



# How Historians Know What Happened in the Past

**KS2 HISTORY** Ages 9-12 🕒 3 min read

## Historians are History Detectives

**Historians** are like detectives hunting for clues about the past. They can't travel back in time, so instead they study **evidence** left behind. This evidence comes from many different sources that help them build a picture of what life was like hundreds or thousands of years ago.

Think of it like solving a puzzle. You don't have the picture on the box, but you piece together the clues until the full story emerges.

## Written Records Tell Stories

One of the most important clues is **written evidence**. This includes letters, diaries, newspapers, official documents, and books written by people who lived through historical events. When we read what someone actually wrote down, we get their perspective on what happened. **Ancient texts** like the writings of **Roman historians** or medieval chronicles help us understand how people thought and what they valued.

## Objects and Artefacts Reveal Secrets

Historians also study **artefacts**—objects made or used by people in the past. Pottery, tools, weapons, jewellery, and clothing all tell stories. By examining these items, historians can learn what materials people used, how skilled they were, and what their daily lives looked like. The age of an object can be measured using **carbon dating**, a scientific method that reveals how old something is.

Think of it like finding your grandmother's old photo album. The pictures, dates, and handwritten notes tell you what she did and who mattered to her.

## Archaeology Digs Up the Truth

**Archaeologists** are historians who dig into the ground to uncover buried sites and hidden treasures. By carefully excavating ancient cities, tombs, and settlements, they

find artefacts, bones, and buildings that reveal how people lived. Every layer of earth is like a page in a history book—the deeper you dig, the further back in time you go.

## **Pictures, Maps, and Physical Evidence**

Historians also use **paintings, photographs, maps, and buildings** that have survived. Old buildings show us architectural styles and engineering skills. Paintings and artwork reveal what people looked like, what they wore, and what they enjoyed. Even **bones and remains** from archaeological sites help scientists understand diseases, diet, and life expectancy in the past.

By combining all these different types of evidence—written records, objects, buildings, and scientific testing—historians piece together a detailed and fascinating picture of human history.