his purpose in beheading his wives or divorcing them and sending them off to the convent was more political than personal. His purpose also evolved into one of getting out from under the rule of the Pope in Rome.



## Seven Frames of History

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The second question about impact, establishes the ripple effect of the consequences of the decisions, actions, situations or events. What was the impact of Henry's action? Well, not only did he establish the Church of England, but he became one of the earliest "protestors" of the Protestant Reformation that took off in Europe, especially in what is now Germany in the 1600s. The next question about impact would be, what was the impact of this on the people, the governments, the countries, and the "established" order of things at the time?

Following questions like these can provide road maps for determining which facts are important and which are just "interesting, but not very relevant." This process can also help you to avoid the frustration of having too many facts, and spending all your time trying to rewrite what has already been written and still not knowing what you have learned!

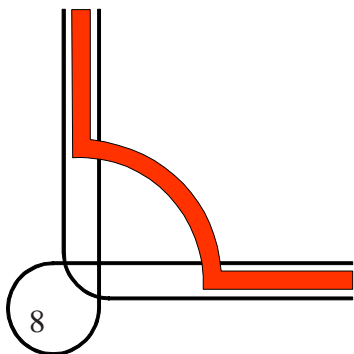
### The Frames of History

Frames represent ways of seeing things. When you take a painting to the store to get it framed, the one you choose adds to the "understanding" and "essence" of that painting. The same is true with a photograph. Some photos are positioned in a plastic see through frame; others, like a picture of our grandparents at their wedding, are "presented" in a classical, even ornate frame. How we frame the past gives us a deeper understanding of the significance of certain events and people. Understanding the background or the "context" of history provides a series of landmarks so that the student of history can see the big picture, the interrelationships and the key elements that make history come alive and become ever so relevant to the world of business today.

There are seven frames that can be considered the foundations for understanding history. Each of these presents the events, cultures and people of a nation in a unique way. The frames however, have to be thought of as "transparent," layers, one built upon the other. Paintings done with watercolor as the medium are also layered. Many layers of transparent color are "built" in order to create just the right "picture." The same can be said of history. By layering the frames, building one upon the other, it is possible to create an awareness of the historical picture of a nation and its people that goes far beyond wars and kings. It is also important to know that each frame provides its own set of assumptions, values and biases which could create conflicts regarding what is considered to be a "fact." Using this layering strategy can also help the historian avoid viewing historical events through present day values and beliefs.

The seven frames are:

- Climate and Geography
- Ideas and Thought
- Society and Culture
- Religion and Spirituality
- Transportation and Technology
- War, Government, and Politics
- Economics and Commerce



# Seven Frames of History

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## The Frames of History

“History” is a very broad discipline. There are many elements that make up the layers of history. It isn’t just a chronology of wars, kings, and revolutions. There is much more. Understanding the background or the “context” of history provides a series of landmarks so that the student of history can see the big picture, the interrelationships and the key elements that make history come alive and become ever so relevant to the world of business today. Themes in history are often bracketed by significant events, turning points, intellectual or religious influences, or by dates .

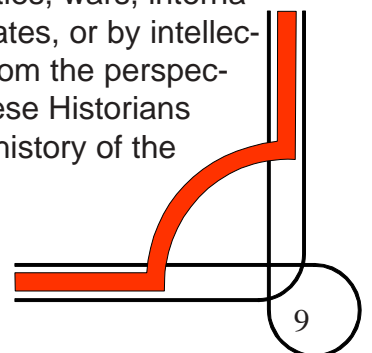
Time lines, or periods of history are some of the most common frames of historical organization. Most often these periodic frames are influenced by the perspective of the historian. For example the study of American history can be grouped into the following time frames and historical themes. Note that these that have a political focus. Another historian concentrating on social movements would set up different time frames and different themes to help the reader follow his or her “hypothesis” about “how things came to be this way.”

1492-1776: The Age of Exploration  
1777-1850: The Age of Expansion  
1851-1920: The Age of Nationalism  
1920-1975: The Age of Development  
1976-2001: The Age of Knowledge

The history of Western Civilization, on the other hand might have another set of time periods. These particular groupings emphasize distinct changes in culture and thinking of peoples and nations.

Before the Common Era: Ancient History  
Until 1100: Late Antiquity  
1100-1400: The Middle Ages  
1400-1599: The Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation  
1600-1700: The Seventeenth Century  
1701-1804: The Eighteenth Century, The Enlightenment and  
the Age of Revolution  
1804-1905: The 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the Rise of European Liberalism  
1906-1946: The World Wars  
1947-2000: The Cold War and the Struggle for European Unity

World history, by the same token could be divided into regions, dynasties, wars, international exploration adventures, colonization efforts by various nation-states, or by intellectual or technological developments. World history could be framed from the perspective of an individual country: How might Chinese Historians or Japanese Historians write the history of the world? How might an Islamic historian write a history of the world?



## Seven Frames of History

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Another important frame of reference to consider is the perspectives of individual players in history. For instance: how would the American Revolution be seen by a British Loyalist in South Carolina? How might a young mother on a wagon train with her two babies experience the trip to Oregon? How might a Lakota warrior experience life on a reservation? How might a freed man report his experiences in the Civil War? How might a Chinese immigrant describe his experiences in San Francisco in the 1850s? How might a farmer or rancher experience the railroads in the 1880s? Thus, there are various frames of reference and various levels (individual, regional or national, continental, global) of history to consider as well. Each of these contributes to our understanding of a particular time, people, and place in history.

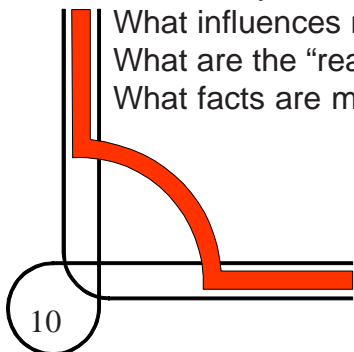
### **Making History Relevant**

Over the next few pages, each of these frames will be explained. Once you have examined the way in which the frames work, then you will be ready to explore countries and their people with a sense of purpose and direction. Always, as you are exploring the history and culture of the country you choose, it is important to keep in mind what is happening in that country in the present day. Here are some questions to keep in mind:

- What role is this country playing in international affairs?
- What are its strengths and weaknesses in a global economy?
- Who are its real and perceived enemies?
- What are some of the dangers facing this country at this time in history?
- How might those dangers be traced from events and decisions made in previous times?
- What economic and political decisions being made by our government are influenced by historical relationships with these countries?

Another group of questions that historians need to consider reflect the spirit of inquiry and the critical thinking that are necessary for an “historical perspective.” These help the historian to focus and continue to investigate. After reading a particular account of an event or a biography, for instance, one might ask :

- What point of view is missing?
- What is the perspective of the writer of this document?
- Does the author have an “axe to grind?”
- What can you learn about the author’s ideology from the words that are used?
- What influences might be at work in this situation?
- What are the “reasons” that the author provides?
- What facts are missing? What else is omitted?



# Seven Frames of History

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Are the facts that are presented accurate?

What is the context of the facts?

Questions become the driver of historical inquiry: who, what, when, where, why, how. Another good question begins with “In what way did...” The historian never stops asking questions.

The historian’s job is to be a critical thinker. Useful history, from the perspective of Gay and Cavanaugh (1972) “...is the product of historical thinking and historical thinking is critical thinking about the past” (p. xi). When we first begin to study about a country, a time period, an event or a person, we try to get our bearings. The seven frames can help to do that. Then it becomes our challenge to dig deeper, to acquire a real understanding. This is when critical thinking and a spirit of inquiry become important.

## History—An Interconnected Discipline

History is categorized as a “social science.” As a science there are many facts: dates, events, names of people, important movements, and so on. If you look at the gazetteer published by the CIA, The World Fact Book (<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook>), you will see lists and lists of facts about various countries. These facts by themselves are the data of the scientist. They are simply bits of information.

They become important and relevant when considered in connection with other facts, or when specific questions are asked. When you begin asking questions, that is the beginning of the creation of knowledge! Generally, an historian will begin with a series of questions, or he may formulate an hypothesis about those facts, much as a scientist does in relation to a set of data from an experiment. For instance, a fact may tell us that India, Burma and much of Southeast Asia experience monsoons many months of the year. A series of questions might begin to shape an image of a nation, its people and culture. Think about Southeast Asia (perhaps South Vietnam) and ask these questions:

How much water does a monsoon bring?

What happens to that water?

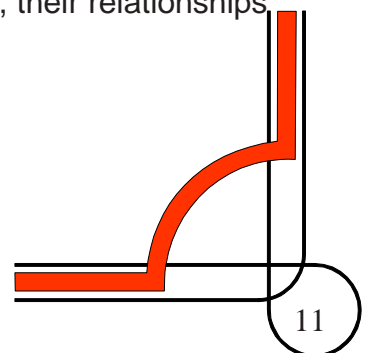
How does it impact the land and the soil?

What influence does all that water have on the agriculture, the economy, the transportation systems?

How might those factors influence the international political goals of a country, or of its neighbors?

How might months of rain, high water tables, huge tidal waves impact the psychology of a people?

How is that psychology reflected in their world view, their religion, their relationships with neighboring countries and cultures?



## Seven Frames of History

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Asking these and other questions forms the basis for the “art” of history, the interpretive part. History is much more than a science. It becomes an art when the historian begins to explore a series of “hypotheses” developed in relation to the facts. This is also the beginning of the “stories” that make history so fascinating and rich. These stories are also interconnected with the historians own perspective and the point he or she is trying to prove. Thus, they are “hypotheses” that are eventually challenged by other historians who see the same set of facts from a different perspective. So, while the facts are the same, the way they are used is critical to understanding what it is that the historian is trying to tell us.

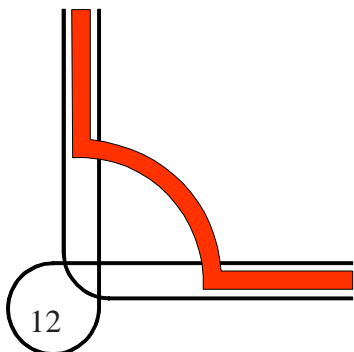
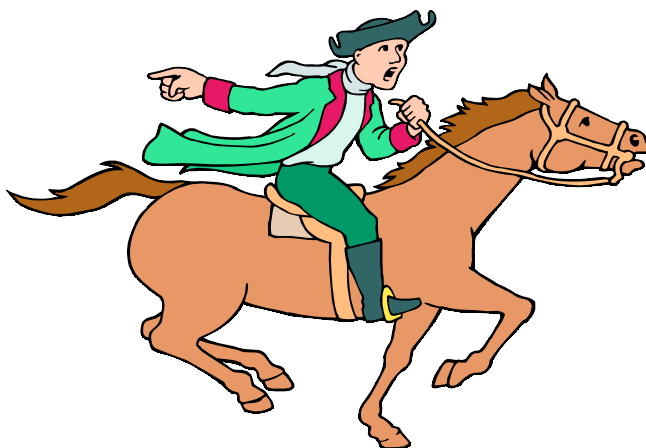
History is also very much interrelated with other social sciences such as political science, economics, and sociology. Other scientific areas such as archeology, ethnography, and anthropology also provide important foundations for understanding issues in history, especially in the social and cultural frame.

The hard sciences such as engineering, chemistry, biology, medicine, astronomy have also left their mark on history. The impact of technology is threaded throughout the past and into the present.

Humanities, literature, the arts, music, drama, and cinema have also played a role in helping to understand the people and their times, how they see the world and how they react to the events and conditions around them. Intellectual and spiritual thought as well as cultural mores and mythology are reflected in the work of poets and novelists, and writings of philosophers of each era and nation. These all add to shape the fabric of the culture of a people.

