

WHAT IS HISTORY?

MEANING, ORIGIN, DEFINITIONS,
NATURE, IMPORTANCE AND
SOURCES OF HISTORY



Meaning
of History



Origin &
Definitions



Nature &
Importance



Sources of
History



Primary &
Secondary
Sources



Exam
Facts

ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS FOR UPSC, PCS, SSC & OTHER
COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS

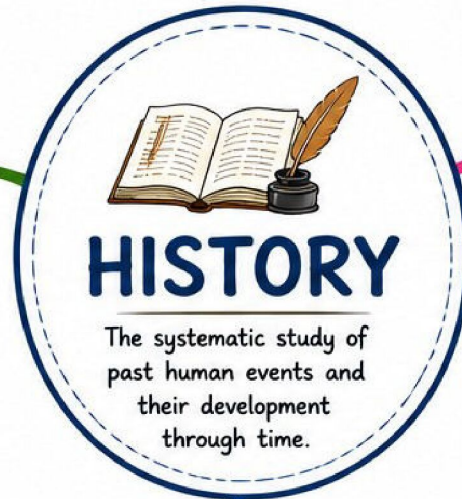


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WHAT IS HISTORY?

MEANING, ORIGIN AND DEFINITIONS



1. MEANING

- History is the systematic study and interpretation of past human events based on evidence.
- It is not a collection of stories or dates, but an analysis of causes, effects and relationships between events.
- It helps us understand the present and plan for the future.
- It records the achievements, struggles, ideas, culture and civilization of humanity.
- It is both a science (based on evidence) and an art (presentation of facts in meaningful way).

2. ORIGIN OF THE WORD "HISTORY"

- The word "History" is derived from the Greek word "Historia".
- "Historia" means Inquiry, Investigation or Learning through Research.
- Greek historian Herodotus wrote "The Histories".
- Herodotus is known as the "Father of History".
- Later, Thucydides introduced a scientific and analytical approach to history writing. He is known as the "Father of Scientific History".

3. DEFINITIONS OF HISTORY

- Herodotus**
"History is the record of human events."
- Thucydides**
"History should be based on facts and evidence, not on myths or legends."
- E. H. Carr**
"History is an unending dialogue between the past and the present."
- R. G. Collingwood**
"History is the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's mind."
- Lord Acton**
"History is the unfolding story of human freedom."
- Arnold J. Toynbee**
"History is the study of the rise and fall of civilizations."
- Jawaharlal Nehru**
"History helps us understand the journey of humanity and the evolution of civilizations."

In simple words: History is the systematic, evidence-based study of the past to understand human development and its impact on the present.

NATURE OF HISTORY

Key Characteristics of History as a Discipline

NATURE OF HISTORY

History is a unique discipline with its own characteristics and approach.

1. EVIDENCE-BASED STUDY

- History is based on authentic and reliable evidence.
- Facts are collected from various sources like inscriptions, manuscripts, coins, monuments, etc.
- Evidence is critically examined, verified and interpreted.
- It rejects myths, legends and unfounded stories.

7. OBJECTIVE YET INTERPRETATIVE

- History aims to be objective by using facts and evidence.
- But complete objectivity is not always possible.
- Interpretation of events may vary from historian to historian.

6. EXPLAINS CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

- History explains why certain changes occurred in society.
- It also shows why some traditions and institutions continued for long.
- It helps us understand causes, consequences and process of development.
- It connects the past with the present.

REMEMBER

History is not just the study of the past, but a guide to understand the present and shape the future.

2. HUMAN-CENTRIC STUDY

- History mainly studies human beings and their activities.
- It includes their society, culture, politics, economy, religion, ideas and achievements.
- The progress of civilizations is the focus of history.
- It deals with the past life of individuals and communities.

3. SCIENCE AND ART

- It is a science because it follows systematic methods of collecting and verifying evidence.
- It is an art because it presents facts in an organized, meaningful and interesting manner.

4. DYNAMIC AND CHANGEABLE

- New discoveries and research constantly bring changes in our understanding of the past.
- History is not static; it evolves with new evidence.
- Interpretations may change over time.

5. INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE

History is closely related to many other disciplines, such as:



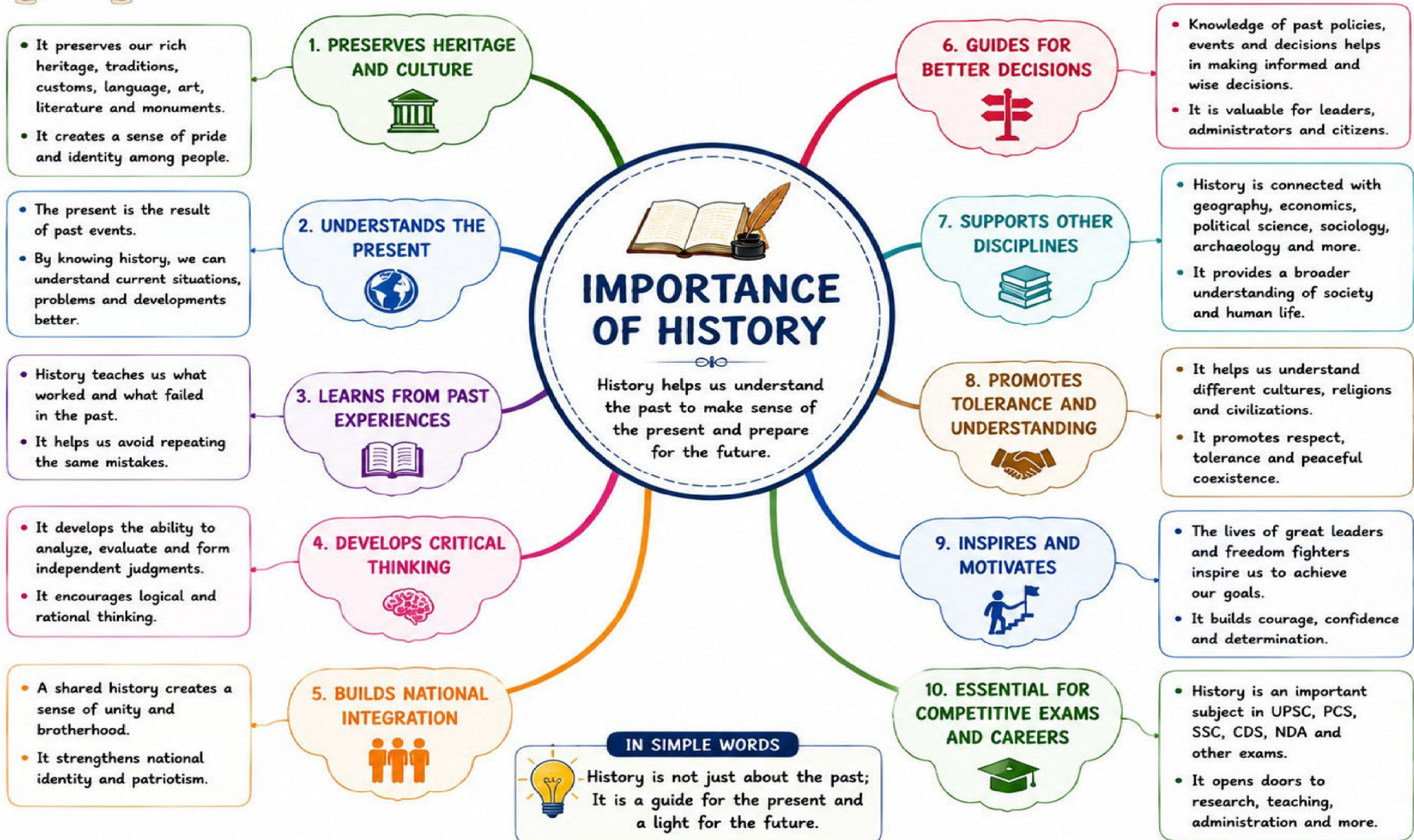
KEY TAKEAWAY

History is an evidence-based, human-centric, dynamic and interdisciplinary discipline that explains the story of humanity over time.



IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY

Why Study the Past?





SOURCES OF HISTORY

SOURCES OF HISTORY
The materials and records from which historians reconstruct the past.

1. LITERARY SOURCES

- (A) Religious Literature
 - Vedas, Upanishads
 - Ramayana, Mahabharata
 - Puranas
 - Buddhist Tripitaka
 - Jain Agamas
- (B) Secular Literature
 - Arthashastra
 - Rajatarangini
 - Sangam Literature
 - Court Chronicles
 - Biographies
 - Administrative Records
- (C) Foreign Accounts
 - Megasthenes (Indica)
 - Faxian (Fa-Hien)
 - Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang)
 - Al-Biruni
 - Ibn Battuta, etc.

