Exercise A: Reading

Time and Timelines

Historians have to think in blocks of 10, 100 or even 1000 years when studying and recording past events. To do this, they use specific ways to measure and divide up time. In the modern Christian calendar (the Gregorian calendar); time is divided into two periods – before and after the birth of Christ. To show that a year falls after the birth of Christ, the letters AD are put in front of it. These letters are short for ‘Anno Domini’, meaning ‘in the year of our Lord’. To show that a year falls before the birth of Christ, the letters BC (before Christ) are put after it. Some historians prefer to use the letters BCE (before the Common Era) instead of BC, and CE (Common Era) instead of AD.

Other religions use different calendars. The Jewish and Islamic systems record time differently. According to the Jewish calendar; time started in the year that corresponds to the year 3761 BC (or BCE). So AD 2001 would be the year 5762 under the Jewish system. The Islamic system has a start date that corresponds to the year AD 622. Its year has less than 365 days, so a direct match with a date in the Christian system is not so easy to calculate. The year AD 2001 corresponds to the year 1422 under the Islamic system.

Time is broken up into periods. One thousand years is called a millennium, 100 years is called a century and 10 years is called a decade. The first 100 years after the birth of Christ is called the first century AD; and the first 100 years before, the first century BC. The next 100 years either way is called the second century.

Historians often divide human history into four main periods and several minor periods. The four major periods are:

- **Prehistory** – (before written records) up to about 3000 BC includes the Palaeolithic (Stone age) and Neolithic (Copper Age) periods,
- **Ancient History** – from about 3000 BC until AD 476 (when the Roman Empire was overthrown),
- **Medieval History** – from AD 476 until around AD 1500 (when the Spanish discovered the Americas)
- **Modern History** – from around AD 1500 until now.

The above dates apply to Western Civilisation. In non-western societies (e.g. Aboriginal Australian, Chinese, Mayan, etc.) these dates and names are not very useful. For example, the civilisation of the Mayans (a Central American civilisation), though ancient, was still at its peak around AD 800.

A timeline is a useful way to show the order of past events. It may span thousands of years or cover a very short period. To draw a timeline, the bar or line is divided evenly into equal blocks of time (often centuries or decades). Key dates and brief descriptions of events are marked on it. Sometimes dates are approximate in this case, they are preceded by the letter c, which is a short way of saying circa, the Latin word for ‘around’. So ‘circa 2000 AD’ (c.2000 AD) means ‘around the year 2000 AD’.
Exercise B: Comprehension questions

1. According to the article, what calendar do we base our time on in Australia? ______________________________

2. What do the following terms mean?
   i. BC ______________________________
   ii. BCE ______________________________
   iii. AD ______________________________
   iv. CE ______________________________

3. Why would trying to match a date between the Christian and Islamic calendars be difficult?
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

4. What would the following years correspond to using the Jewish calendar system?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian Calendar</th>
<th>Jewish Calendar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>396 BC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450 BCE</td>
<td>1261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750 CE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Match the following words with the correct definition.

- **Ancient history**
  - Before written records

- **Anno Domini**
  - 100 years

- **Century**
  - Latin for around

- **Circa**
  - 10 years

- **Decade**
  - In the year of our Lord

- **Millennium**
  - A diagram showing events and time periods

- **Prehistory**
  - From the start of written history to the fall of Rome

- **Timeline**
  - 1000 years
Exercise C: Cloze exercise

The concept of time
can represent events that have happened in past centuries on a
__timeline__. A timeline is a good way to help us get history into perspective. It shows events from
the past in a clear __chronological__ order — that is, from the earliest to the latest event.

Timelines are not meant to show a lot of __detail__, and they don’t explain why
certain events happened. However, they are useful in helping us to picture in our minds the order of
historical events.

Sometimes things that happened __historical__ of years ago cannot be precisely dated. In
these cases an __approximate__ date is used. For example, writing began approximately 3000 years BC
(__3000 BC__).

History records things that happened many hundreds and thousands of years ago. For convenience,
time can be divided into __periods__ of 100 years (called __chronological periods__), or 10 years (called
__decades__). Dividing years into centuries and decades can be confusing. Although most people
celebrated the beginning of the twenty-first century on midnight 1999/2000, the twenty-first century does

Source: Jacaranda SOSE 1, 2nd Ed., 2000.

Word Bank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>circa</th>
<th>historical</th>
<th>centuries</th>
<th>chronological</th>
<th>periods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>timeline</td>
<td>thousands</td>
<td>Historians</td>
<td>decades</td>
<td>approximate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exercise D: Cross Curricular

Using the information from the article, draw a timeline of your day. Make sure you divide the line into
twelve equal parts to represent the hours of the day. Add and label important events from the day.