Each of the frames of history needs to be interconnected. The interconnected nature of history provides a platform for understanding peoples and nations of the present-day interconnected world. To view them individually is to be left with only a partial view of a people and their nation.

As a way of emphasizing the importance of maintaining a “spirit of inquiry” and a critical approach to the study of history, Gay and Cavanaugh (1972) warned about histories that serve only to aggrandize a political regime or to reinforce a particular ideology or mythology:



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A culture that confines its chroniclers to agreed upon and aggrandizing tales, to recording without skeptical review the exploits of its kings, the miracles of its saints, the special benevolence of its gods, or the unique pre-eminence of its merchants, scientists, or athletes, is a culture without true history. The historian needs distance from his materials, he must question the authenticity of his documents, the correctness of his precursors, the validity of his information. (p. xii-xiii).

It is also important to avoid viewing the past in terms of today's values, ideologies and "politically correct" perspectives. Each era has its own challenges and its own "framework." Political commentary and editorial commentary about events have their place, but they are not history. The goal of the historian is to get "inside" a time period and describe it from the inside out. To do otherwise is to create a distortion.

Well, you might ask, what about the history of the people who had no "voice" and were thus not represented in a certain time period? This is where new perspectives, or frames of history might be presented: "A Native American history of the Westward expansion," "The African American Experience in America." Also, as new data becomes available, facts may change and historical accounts may need to be revised. Thus we may find current histories of the American Revolution and Civil War containing much more information about the roles of women, Native American peoples, and African Americans.

Choosing what goes into or is left out of any particular narrative may be guided by the point of view and the goals of the author. Thus, an historian whose focus is on the dynamics between two political powers may choose to ignore the social or religious issues of a time period.

Gay, Peter and Gerald Cavanaugh. 1972. *Historians at work*. Volume 1. New York: Harper and Row.



## Seven Frames of History

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### Some Useful Resources

There are several resources that can assist you in developing an understanding and awareness of various countries. Some of these include:

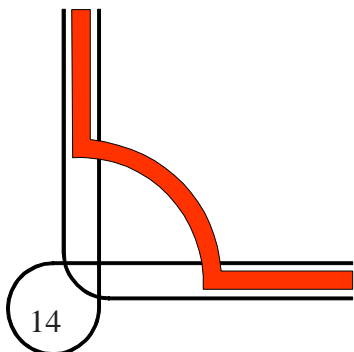
The Wall Street Journal [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com) (look for the link to the Asian version!)  
Britannica Encyclopedia [www.britanica.com](http://www.britanica.com)  
National Geographic Society [www.nationalgeographicsociety.org](http://www.nationalgeographicsociety.org)  
World History Archives [www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/29/index.html](http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/29/index.html)  
CIA World Fact Book [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/)  
Interesting Satellite maps: [www.ravenmaps.com](http://www.ravenmaps.com)

Proquest: [www.umi.com/proquest](http://www.umi.com/proquest)

Proquest is your window to the world of information. Be sure to get your password from the library. You can put your country name in the Search Engine and find articles on all kinds of topics related to your interest. You will find that Proquest lists many articles from magazines and newspapers. You need to balance articles you get from the World Trade, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Business Week or Newsweek with articles from more academic journals such as:

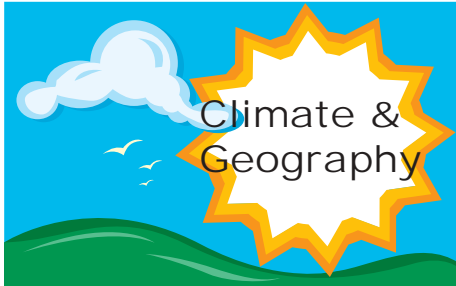
Journal of Social History	Journal of Women's History
The Economist	Nineteenth Century Literature
Far Eastern Economic Review	East European Politics and Societies
Journal of International Economics	Journal of Contemporary History
Harvard International Review	The Middle East Journal
Harvard Business Review	Journal of Business Ethics
Fortune	Military History
Contemporary Review	European History Quarterly
Diplomatic History	
A Journal of History	

Also see the list of search engines and reference resources in the Criteria for Excellence.



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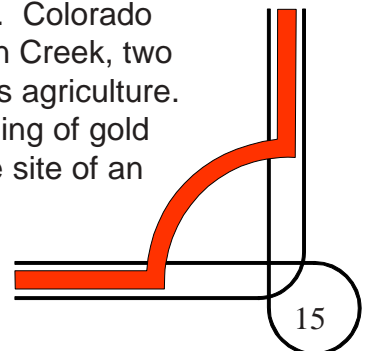
Climate and geography play an important role in the shaping of a culture and a nation. Land formations, waterways, the existence or non-existence of natural resources, fertile soil, and the amount of rainfall all impact the way that a culture forms and the focus of the nation that develops out of that culture.

Countries that have natural seaports had distinct advantages over those that were landlocked. Before railroads, airplanes, and satellite communications, seaports were a window to the world. Countries fought major wars to acquire them and to protect them. Accessible seaports could mean the difference between wealth and poverty for a nation. Major cities are often located on seaports or at the confluence of large rivers. They become centers for commerce and population migrations.

Mountain ranges create transportation nightmares, climate variations, and direct the rivers flowing from the winter snows coming from their peaks. Mountain ranges often serve as natural markers for political boundaries, as do rivers. These days we are accustomed to looking at a map and seeing political boundaries: states, countries, and continents. Rivers, mountains, lakes and oceans are seen as boundary markers. Our eyes trace the paths of the interstate highways. But 200 years ago the maps were defined by the mountains and waterways. Rivers formed the highway, while mountains, giant lakes, and deserts were awesome barriers to circumvent.

Deserts create interesting challenges to lifestyle, as do wetlands. Just consider the differences between the Bedouin nomads and the rice farmers of Southeast Asia. Think about the way of life in the Louisiana Bayou compared with that in the plains of Kansas. What effect does the amount of water have on the development of the culture and lifeways of a people? How are these differences reflected in the choices and behaviors of the people of a particular region?

Between 1859 and 1872, people flocked to Colorado for the gold rush. Those who didn't mine plotted out farms thinking they would grow corn and wheat as they had done east of the Mississippi River. They quickly found that the soil would not support rich crops. Then, too, Mother Nature played a trick on them. In those early years, there was an abundance of rain. But then the cycle shifted. Crops dried up, farmers were ruined and many turned to ranching or mining. Colorado Springs was built at the intersection of Monument Creek and Fountain Creek, two very small water sources. But Colorado Springs was not known for its agriculture. Rather it became a center of international finance because of the mining of gold and silver! When the mining ceased it became a tourist town and the site of an



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army fort, chosen because the altitude and climate was suitable for winter combat training.

Heat and cold can also influence lifestyles and cultural behavior. Did you ever see *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*? The setting was a hot, humid southern town. Things moved slowly, tempers were short, the heat and humidity actually became characters in the film. William Faulkner, like Tennessee Williams also wrote of lifeways in the American South—before air conditioning! Why do Mexican people take siestas? It's not just because people get sleepy at noon! The tropical climate of Mexico and the Central American lowlands makes doing anything else between noon and 3pm almost impossible!

Why were there so many Greek philosophers who shaped Western Thought? Greek city states were scattered throughout the mountainous region and were relatively unscathed by wars for many years. People had the leisure time to think about ways of governing, ways of learning, and ways of living. They had enough of the essentials of life that there was time for reflection. They also recorded their thoughts.

There are several categories that can be useful for gathering facts and then asking questions in relation to the impact that those facts had on people: landforms, population, natural resources, and climate provide a starting place. Think of a particular region, country or place. Then, examine it in relation to these four categories.

### Landforms

What landforms characterize this area? (mountains, rivers, lakes, oceans)

How high are the mountains? Where are they located? What boundaries do they create? Are any of the mountains active or inactive volcanoes?

How wide are the rivers? Are they fairly stable like the Mississippi, shifting its banks continuously but subtly? Or do they wildly change their courses like the Yellow River in China?

Are the rivers suitable for transportation?

Are there manmade rivers (canals)? How do these impact the region?

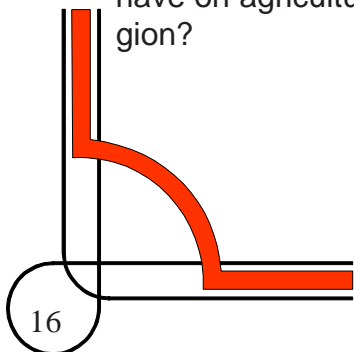
Is this location a peninsula? An Island?

Is it landlocked?

What impact do the landforms have on the climate? Are there ocean breezes?

What is the altitude? What is the latitude? How might those facts impact the development of a country?

What is the rainfall and humidity of the region? What impact does "water" have on agriculture, the economy and the transportation systems of the region?



# Seven Frames of History

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Do the winds bring balmy weather or bitter cold?

Do hurricanes, tidal waves, or cyclones tear up the land and the sea shore on a regular basis?

In what ways might the unpredictability of Mother Nature contribute to a particular spiritual development?

How can the land and climate become a “character” in the great literature of the culture?

In what ways might the people’s character or beliefs be shaped by where they live?

Fishing communities in Maine and the upper Northwest have very different cultures than the Midwestern farming communities or the mining towns of Pennsylvania and Tennessee. The vast open spaces of Texas, Alaska, Montana and many of the Canadian provinces like Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Yukon Territory have significantly different cultures from New York, South Carolina, California. If such significant differences have shaped the cultural variations within the United States, just imagine how landforms, waterways (or their lack) and access to the sea have shaped whole nations!

## Climate

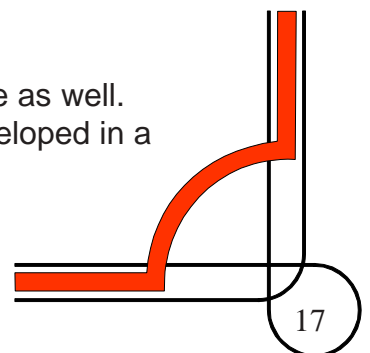
Climate includes rainfall, temperature, prevailing winds, and weather patterns. Each of these shapes both the geography and the peoples of a land. Climate also influences population density. For instance Alexandria at the mouth of the Nile River is very heavily populated, but the existence of a mountain range on one side of the river as it flows from Victoria Falls causes the land in between to be mostly uninhabitable because of the lack of moisture. Sometimes people reflect that differences in “national personality” could be a result of the climate: the sunny outgoing dispositions of the Mediterranean people compared to the dour seriousness of the Northern Europeans. It’s worth considering.

In considering a country, its culture and position in the world today, climate and geography hold many clues to its development, historical challenges and world view.

## Population

Population is also a key variable in examining the geography of an area. Where do the people congregate? Why? What influenced great population migrations? Why do some countries have people of different cultures (such as Algeria or Constantinople) while others like Japan and Korea have only their own culture? How do the aggregations of ethnic cultures and religions impact the character and development of a region?

Population density is an important factor in the development of a culture as well. Tiny Japan has very little room for people to spread out. Customs developed in a



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very formal way to counteract the tensions of close living. In the western US and Canada, and in the outback of Australia people developed very independent ways that were culturally incompatible with the expectations of the organized cities, such as Toronto, Sidney, or cities in the US, east of the Mississippi. In many ways geographic differences still underline the cultural variations across the United States and Canada

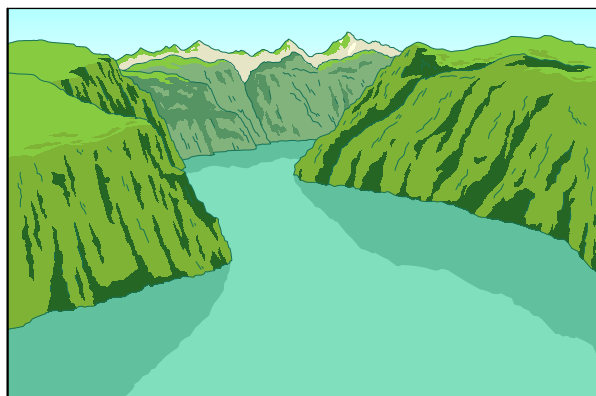
### Natural Resources

The availability of natural resources and the how easy they are to acquire and transport has a great deal of influence on a country's commercial and economic development. Countries fight wars to secure natural resources, or to find access routes to transport goods and resources. The availability of natural resources can influence the development of the spiritual dimension of a culture as well. For the Aztecs, gold was so abundant that it was used as a resource for building and for ornamentation. In Europe, on the other hand, gold was so scarce that it was a prize worth risking fortunes and dying for in order to acquire. Russia wanted access to the Mediterranean sea and kept pushing its way south. The United States wanted land and open space and pushed its way west. Oil reserves in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were a major factor in the decision of the US to engage in the Gulf War.

The availability of furs, leather, and cotton influenced the clothing styles of a culture as well as its export and import commerce. Coal, iron, copper and rubber, for example, have played important roles in the commercial development and history of countries such as Germany and Southeast Asia. Diamonds found in Africa created nearly a century of colonization by other countries who valued the gem such as England, Germany and the Dutch.

See pps 491-495 in McKay et al as an example of how geography and climate shapes peoples. And pps 591-596 and 1119-1132 show how changes in population impact an agricultural community and can change the very nature of a society.

Find a geography textbook in the library and see how it is organized and what you can learn from browsing through it.





**As a man thinketh, so he is.**  
**Proverbs**

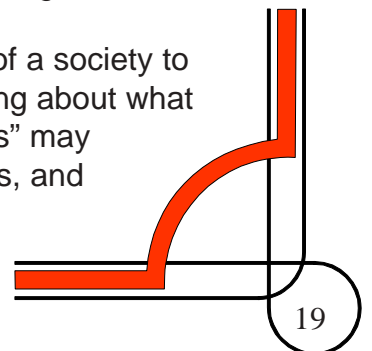
### **R**eflections upon the Environment

The ideals, thoughts, and reflections of people about what they see around them are reflected in the “intellectual” development of a nation or a region. These “ways of seeing” become a “world view” or the way that any given people reflects upon, interprets, or understands its environment. Intellectual thought defines the values and the predominant themes of a given time period. At various times, religion, politics, science and social movements influence thinkers to make observations and insights about the nature of “man” within the context of his environment, or culture. In the late 18th and early 19th century much thought was given to the ideas of political freedom and liberty, what that meant and how it would be best incorporated into the governments and societies of the day. In the mid-nineteenth century nationalism, Social Darwinism and nihilism were key issues. After World War I, existentialism and socialism were characteristic themes that shaped the thinking, literature, arts, and even behavior of people in the western cultures.

These reflections are of course, those of Western Europe and the United States at those times. But what were the “ways of seeing” of the Chinese, the people of various South American countries, of the many Native American people scattered throughout North and South America?

The very fact that “man” is in quotations is a result of “intellectual” thought and writings about gender equality, an intellectual movement that has been extremely influential in American life for the past thirty years. As the feminist movement that began as a trickle in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century became influenced by Postmodern ideas (imported from French thinkers) in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, new emphasis has been placed on the “power” of language to control and the use of specific words to mean specific things. In addition power and influence has become an important component of feminism. This emphasis has had a shaping force on many areas of our culture, from family life and religion to corporate culture and affirmative action. Most literature is scrutinized to ensure “inclusive” language. Even the Bible has a version rewritten to reflect an inclusive use of language.

Throughout history, intellectual trends have filtered through the culture of a society to shape and direct its values and behavior. Often, the “thinkers” are writing about what they observe, and framing it with a certain emphasis. Different “thinkers” may see different themes depending upon their personal filters, goals, values, and experience of the times.



### **Influence on Values and Behavior**

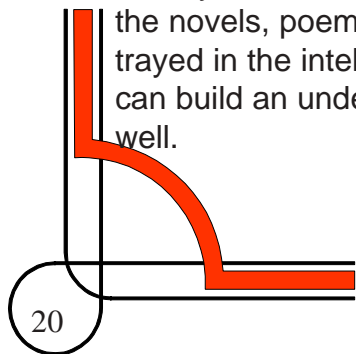
Ideas and thoughts of articulate people have a powerful influence on the values and behavior of people. With the introduction of the printing press (invented by the Chinese), for instance, Martin Luther was able to translate the Bible into German and break the monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church on religion in Europe. The consequences of this are still being felt centuries later!! Ideals and values that are expressed in the writings of people such as Franklin, Monroe, Jefferson, and Hamilton describe a vision for a country that is unlike any other in the world.

Ideas, ideals, values, and ways of thinking shape nations, religions, cultures, and people. They are very powerful. Wars are fought, thrones are lost, and millions of people can die because of a belief in a certain set of ideals. The study of intellectual history brings to light the origin of many of the terms we hear in the news each day: socialism, fascism, communism, democracy, liberalism, freedom, etc. Tracing the origins of these ideals and the roles that they play in international and national political and social life is a fascinating study in the life and development of people. Ideologies, or patterned sets of ideals, define the biases, values, concerns and preferences of a people or a nation. These systems of thought shape societies, economies, and motivate action on the part of governments. Understanding the origins and unfolding of ideologies can provide an important context for understanding world events in any given time frame.

### **The Challenge of Learning and Studying Intellectual History**

Unfortunately, most of us are introduced to intellectual history or philosophy without a context. We are given Hamilton's *The Federalist Papers* or Aristotle's *Clouds*, or Thoreau's *On Walden Pond* as assignments to read in high school. No context of the meaning or purpose of philosophical writings is given. Unless you know what is happening at the time the document was written, what the author was reacting to, and what he or she was trying to illustrate, the writings can be very difficult to read. As teenagers, very few of us have the experience or the awareness to understand the significance of what we are reading. We only know that the language is obtuse, the words are abstract and that we would much rather be doing anything else but reading this "stuff."

As adults we begin to have more questions about what is going on around us: questions about politics, about forms of government, about religious expression, about society, about human nature, freedom, human rights, civil rights and so forth. Many of the novels, poems, art and even music of the times reflect the ideals and values portrayed in the intellectual trends. Intellectual history paints a backdrop upon which we can build an understanding not only of the past, but of the present and the future as well.



# Seven Frames of History

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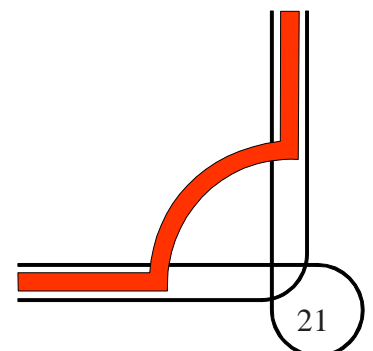
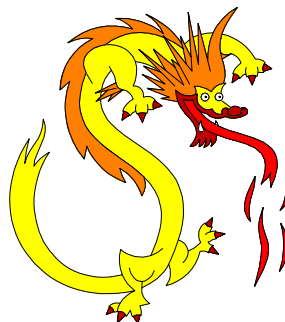
## The Power of Ideals and Ideas

Ideas are very powerful. People have been burned at the stake, or have lost their freedom because of their ideas (i.e. Joan of Arc, the Chinese students in Tianmen Square). Intellectual ideas are founded in idealistic principles and values, issues that people think are crucial to our existence. The intellectual traditions of early Christian thinkers like St Augustine shaped Catholicism and much of the way the religion is interpreted in the Western cultures. The Analects of Confucius provide a framework for understanding Confucian societies such as Korea.

Ideals are images, or visions, of how we would want things to be: “In an ideal world....” Gifted thinkers write about these ideals in ways that inspire kings, popes, princes and warriors into action for a cause. Sometimes these thinkers may have ideals that have destructive influences or that come from a mind that is “on the brink of sanity.” For instance, Nietzsche, who wrote his first novel in 1872 was a determined atheist, even though he grew up as the son of a Lutheran pastor. His novel focused on alienation, meaninglessness and the uselessness of life. By 1882, Nietzsche was insane. Yet, his written words formed the basis of a whole system of thought called nihilism and existentialism that has shaped much of our current day philosophy as reflected in literature, art and movies. It is important to remember that ideals, utopias and “perfect” societies do not exist and the effort to coerce people into conforming to one set of these ideals can result in totalitarian governments and dictatorships. Yet, on the other hand, it is important to think about these ideals and work at bringing them about.

In Europe, the Enlightenment and its emphasis on political and social freedom impacted not only the European cultures but nations on other continents as well. Out of the ideals of the Enlightenment came the American and French Revolutions, the formation of the United States, the foundations of communist thought and ultimately the Russian and Chinese Revolutions. It is from the ideas of the Enlightenment that “liberalism” was developed. The Enlightenment was also dubbed The Age of Reason, because of the influence and the challenge of scientific thought on validity of religion. While the positives abound in thought based upon “reason,” too much reason can eliminate the more spiritual aspects of life. The conflict between the mind and the spirit characterizes many of the discussions over the value of the ideals of the Age of Reason.

Not all cultures were “captured” by the ideals of the Enlightenment. The Moslem and Chinese cultures ignored these intellectual trends, preferring to retain their own intellectual traditions shaped respectively by the Qur’an and the thoughts of Confucius. Not captured that is, until Mao Tse Tung shaped the message of Karl Marx and Lenin into his own brand



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of Communism. The Age of Reason, filtered through Confucian cultural thought and shaped by the egoisms of a communist dictator created a unique society in China beginning in 1949 and continuing, with many alterations, including a distinct form of free market economy in the 1990s, although much changed, for the last 50 years. The Soviet Union, however, imploded under the weight of the ideals of the communist intellectual tradition.

Not all ideals or systems of thought are of benefit to all peoples. The traditions, experiences, desires and dreams of a people shape their acceptance of or resistance to any particular set of ideals and values. This is why some of the political efforts on the part of government to “export” their brand of governing to a particular location seldom works. Governance rises from the experience and ideals of the people, and can seldom be imposed by outside entities except by force.

It is also important to remember that just because a system of thought is not written down in books, doesn't mean that it doesn't exist or that it isn't of value to a particular society. It is also important to remember that just because something is left out of the history books during a certain time frame doesn't mean that an idea, an event, or a situation wasn't true. The writing of history can also be politically motivated. World views, life ways, and cultural values all serve a purpose. The question for the 21st century is: Does this ideal or this value support the life goals and desires that this society has for itself? So some may choose traditional ways (a focus on the spiritual and social values), and some may choose the way of technology and commerce, still others may choose the way of warlords and power.

Intellectual history is the history of ideas, ideals, and values. It defines the priorities of the thinkers of an era. It catalogues the trends, patterns, and ways of perceiving and interpreting events and situations. It can be focused upon politics, social issues, economics, technology or science—just about anything. Trends and patterns of ideas and ideals shape the context and the nature of a people in a certain time period. These trends and patterns become part of the cultural expression of the people.

In McKay et al, there are a number of chapters that address themes of Intellectual History: Chapter 17,18, 19, 25, 26,30, 31, 36

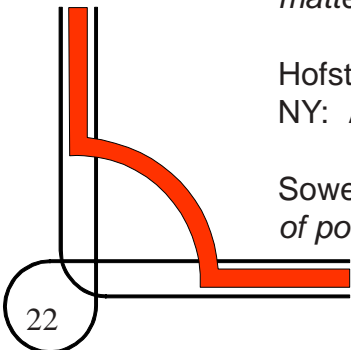
Some books you might wish to read:

Baumer, Franklin L. 1977. *Modern European thought: Continuity and change in ideas, 1600-1950*. NY: MacMillan Publishing, Company..

Harrison, Lawrence E. and Samuel P. Huntington. 2000. *Culture matters: How values shape human progress*. NY: Basic Books.

Hofstadter, Richard. 1962. *Anti-intellectualism in American life*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

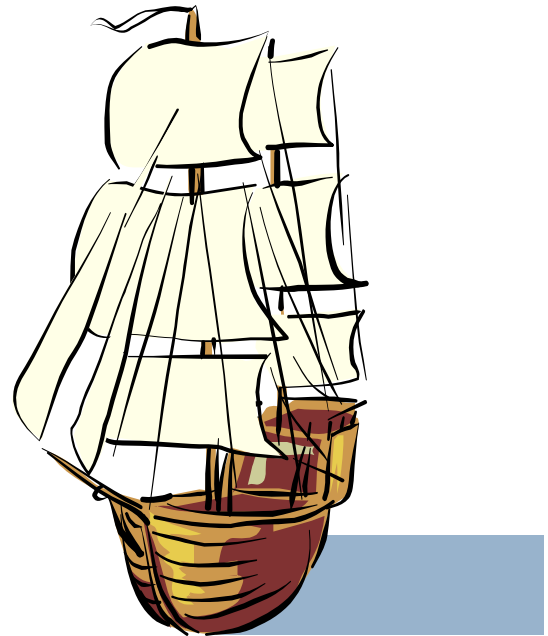
Sowell, Thomas. 1987. *A conflict of visions: Ideological origins of political struggles*. NY: Quill, William Morrow



## Some Important Concepts

Enlightenment  
Renaissance  
Freedom  
Liberalism  
Socialism  
Communism  
Fascism  
Social Darwinism

Romanticism  
Realism  
Impressionism  
Belief in Progress  
Nihilism  
Anomie  
Impressionism

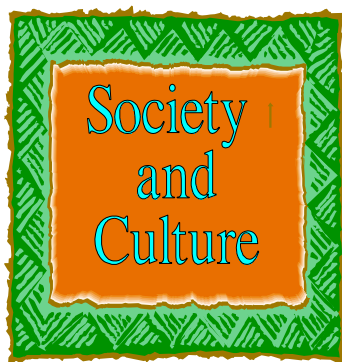


## Some Influential Thinkers



Planck  
Einstein  
Whitehead  
Freud  
Picasso  
Weber  
Sorel  
Henry Adams  
Lenin  
Gandhi  
Hitler  
Stalin  
Sartre  
Barth  
Maritain

Hegel  
Goethe  
Pushkin  
Comte  
Darwin  
Durkheim  
Marx  
Nietzsche  
Pasteur  
Lister  
Rousseau  
Hugo  
Confucius  
Buddha



### Society and Social Customs

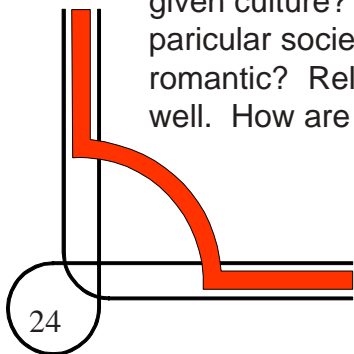
While Intellectual History defines the values, issues, and themes of the times, these characteristics are expressed through the social customs, art, music, architecture and drama of the times. In open societies, that is, those that are free enough to choose their own direction, the “press” of the environment, the fears, anxieties, and hopes of the people are reflected in their behavior, choices and modes of expression.

Social customs include marriage and family conventions, relations between the social classes, disposition of family property across generations, health and education. In some cases, as in the United States and Britain, social reform efforts are also a significant part of the social history. Reform efforts played an important role in child welfare, education, health improvement, childbirth, sanitation and care for the insane and for prisons, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Western Europe and North America.

The way in which a society cares for those who are ill, imprisoned, indigent, insane, or inept is a reflection of its values, culture, norms and its fears. This is especially true in the case of how children are treated. In times of long drawn out hardship, such as famine, war, and disease, the mortality rate of children was so great that clergy and doctors advised parents not to become too attached to the children because they would most likely die. This led to emotional and physical neglect which created a cycle of poor nutrition, inadequate care, and very hard times for children as was seen in the mid-nineteenth century and during the Depression years in the United States.

Social customs are interesting. While they reflect the values of the times, they also create the values of the times. The availability of divorce and rules about property—who owns it, who doesn’t—play an important role in the status of women in a society. Different societies at different times had different rules, many of which were influenced by the laws and religious practices of the times.

The role of marriage in society is an important characteristic of the culture. Are the marriages arranged? Do men and women have more than one spouse? Are there differences across social classes? Are social classes a defining characteristic of a given culture? How are social classes defined and why are they a part of a particular society? Is the purpose of marriage economic, diplomatic, practical, romantic? Relationships outside of marriage also help to define the culture as well. How are children raised? Are they cherished, are they ignored? What is the



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role of the elderly? How are gender roles defined? Who goes to college? Who works on the farm? How do people move from one social strata to another? What defines social standing? Is it age, gender, connections, relationships, achievement?

Social customs also reflect the culture's values of personal liberty, political freedom or lack thereof, and human rights. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century Human Rights became an important aspect of Western Culture. Eleanor Roosevelt helped to draft a document for the United Nations that stated Western ideals of human rights. However, not every form of government and not every culture consider human rights relevant. Why is that? Why are girl babies easily abandoned in some societies, while boy babies are prized? Why are children in some societies sold by their families as slaves and prostitutes? How are prisoners treated? What happens to the poor in a given society?

Another group of questions that could be important in examining social customs include: What is the impact of war upon a society? How do people behave when governments change drastically? What role does technology have in shaping family and social customs? How do changes in economic and agricultural practices impact family life? How do advances in science and sanitation change opportunities for people? What role does education play at any given time, in any given society? What is the role and form of education?

The exploration of these and many other questions are the focus of social histories. Many of these histories are explored using diaries, letters, church and country records, household inventories, and artifacts. The job of the historian is, in some ways, like that of the anthropologist or archeologist. Out of fragments of the past, the historian reconstructs a plausible picture of family and social life. As the student of history, we can compare behaviors, attitudes, and dreams across the ages and get a better understanding of the essence of human nature.

### Culture

Recently a number of books have been published that question the prevailing wisdom of the past 30 years that cultural values are relative and therefore cannot be 'evaluated' in terms of their usefulness or appropriateness. In a new book Harrison and Huntington (2000) point out that cultural values are a major influence on the social, economic, and political behavior of societies (xiv). They define culture as the "values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society" (2000, xv).

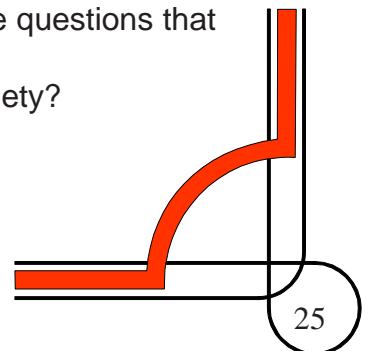
These elements of culture are often reflected and expressed through various media: art, literature, music, drama, architecture, and film. We can learn a great deal about a society by reading its novels, poetry, plays, and listening to its music. The questions that historians have include:

In what way do historical events and people shape the culture of a society?

In what way does the culture of a people shape the historical events?

What values are being expressed by the intellectual, musical, literary, or artistic products of a given time or society?

What do social customs tell us about society at any given time?



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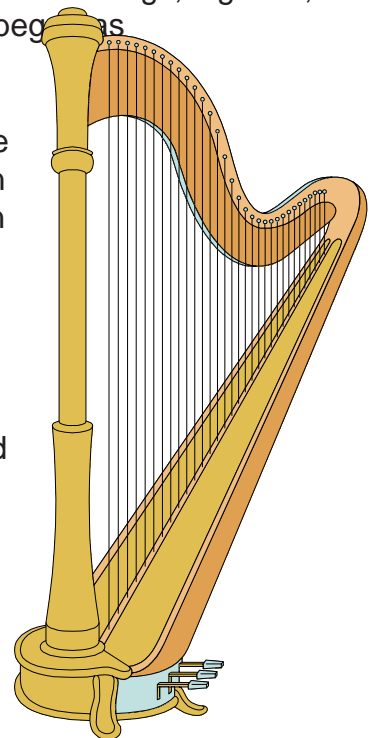
### Arts, Music, Drama, Literature, and Architecture

Expression of the values of the times is most readily seen through the art, music, drama, literature and architecture of a culture. In the last 100 years, cinema (and television) has also become a major form of expression of the cultural norms and values in a society. An examination of art in various countries and at various times can reveal what a society thinks about its people. Various forms of artistic expression also explore the fears, hopes, fantasies, and dreams of a culture. Comparing, for instance, the art of the late middle ages to that of the Renaissance demonstrates the awakening of the human being as an individual. Instead of producing standardized human shapes and faces, which looked flat and stylized, artists of the Renaissance went to great lengths to make accurate representations of people.

Leonardo DaVinci and Michaelangelo were two of the most notable artists of that period. They did magnificent studies of the human figure. Compare those with the chopped up, disorganized forms represented in the art of Picasso!! What are the differences in thinking between the artists of the Renaissance and those of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century? What were the influences affecting their thinking? How did their art impact the public and how did the art reflect the values and issues of the times? In the modern era, there has been considerable controversy over who should fund art, what is art, and how it should be displayed. Was this always the case? How were artists compensated in the past? For whom did they work? What role did they play in society? What were their works trying to express?

The same is true for literature, drama and for music. Each of these forms of expression play different functions in society. Drama and the traveling troubadour were ever popular in illiterate societies. Oral histories were passed on in the form of songs, legends, and epic poems. Some of the most famous western literature began as stories told by traveling singers. Beowulf is an example. Compare the differences in the drama of Shakespeare to that of a Neal Simon play. What are the themes and issues that are explored? How is the play performed? How have plays been adapted to movies and television? What is the role of drama in a society at a given time? How is it funded?

Did you know, that Shakespeare was written for the masses? It was a form of entertainment for common people in the 16<sup>th</sup> century!! In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, drama, ballet, opera and poetry reading were relegated to college campuses and were replaced by new forms of entertainment. Movies, television, rock concerts, and walkman's became the preferred form of entertainment. It's hard to imagine that in his day, Mozart was considered the equivalent of a rock star!!



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# Seven Frames of History

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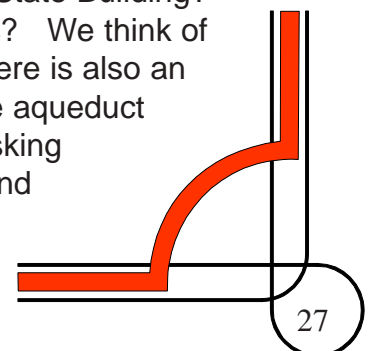
In almost all cultures storytelling is a opportunity to explore the human condition, challenge the authority of state and social institutions, consider “what ifs” in relation to patterns of life and experience. Just consider the stories that have had an impact on your life! Novels, drama, biography, short stories, folk songs, operas — each of these in their various genres (science fiction, romance, history, social commentary) play a role in both reflecting and shaping the culture of a particular time and society. With the invention of cinema, literary expression moved to the big screen, resulting in an even greater influence on cultural mores.

The study of artists, writers, musicians, and thinkers of a particular time period can help define the key issues and concerns of that time. They can show the impact of political, religious, economic and technological forces on people in a way that historians looking backward cannot. It is important, therefore, to explore the expressions of the times through the art, literature, drama, and music.

## Architecture

How did cathedrals come to be built? Are skyscrapers nothing more than modern day castles, complete with security? Who decides whether a building will be created out of steel and glass, or whether it will be ornate stone with statues decorating the entry way? What makes architecture exciting? How does it reflect the thinking and the feelings of a people? How are trends in architecture reflective of social, political, and economic thought? How do governments influence architecture? How does technology influence architecture? Did you know that parts of the road built by the Romans from Rome to Britain are still in existence? What was the significance of the arch? How were skyscrapers supported? How long did it take to build a cathedral? Who paid for them? How did the architecture of public buildings influence the building of private residences? How did the shape or design of public buildings influence or reflect social customs? All around the world there are beautiful structures, each of them reflecting the values and the ideals of a culture. A little digging will uncover the symbolism behind various forms as well.

Symbols are a significant part of the social customs and artistic expression of any people. Deciphering the symbols can help to understand what is important to and what drives a people. For instance, did you know that cathedrals are shaped like a cross? Do you know why they have statues and stained glass images depicting stories inside? Do you know the significance of the dome shape of the Taj Mahal? What is the significance of the many spires on buildings such as the Empire State Building? And what is symbolic about hydroelectric dams, or suspension bridges? We think of them in relation to creating energy and facilitating transportation, but there is also an artistic side to these very pragmatic structures, just as there was to the aqueduct system built by the Romans or the Pyramids built by the Egyptians. Asking questions about these forms and structures leads to historical inquiry and a sense of awe about the customs and thinking of a people.



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### Resources:

Some resources for Social and Cultural History in McKay, Hill, Buckler, and Ebrey:  
(note some of these references also overlap with economic and political trends)

Chapter 19; Chapter 21 (pps 652-656); Chapter 22 (pps 692-604; 703-708) Chapter 24 (pps 763-770) Chapter 26 (pps 808-825); Chapter 28 (pps 889-905; 910-915); Chapter 33 (pps 1046-1052); Chapter 35.

Another really good resource for this section is a Humanities textbook. You will find various editions in the library. For example:

Cunningham, Lawrence and John Reich. 1998. *Culture and Values: A survey of the Western humanities, Alternate Volume, 4th Edition*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace.

Also See: (Use the search engine on your browser to conduct a Search on "Culture" and see what you can find!)

[www.artcyclopedia.com](http://www.artcyclopedia.com) to explore the world of Art

[www.si.edu](http://www.si.edu) to explore the Smithsonian Institution

[www.artnetweb.com/guggenheim/africa/](http://www.artnetweb.com/guggenheim/africa/) to explore the Guggenheim Museum's collection of African art, photography and film

[www.acejapan.or.jp/](http://www.acejapan.or.jp/) Japanese art and film

### Some References for Futher Reading:

Ardrey, Robert. 1970. *The social contract: A personal inquiry into the evolutionary sources of order and disorder*. NY: Delta Books.

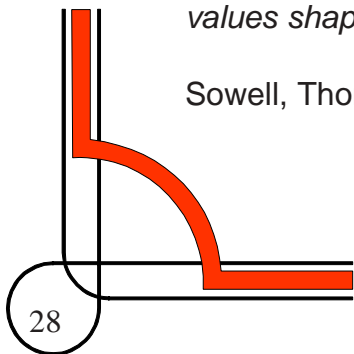
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**H**uman beings are spiritual as well as economic, political and social. From the beginning they have searched the heavens for answers and for understanding. Religion, myth, and spirituality all play vital shaping roles in culture. The questions that form the basis for religion include “Who am I, “ “Who made me,” “Where do I fit in the cosmos?” “ What is my purpose?” Most people have viewed the mysterious with a great sense of awe. The unexplainable, the terrifying, the tragic and the sacred each play a special role in the spiritual lives of a people.

### **Mythology**

Myths have long played a framing role in culture. Almost all cultures have some type of Creation Story that explains “how we came to be.” In addition, myths explain roles, relationships, expected behaviors, and the consequences of not behaving properly in a society. Myths can be sacred stories. This means that they represent the continuous search for answers. They are not necessarily factual in an historical or scientific sense – they cannot be tied to a particular date or place. However, because of the story quality of myths, they become a timeless means for transferring culture from one generation to the next. Many of the myths have “heros,” “everyman” characters or “tricksters” who represent the curious good and bad characteristics of human beings, archetypes of personality and individual goals and struggles. Myths serve to bring order to the human experience.

Myths set the stage for the culture. For some cultures each day is a reliving of the central mythology. Thus time is not represented by a linear path to the future, rather a return to the beginning of the myth and a repeat of its cycle. Sometimes, that cycle is as simple as the four seasons. Othertimes, it relates to a journey for redemption, or for recognition, or for accomplishment of a certain objective. People in some cultures live their lives from inside the myth. Thus everything they do becomes a reenactment of the central character’s challenge or dilemma. In such a society, events repeat themselves over and over each generation. Prophecy is an explanation of the future based upon an understanding of the dynamics and expectations of the mythology. It is also a way of providing a vision for change or for reminding people of their obligations.

In many cultures, there were individuals who understood the role and function of the myth and they functioned as the priests, or the guardians. These people interpreted the sacred. They established the rules of order and of the proper respect for all things. In time these rules, behaviors, and expressions of hope and relationship became the religion of the people. Some religions demanded

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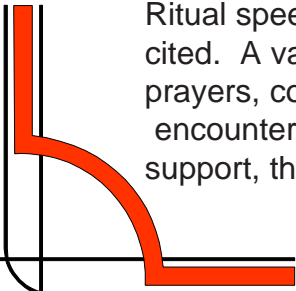
sacrifice to keep the world in order, some demanded war to keep the faith pure, some demanded obedience to a routine or a set of behaviors in order to maintain the balance between good and evil in the world. Thus, myths can be used to inspire, create conformity, control, or simply to provide hope.

It is important to note that even in today's technological world, myth continues to play an important role. It is a part of our political system, our entertainment, our architecture, and our social interaction. It even permeates the structure of the Internet, and frames how we speak about it: cyberworld. It is also important to note that we continue to create new myths that reflect our ideals and shape the images that we have of ourselves as a society.

### Religion

Religion is the expression of an individual's relationship with his or her creator and the cosmos. In addition, religion and its basis in the culture's mythology also defines the role and place of an individual in relation to the community as a whole. Some cultures do not see the individual as unique. People only matter in as far as they are a part of the community and can help to further the goals of that community. Other cultures see a unique value in each human being, and look at what that individual contributes, both positively and negatively to his or her social group. Beginning in the Renaissance (14<sup>th</sup> century) cultures in the Western European civilizations began to focus on the individual as unique and separate from the society as a whole. This perspective had a profound effect on religious institutions and the practice of religion in Europe.

Language is also derived from myth. All cultures have various levels of language: intimate for family interactions; informal for dialogue and exchanges among friends and peers; formal for economic and social exchange and for the expression of social order; and ritual for transmitting the sacred. Some cultures are so steeped in their religion, myth and the world of the sacred that the only effective language they have is that of ritual. This seems to be the case when Cortes met up with the Aztecs in 1510. The Aztec people and government was so steeped in its religion that it had only a ritual language, the language of ceremony and the sacred. Their written language was pictographs, which, while useful for remembering the stories, was not useful for expressing commands in the present moment. Winschuttle (1996) explains the function of ritual language in his discussion of how Cortes was able to conquer the Aztec peoples so quickly.



Ritual speech was regular in its forms and functions and always quoted or recited. A vast range of social circumstances were covered by ritual speech: prayers, court ceremonies, rites of passage ceremonies, departures and encounters.. When ritual speech becomes the principle vehicle of memory support, the society is dominated by its past rather than by its present (47).

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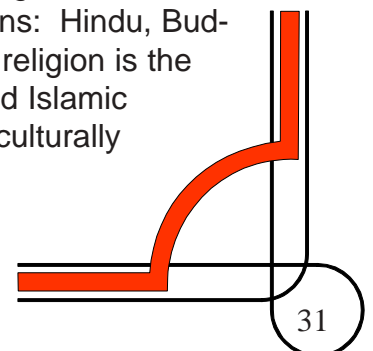
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Because of their frame of reference and their grounding in the prophecies and stories of their mythology, the Aztecs saw the Spanish as gods and their horses as “divine creatures” (Windschuttle 1996, 47). For the Aztecs, this belief was fatal. In terms of their strategy towards Cortes, the Aztecs were bound by the forms of their religion and mythology. The frame of reference for the Christian religion was not a cyclical reenactment of the past, but rather, a progression of the human spirit toward some future perfection. Thus, the ability to adapt to the environment and the formal, written language gave a significant competitive advantage for the Spanish. Unlike the Aztecs, Cortes, was able to adapt his strategy to the needs of the moment. Ritual was overcome by improvisation.

Religion is so all encompassing in a society that its symbols and rules permeate the art, music, architecture and literary expression of a culture. The great cathedrals of Europe, the paintings of the masters, the music of Bach, the literary masterpieces and the philosophical questions of a culture have all been framed by religion. In the west, that religion was primarily Christianity, expressed as Catholicism until the 16<sup>th</sup> century at which time, different groups of protestors created various forms of Protestantism. In the middle east in early times, the Greek and Roman religious experiences coexisted with the Hebrew religion, Judaism. The Roman Empire was basically tolerant toward other religions. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, a new form of religion, Islam, jostled with Christianity for supremacy. Both of these religions believed that theirs was the only way. Inevitably, this led to terrible wars, some of which continue in various forms today.

Religions serve as a basis of identify for a people. Religions also frame the political, economic, and social energy of a culture. To understand a people, it is important to explore and gain an understanding, as much as possible, of the role of myth, religion and spirituality in a culture. Religion is primary factor in distinguishing one culture from another: “It was religion that distinguished and united those who belonged to the group and marked them off from those outside the group, even if they lived in the same country and spoke the same language” (Monshipouri, 1998, 2)

In the United States, we have so many forms of religion that we have become a tolerant people. In fact, our country was founded upon the principle of religious tolerance. The United States does not have a government sponsored religion. Religious beliefs and philosophies however, provide defining characteristics of political, social, and economic behaviors. Thus, since those who founded the United States were followers of various forms of Christianity, the underlying assumptions about social structure, the role and place of the individual within the society and the framework for holding the society together come from Christian principles and philosophy. Throughout the rest of the world, religion provides a different frame of reference for civilizations: Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Confucian, Christian, Jewish. In many of these groups religion is the defining factor, no matter where the people live. Jewish, Christian, and Islamic peoples live in many different cultures, but are defined ethnically and culturally by their distinguishing practices.



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Some important articles and websites to consult include:

“Myth” [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

“Religious” [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

“Spirituality” [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

“Symbolism” [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

World Mythology [www.artsmia.org/mythology](http://www.artsmia.org/mythology)

The Book of Gods, Goddesses, and Heroes

[raven.cybercom.com/~grandpa/gdsindex.html](http://raven.cybercom.com/~grandpa/gdsindex.html) (no “www”)

(you might also explore the articles in the Britannica related to various religions)

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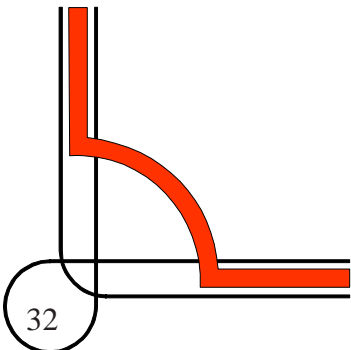
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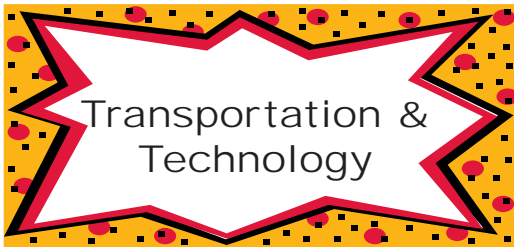
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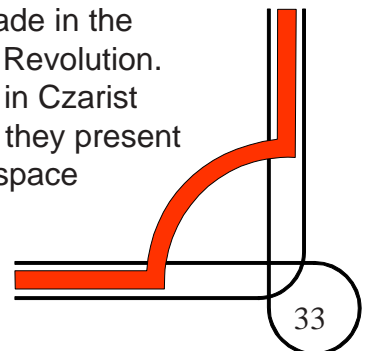


### Technology

The impact of technology in any time period is an essential aspect of a nation's or a region's history. Historians often overlook the incredible influence that technology has on social customs, commerce, political decisions, agriculture, manufacturing and industry, communications, transportation, art and architecture, medicine and the military. The story of technology is woven into the fabric of the culture, the climate, geography and social structure of people. It is also closely linked with the development of scientific thinking, philosophy and religious attitudes in various cultures. The questions that concern the historian upon approaching a nation, region, a time period or a particular culture include:

- What is the attitude toward innovation on the part of the government?
- In what way are the people in this society using technology?
- What impact has technology had in the social, intellectual, economic, and creative aspects of this society's behavior?
- What decisions, made by the government (or other social institutions), were influenced by the presence or absence of technological advances?
- What role did leaders (religious, political, intellectual and social) have on the opportunity for technology to flourish?
- What innovations were introduced but ignored or rejected? Why?
- What were the practical problems that were solved by technological innovations?
- In what way did the intellectual, religious or political climate foster or inhibit innovation and the development of science?
- What are the primary values that resist or encourage scientific exploration and technological innovation?

Four qualities must exist for technological innovation to develop in any society: a practical social need; the availability of resources to invest; the willingness of the broader society to support that investment; and the existence of an environment that cultivates and rewards innovation and intellectual curiosity. Each of these was present in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Great Britain, the United States, and Northern Europe, when enormous strides were made in the development of the tools and techniques that supported the Industrial Revolution. Except for the practical social needs, these qualities were not present in Czarist Russia (except perhaps under the reign of Peter the Great); nor were they present in the Soviet Union (except in the areas of military preparedness and space



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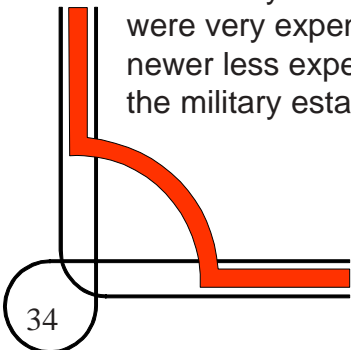
exploration). In many of the nations of the world, despite the existence of practical social needs, there are significant barriers to technology in the form of cultural values, political structures, and religion attitudes (Harrington and Huntington 2000). Thus, not all cultures value technology as a worthy objective. Very often values that support technology are tied closely with those that support economic and commercial development.

Practical social need refers to the “felt” need on the part of a society to solve some type of problem: eliminating small pox, bringing water into cities, improving weapons, moving large numbers of people across vast areas, sharing information quickly, understanding the creative forces of the universe and thus, man’s relationship to God, bringing sanitation and safety to the city, feeding large numbers of people, developing the tools for measuring and counting, creating structures to honor deities or emperors. Felt needs will reflect the values of the culture at any given time. The ancient Egyptians went to great lengths to develop technologies that would preserve bodies because of their religious beliefs. The Mesopotamian cultures brought technological advances to agriculture in their efforts to feed many people in an unpredictable environment. They also developed a complex system of mathematics to support measurement, surveying and commercial activity related to their agricultural system. Along with those innovations, they also developed methods of social control that supported the agricultural and economic structures of the times.

The Romans had a different set of “felt” needs. They had a huge empire to manage. Soldiers had to be transported and supplied, cities needed to be supplied, communications had to be precise and cut across many cultural barriers. Solving practical problems through engineering efforts became the hallmark of the contribution of the Roman Empire: paved roads, aqueducts, advances in building materials (cement that would harden under water), contributions to architecture (the development of the arch), and many more.

The understanding of disease in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century came about as the result of the frustration of many societies with the terrible epidemics of cholera, small pox, and with deaths of so many during the War Between the States, and the many European wars from lack of sanitation and from shock. While these advances in medicine were being made in the scientific and medical community, they didn’t receive large scale acceptance until after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The same is true with some of the military technology. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the military was using bronze canon as one of their major weapons. These cannons were very expensive to build and to maintain. The Krupp family in Germany designed a newer less expensive cast iron cannon that would not crack under pressure. However, the military establishment at the time, in 1849, rejected that cannon. It wasn’t until



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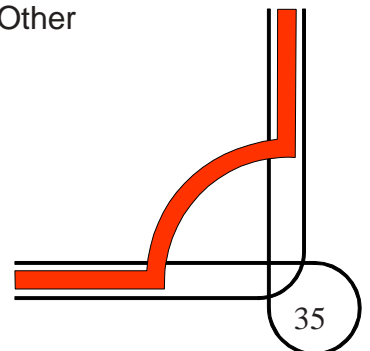
years later that they finally saw the benefits (Manchester 1968). Thus, while there was a felt need on the part of some people, those who made the decisions, did not share that need, thus, the innovation was stalled.

Sometimes, even though there is a significant felt need, the technology isn't able to support an idea. The steam engine is an example. The steam engine was developed early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and there were ideas for transportation systems that relied upon steam engines. However, because of the state of the art in the development of steel, it was not possible to construct a boiler that would support the heat and pressure required to turn steam power in to locomotive power. That required the development of a more refined quality of cast iron and steel (Manchester 1968). It wasn't until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that a variety of felt needs such as connecting the ends of a vast continent, moving grain, coal, cattle, ore, and people in a more efficient manner brought the steam locomotives, iron rails and land development systems into play to form the railroads.

In our time of continuing technological advancement, it is important to remember that "felt" need must be experienced, not only by the person who innovates, but also by the decision makers and investors of a particular time. Timing is everything!! Without the economic resources to pursue and develop an innovation it stays on the drawing board. Leonardo da Vinci designed airplanes and helicopters during the Renaissance, but it took until the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the timing to be right to bring together the need, the technology, and the resources to make these inventions reality.

We make jokes about the short sightedness of the corporate executives who didn't see the value of the copy machine, or the personal computer. But we also must remember that the values and preferences through which any person or society sees the world also helps to determine the need. The challenge of the historian is to understand the values, motivations, and conditions of any particular time, and integrate those into the way that technology is developed and implemented.

Economic, social and political resources must often be mobilized before technology can really take off. The Krupp family metallurgy business struggled for several generations before the Prussian government saw a need to invest in the manufacture of arms and thus poured resources into the company (Manchester 1968). Sometimes, the forces of religious and political institutions are so opposed to a scientific discovery or technological innovation that its promoters are persecuted, as in the case of Copernicus and Galileo. Other



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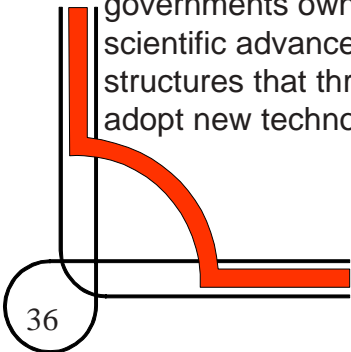
innovations, such as the stirrup or the lateen sail, create opportunities for political and religious leaders to build armies, discover new economic resources, and to expand their wealth and power.

Some technologies or tools generate new resources, such as the invention of banking, credit and insurance. These economic technologies created many of the resources that propelled the great age of discovery in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. Without these “tools of commerce” the risk of global exploration and the transportation of goods and people was too high. Advances in ship building and navigation also helped to mobilize the resources that encouraged more technological development.

The society also must be willing to support the application of its resources towards technological innovation and scientific exploration. In the late Middle Ages, the Church was so wary of the threat of technology to its own position, that it used its power of excommunication to threaten those who would introduce ideas that might challenge its position. The power of the Church and the influence of its values held many technological advances in check. It wasn't until the Protestant revolution and the impact of the Calvinists, Puritans and Dissenters that innovation began in earnest. The major reason for this was the difference in values. The Protestants saw that a person's lot in life could be changed. Their value system encouraged innovation, industry and change. Thus, in Northern Europe, England, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States, throughout the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century technological advances were more accepted and supported than in those regions where the religious values did not change.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century we have seen the challenges that Space Exploration has received. Public pressure for practical results, withdrawal of congressional financial support and pressure on the part of politicians all played an important role in the development or inhibition of space technology from 1940 until the present time. The attitude has changed from all out support during World War II and the Cold War, to begrudging support since the late 1980s. The public demands practical applications of space technology and is wary of expending the huge resources for current exploration and testing efforts.

A political, social, and religious environment that fosters and rewards intellectual curiosity is essential for innovation to thrive. A planned, centralized state, such as Czarist Russia, or the Soviet Union that followed it did not encourage innovation. A fundamentalist religious state like that in Iran does not encourage technological innovation. A state in continuous war, like Northern Ireland, or southeastern European states, do not have the intellectual “free time” to innovate. Nations in which governments own or control economic activity provide little incentive for innovators and scientific advancements. Social environments in which the past is revered, or political structures that thrive on maintaining the status quo will be much slower to encourage or adopt new technology. This doesn't mean that invention isn't pursued, it just means that



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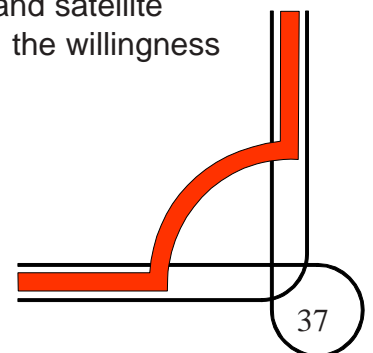
it isn't likely to be supported economically, socially or politically. It is the historian's job to determine how technology is viewed, encouraged or inhibited in any given time period or in any given society.

### Transportation

Closely related to technology is the impact of transportation (and its relation to communication) on the events of an historical period or a particular nation's behavior. The movement of goods, people, and raw materials from one place to another is an important catalyst for historical events. Countries that are landlocked want to get to the seaports. Waterways were for centuries the major means of transportation. In fact, it is only since the 1950s that the United States has had a system of highways that crisscross the continent. For the previous 100 years, railroads, river traffic and canals were the primary modes of transportation. Prior to that, it was horseback, wagon and foot power that moved goods and people.

Commercial transactions took place where transportation systems existed. Cities grew around seaports, where major rivers intersected, where rivers met the ocean, or where railroads could deliver or pick up raw materials or people. Canals were important in the later 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century because they connected rivers and enabled river traffic to reach the sea. All of these systems required innovations in technology. The system of locks in the canal systems in Northern Europe, and in the Panama Canal were technological marvels for their time. Thus, the development of commerce, economics, and even political power depends upon the development of transportation systems and the technology to support them.

The development of transportation and technology was dependent also upon the development of power sources. Harnessing the power of horses with padded horse collars, stirrups, and bridles enabled armored knights to ride into battle and enhanced transportation and agriculture. Using the forces of nature to grind grain (windmills), to power industry (waterwheels) and to cover vast oceans (developments of new types of sails), the use of steam to power industrial manufacturing and to power locomotives and ships, and the use of huge turbines to generate electricity were remarkable advancements in technology. The development of the internal combustion engine, and the eventual harnessing of nuclear energy were all significant technological advances that occurred over the course of 125 years!! The understanding of how electricity works and the ability to put it to use for communication (telegraph, telephone) and the understanding of the physics of sound and light contributed significant changes to society over the past 125 years. Consider for instance the inventions of the automobile, the television, movies, and satellite communications. All of these are possible because of the "felt" need, the willingness



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of the society to provide the resources and the economic incentives for the development of these technologies.

One of the remarkable changes in our world is the speed at which information can now be exchanged. When the United States was formed, messages traveled no faster than the speediest horse or the swiftest sailing ship. Now, information is almost instantly transmitted to any point in the world. The transportation of ideas can no longer be enclosed by physical walls like the Berlin Wall, or by psychological walls like the Iron Curtain. People now share ideas freely. The internet provides a medium for information dissemination, technological discussion and scientific advancement by providing a forum for discussion that was unconceivable in earlier times. Large quantities of data can be catalogued and stored, people in locations far from cities and transportation centers can communicate through the vast “world wide web.”

For countries struggling economically with the advancement into the “industrial world,” this new technology could provide the means to create new forms of economic development and commercial activity, political and social change that were unthinkable fifty years ago. For the historian, these are issues that are of significant importance.

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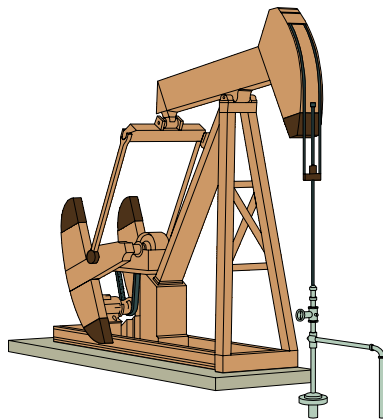
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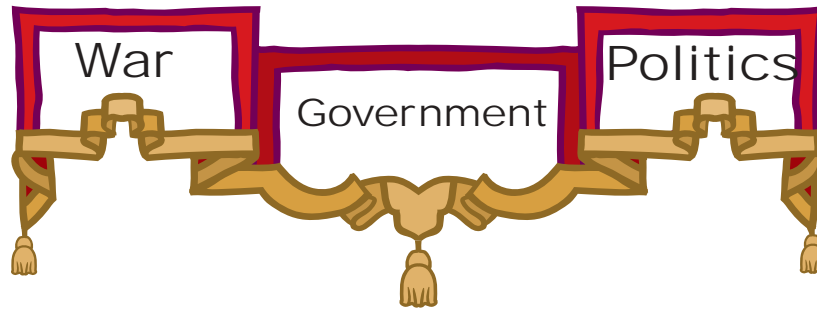
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## Seven Frames of History

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### **War**

No history class is ever complete without the appearance of at least one war! Every nation, every culture and every region has had its share of fighting and mayhem. The causes for wars vary as much as the people who start them. For some cultures such as the early Vikings, war was an economic endeavor. For the early Greeks and for the Romans, it was an opportunity to expand territory. For many of the emperors and kings, it was a way to amass wealth, acquire seaports or valuable natural resources. For some cultures, war was about imposing religious, social or political ideals. One of the interesting things about the study of wars is that the justifications or reasons for wars are always multi-layered. Rarely are the causes really the “official” ones that are recorded by the leaders and major players of the times. Sometimes the forces of change in the world converge and create a mindset, or a series of situations in which war seems to be the only way to address a problem.

There are a variety of ways to look at the study of wars in any culture. It is, however, important to look at the events, ideas and interpersonal situations (between leaders or governments) that led up to a war. Exploring strategies and tactics can be an interesting approach, and many historians really get involved in the day-to-day activities of the war and in the various types of technology being used, or the various decisions being made. From this perspective, war can be seen as the study of leadership and decision making under pressure. It can be used to explore the strengths and weaknesses of great (or not so great) people.

The study of war can also be seen as the exploration of the implementation of the “will” of a government, a nation, or a leader through the use of power, aggression, intimidation and force. Or it can be seen as the resistance of a people toward a government or nation through the use of power, aggression, intimidation and force. Resistance is usually seen as rebellion, or revolution. Underlying both of these are efforts to pursue an ideal, or protect what is seen as rights, values or a way of life. Looking at war through these lenses can tell us a lot about what is important to any particular culture.

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Wars are very expensive. Logistics, technology, manpower, supplies, and the mobilization of all the mechanisms of war from soldiers to spies, from public relations to strategy requires tremendous resources: money, time, energy, people, raw materials, food and clothing, ammunition, and technology. This money has to come from somewhere. Depending upon the form of the government, the reasons given for the war may be designed to gain sympathy from those who hold the purse strings: the nobility, the merchants, the bankers, or the congress. These interdependencies add interesting twists to the story of wars.

Getting people to sacrifice their lives is another challenge that those who would foster wars need to consider. Thus, visions, patriotism, national pride, tribalism, religious zeal or political zeal could all be engaged in some form to bring about the “will” of the people to support the “will” of the government, military or leaders who see war as an alternative.

As a student of history, the questions begin to form:

Who are the proponents of the War?

What do they hope to gain?

What are the social, economic, religious, political, or military outcomes?

What is there to lose?

How do egos play into the decision making?

What is the impact on the everyday lives of the people?

Who has the Power and who doesn't ?

What is the fate of the culture in relation to the outcomes of a particular war?

What is the impact of that war over the long run?

How did technology affect the implementation of the war?

How did the social, political or economic climate of the times foster or inhibit the war effort?

What were the fears of the people that drove them to support a war effort?

Some other questions that you might consider include:

What were the stated objectives of the war?

What other objectives (hidden agendas) might there have been?

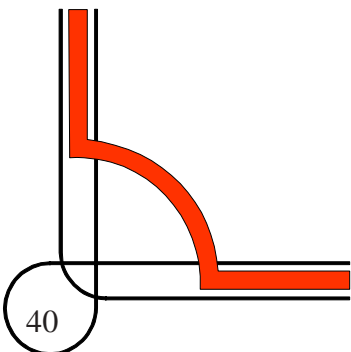
Who were the major players? What were their contributions? Failures?

In what way does geography, climate, current thinking, religion, economics, need for raw materials, need for wealth, power, prestige, set the stage for war

In what ways does human behavior alter or determine the course of war

In what ways do decisions made by leaders or powerful men alter the course of nations

In what ways is “war” rational — irrational?



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## Politics

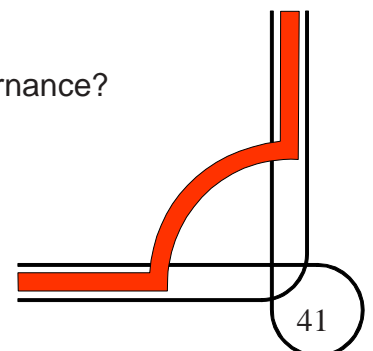
Politics is the study of power: who has it, who wants it, how it is acquired. Throughout history nations, peoples, governments and societies have been shaped and destroyed by the efforts of individuals or institutions to acquire and maintain power. The reason that power is so important is that if one has power, one can command the economic and social resources (i.e. labor). For some individuals, power itself is a visceral drive. Throughout history, empire building, consolidation of territories and the control of resources have been the drivers for war, and for the creation and dissolution of governments, and the establishment of political, intellectual and social movements. The “legality” of this power is also of utmost importance. Who is qualified to be king, or emperor? How is succession managed? How does the selection process work? Once acquiring power, how does one maintain it?

Another aspect of politics is “special interests.” Ideologies or images of the ideal drive much of what we consider to be politics today. However, in the days of Alexander the Great, Julius Ceasar, Henry the VIII, Peter the Great, and Napoleon, ideals were an important component of the vision that these individuals had for their reigns. Thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, St Thomas Aquinas, Francis Bacon, Martin Luther, Rousseau, Marx and Neitzsche all had visions of ideals that they thought would make a better life for people. The ability to communicate these ideals and then to inspire people to take action on those ideals shapes the direction of historical events. In order to understand a time period, a nation, or a people, it is important to explore what ideals they follow and what visions they try implement. It is also important to recognize the deep emotional attachment that people have to their ideals. Incredible human sacrifices are made in the name of ideals: the Crusades, civil wars, Stalinist purges, the Holocaust, the Irish “troubles,” the Mongol invasions, the world wars, Vietnam and the list continues.

Politics shapes the behavior of a nation and its people. The belief systems upon which these behaviors are built provides s the focus of study for many historians.

Questions historians ask include:

- Who are the major players? Who are those who desire power?
- What are the special interests, values, or goals of each of these groups or people?
- How do these ideals or goals impact the common people?
- How do these ideals, values or goals impact the relations between countries, governments or peoples?
- How are political ideals turned into reality?
- What are the characteristics of those who lead others?
- What is the long term effect of these ideals?
- In what way are political ideals translated into governments and governance?
- Who benefits? Who suffers? What is sacrificed?



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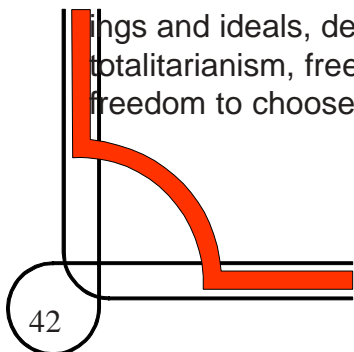
### Government

Political ideals and processes define a nation. What type of governments do people have? How much liberty do they have to choose their form of government? Who really controls the decision as to whom will govern? What do people in a society need to know and understand in order to wisely choose a governing process? Why do societies need governments at all? How are governments structured, what are their purpose and how do they acquire and implement their power? What are the ideals that influence the development of various forms of government? How do these governments play themselves out over time and under the many stresses that impact a society, including religious, sociological, economic, technological, environmental, and cultural forces? These are some of the questions that students of history ask in relation to the role of government in nations and cultures.

There are many forms of government, some of which are shaped by constitutions (which are declarations of the vision of an ideal), others which are established by brute force and dictatorial insistence upon obedience. Legitimacy of any form of government is a key issue. Some claim their “right” to govern as being from the Supernatural: God bestowed upon them the power to rule. Some claim their “right” to govern as being “from the people:” The people select and approve the government and its leader. Some claim their legitimacy from the cultural roots: the nation, the tribe or the ethnic group. Questions of legitimacy lead to war, to the rise and fall of leaders and families (dynasties), to intrigue and to unintended consequences for societies.

The study of politics, war and government explore the activities, beliefs, goals, and needs of empires, leagues, nation-states, confederacies, alliances, federations and international communities. Much of history is told through the stories of world and national leaders, diplomats and would be leaders who struggle to acquire, maintain and make their power holdings legitimate. The consequences of these efforts influence the lives and fortunes of multitudes of peoples.

Because of the efforts on the part of some to acquire and consolidate power, philosophers and other thinkers over the years have spent a great deal of efforts talking and writing about “human rights.” These are principles that the thinkers believe are inherent. Unfortunately, most of these “rights” exist only as long as those in power allow them to exist. When societies get fed up with the system in power and the trampling of their perceived “rights,” then rebellions, revolutions, civil wars and wars for independence follow. The story of Western Europe and the America’s is the story of the effort to gain and maintain political, economic and social freedom. But even the concept of freedom can have various meanings and ideals, depending upon the position that those in power take ( i.e. freedom from totalitarianism, freedom from want, freedom to prevent unrest, freedom from dissent, freedom to choose).



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To the average person in the street in the Western world, the government and political system is no more important than the DOS, Windows or OS operating system of their computer. It is simply taken for granted. That is, until something significant goes wrong. For those who have experienced significant oppression such as those in Latin American countries, the former Soviet block countries and many of the Eastern or Middle Eastern nations run by dictators and princes, government is a key element in the everyday environment. It is not simply operating in the background; it is a key pressure on the lives of individuals in their everyday activities.

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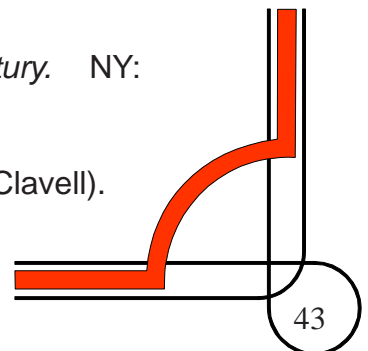
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A growing number of scholars, journalists, politicians, and development practitioners are focusing on the role of cultural values and attitudes as facilitators of, or obstacles to, progress.

Harrison and Huntington (2000, xxi)

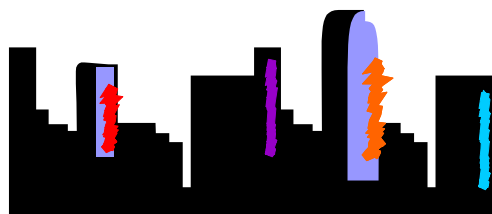
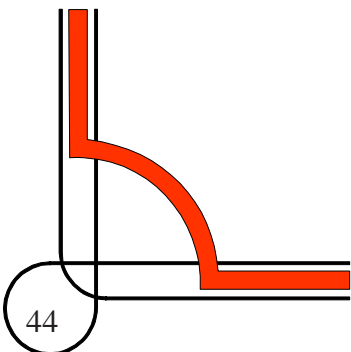
Ronald Inglehart, who coordinates the World Values Survey, argued that there is a powerful link between cultural values and the political—and economic—performance of nations.

Harrison and Huntington (2000, xxii)

**E**conomics looks at how people produce and distribute goods and services. There are different types of economic systems: traditional, command, and free market. Each culture and each country has its own preference for how it engages in commerce and how its economy is structured. In a traditional economy, what can be grown on the land, or easily relatively easily acquired as natural resources (coal, rubber, whale oil), or simply manufactured goods (shoes, farm tools,) are bartered, traded or bought and sold. People try to be as self sufficient as possible. The country may export and import in order to compensate for what they cannot produce by themselves. For the most part, a traditional economy is one based upon subsistence. Just enough is grown or made to take care of the immediate needs. There are no extras. There are few material goods. People live in very small communities and help each other in hard times.

In societies with traditional economies, land is often held by one group of people and worked by another. Many of the revolutions and “peasant uprisings” in the historical past in Europe and in the recent past in China, Central and South American were about the redistribution of land. The goal of many of the communist revolutions was to redistribute income and land to make it more equitable for all the people. The problem was that the government ended up controlling not only the land, but the income and the means of production as well.

Work in a traditional economy is a part of life and of living. It is very much the same in any agricultural community. Much depends upon the weather and the climate. There are disastrous times caused by floods and drought and there are “getting by” times, when the



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crops come in or when people want the cobblers' shoes. In western societies, this type of traditional economy gave rise to the guild system in which apprentices learned a specific trade and mastered it. Craftsmanship, cottage industries, farming, and local entrepreneurship worked fairly well. In some ways the new electronic commercial environment can foster some of the opportunities for individual entrepreneurship just by virtue of the advertising capabilities available. However, for this to be successful, there must be a free market.

A free market is one in which customers ask for services or goods and someone produces them for a price. In addition, those who produced goods and services must also be aware of the needs and expectations of their customers. In a free market, customers have many choices and have the option to go somewhere else if they are dissatisfied with a product. Buying and selling are the norm. Credit, banking systems, loans, venture capital, and a myriad of other economic "tools" are essential for this type of economic system. For instance, people in Pakistan who want to purchase a store or even purchase some land for farming, must have the cash up front. There is no system of credit available. The lack of this common tool prevents people from bettering themselves. In India, some creative entrepreneurs have tried to overcome the lack of credit problem by creating local community "banks" and "credit resources" to help people move from the traditional subsistence economic system to a more robust exchange of goods and services.

Of course free market economies are also challenging in that there are huge corporations with millions of stockholders who demand a reasonable return on their investments. The investment of capital in a company is really a form of speculation. An individual takes a risk by giving money (capital) to an enterprise. If the company is successful this person receives a dividend (interest) on his investment as a return. If the company is not successful, this person loses what he has invested. All of this assumes that there are people who have sufficient "discretionary" cash to make those investments. In a traditional economy few people have "cash."

A free market is "free" because "theoretically" there is nobody governing what will be produced or what services will be provided. In addition, a free market generally assumes that prices are set by the willingness to pay. In the United States we have a mixed economic system. The government sets "price controls" on some things, and influences the way that companies do business. Consider the anti-trust suit against Microsoft, or the suits against the tobacco industry, or the safety requirements placed upon automobile manufacturers, gun manufacturers, and many other industries. A free market that was "pure" would

...systems of accounting and financial reporting that are being used today date back more than 500 years. These systems are not only part of the old economy, they're part of the old, old economy. Luca Pacioli, an Italian mathematician who lived in Venice in the 1400s, developed double-entry bookkeeping in order to offer businesspeople a simple method for keeping track of their transactions — and, even more important, for making sense of the way that they did business

Baruch Lev <http://www.fastcompany.com/online/31/lev.html>

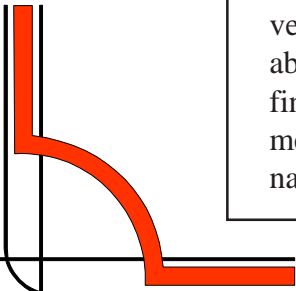
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not have these controls. An economy that is totally controlled by the government is called a “command” economy. For the most part, command economies are part of totalitarian states—governments that control nearly every aspect of an individual’s life.

In a command economy, decisions about what will be grown and how much, what will be manufactured and how much are made by the government through a central planning agency. In China for instance, the tourist agencies are assigned a number of tourists each year that they are responsible for showing the appropriate sites. There is no room for entrepreneurship. Those who “run” the bus service or the food service, simply wait for the government to rotate to them and they then respond. There is no sense of creating a customer “base” nor is there the need to examine “customer service.” The customers will be assigned no matter what. The same was true in the Soviet Union under their command economy. A series of five year plans were designed by the government planning commissions. They told the factories what and how much would be produced. So “gray tennis shoes” (thousands of them were made). And those were sold in the marketplace. If people wanted Nikes or Adidas tennis shoes, they bought them on the black market. There was no choice for the consumer. Command economies in the last 15 years have proven to be mostly ineffective. The joke in the USSR was said to be “ We pretend to work, and they pretend to pay us.” Again, there is no incentive to produce, to be creative, to innovate or to solve problems. Work, rather than being a means to express one’s self or develop skills and competence becomes a way to spend one’s time.

For Americans used to currency, insurance, a credit card, a bank, the stock market, and the many choices for food, goods and services, it may be hard to realize the significance of these economic structures. For instance, if there was no such thing as contract law, no one would honor a contract. If a country did not operate under the “rule of law” then there would be no assurance that anything you did in terms of negotiation or commitment would be honored! If there was no insurance, a major fire could wipe out a business in an hour. There would be no rebuilding.

The study of economics and commerce is really the study of human behavior. In particular the role of choice, self-interest, and risk taking are evaluated. There are many questions that one might consider in thinking about how an economic system and a commercial enterprise works. These questions are intimately tied in with the culture of a people. Their



In 1776 when Adam Smith wrote *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, the prevailing wisdom was that a nation’s wealth consisted of its gold and silver. This “mercantilist” approach is very different from today’s notion that a nation’s wealth consists of its ability to buy and sell both tangible products, real estate, and intangible financial and knowledge assets! Gross National Product (GNP) is a measure of the goods and services exchanged over the open market. A nation’s economic development level is measured by this statistic.

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expectations, assumptions about the relationship of people to land, to the means of production, to how goods and services are exchanged are a vital part of the cultural environment.

Consider the following questions:

What makes countries prosperous?

Why do some countries have significant commercial activity and others almost none?

How do people exchange goods and services?

How do they acquire resources they do not have in their own countries?

How does the economic behavior of individuals impact the culture of a people?

How does a society organize to provision itself with goods and services?

Why kinds of economic systems do cultures employ to accomplish this?

How do currency, exchange behaviors and risk patterns impact a culture's success?

In what way do economic interests influence political decisions?

What does economic growth and development mean?

What is gross national product?

Why do some cultures take grand risks for exploration and adventure and others stay close to home?

Why have some cultures taken advantage of the plentiful natural resources available to them, and others simply remain unaware of the opportunities they have?

Why do some cultures go out of their way to exploit the natural resources and labor potential of other peoples, and some barely take advantage of their own potential?

Why are some cities and countries noted for their commercial transactions?

What is the relationship between culture, geography, economics, and commerce?

How do empires, wars, and politics impact economics and commerce?

What role do cultural values, colonization, global market place and international trade treaties play in creating wealth, poverty, economic prosperity or despair in a culture?

How do politics and economics (such as land reform) impact the life and culture of a people?

These are some of the questions that frame an economic perspective of a people.

How do countries become industrialized?

What does it take to create a manufacturing economy?

What is the difference between an agrarian and an industrial economy?

What is a post-industrial economy?

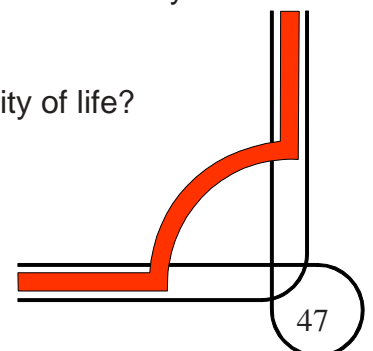
In what way might a geographical or political boundary impact the economic opportunities of a country?

How do demographics influence economic development?

What role do population density, education, and cultural values play in the economy of a nation?

Why is "ownership of the means of production" an important concept?

How do people harness their labor and resources to enhance their quality of life?



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How do governments tax their citizens?

These are just some of the questions that the study of economics and commerce in history would bring to mind. There are significant connections between economics, commerce, exploration, invention, war, colonization and the behavior of one culture in relation to another. The dynamics among all these elements are constantly changing, shifting and realigning. Decisions are made by governments or companies or individuals that have sweeping impacts in the lives of everyday people. The more that we become aware of the economic realities of a society, the better able we are to make decisions that impact our own lives.

There are several issues that guide the exploration of the economic and commercial frame:

- Behavior and Choice as a fundamental principle of economics
- Functions of Economic systems
- Types of economic systems
- Distribution and production of Goods and Services
- Availability and exploitation of natural resources
- Mobilization and coordination of human resources
- Competition and cooperation
- Self-interest and the “commons”
- Profit, risk taking and the social good
- Interdependence of political decision-making and economic interests
- Impact of cultural values on economics and commerce

These themes can be used as guides for asking questions, for noticing patterns and relationships. They can also direct your inquiry into the “nature” of a society. There are also many resources that can be used to begin to understand the importance of economics in various countries.

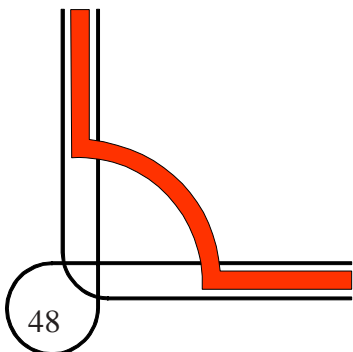
Some resources to help you get a “big picture” point of view include:

“economic systems” in [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

“pricing” in [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

Some resources from the McKay book:

Pps 490-525; 591-596; 620-645; 663-673; 698-713; 746-775; 833-835; 840-875; 1118-1143



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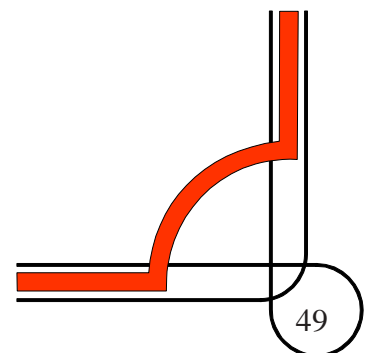
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