Provide written information about political, social, economic, religious and cultural life of the people.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES



- Monuments (Temples, Forts, Palaces, Stupas, Mosques)
- Sculptures and Statues
- Tools and Weapons
- Pottery and Terracotta Objects
- Seals and Sealings
- Ornaments and Utensils
- Cave Paintings and Rock Art
- Remains of Cities and Settlements

Provide material remains which help in understanding the life, art, architecture, technology and culture of the past.

4. NUMISMATIC SOURCES



- Coins (Gold, Silver, Copper, Punch-marked)
- Medals, Tokens, Seals
- Coin Hoards

Coins provide information about rulers, economy, trade, religion, art, language, administration and chronology.

6. ARCHIVAL SOURCES



- Government Records and Reports
- Official Correspondence
- Revenue Records
- Diaries and Letters
- Newspapers and Periodicals
- Maps and Documents

Official records preserved in archives provide valuable and authentic information about the past.

8. OTHER SOURCES



- Anthropological Evidence (Customs, Traditions)
- Geological and Environmental Evidence
- Scientific Data (Radiocarbon Dating, Dendrochronology, etc.)

Scientific and social studies provide supplementary information about the past.

3. EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES



- Rock Inscriptions
- Pillar Inscriptions
- Temple Inscriptions
- Copper Plate Inscriptions
- Stone Slab Inscriptions

Inscriptions contain information about kings, administration, land grants, taxes, wars, religion, and important events.

5. ORAL SOURCES



- Folk Tales
- Ballads and Songs
- Legends and Myths
- Proverbs and Sayings
- Oral Traditions
- Community Memories

Passed from generation to generation. Useful in understanding social beliefs, culture and local history.

7. VISUAL SOURCES



- Paintings, Murals, Frescoes
- Photographs
- Maps and Plans
- Drawings and Illustrations
- Manuscript Miniatures

Help in understanding art, culture, architecture, dress, lifestyle and environment of the past.

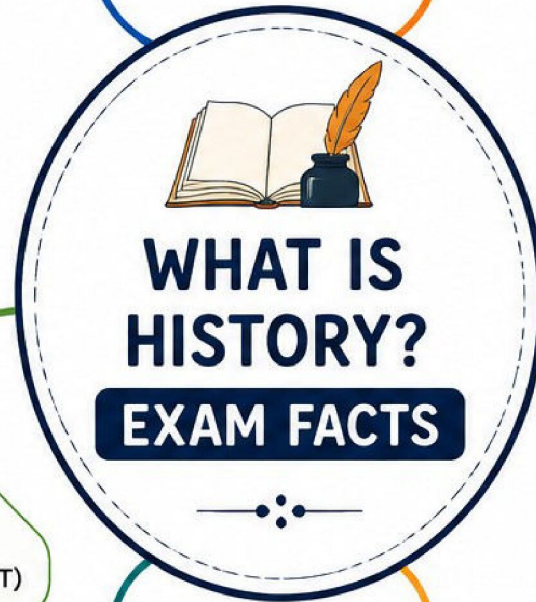
CLASSIFICATION OF SOURCES

(A) PRIMARY SOURCES
Original records and materials created during the period.
Examples: Inscriptions, Coins, Manuscripts, Monuments, Letters, Diaries, Archaeological Remains, Official Records.

(B) SECONDARY SOURCES
Interpretations and writings based on primary sources.
Examples: History Books, Research Papers, Biographies, Articles, Encyclopedias, Commentaries.

REMEMBER
Sources are the foundation of history. Without sources, there is no history!

KEY POINT
No single source can give complete history. Historians use multiple sources, verify them critically, and then write history.



1. IMPORTANT NAMES RELATED TO QUESTIONS



- Herodotus – Father of History
- Thucydides – Scientific History
- E. H. Carr – History is an unending dialogue
- R. G. Collingwood – Re-enactment of past
- Jawaharlal Nehru – Study of past for future

2. SOURCES ASKED IN EXAMS



- Literary Sources – Books, Inscriptions, Manuscripts, Accounts
- Archaeological Sources – Tools, Pottery, Monuments, Remains
- Epigraphical Sources – Inscriptions
- Numismatic Sources – Coins
- Oral Traditions (sometimes asked)

6. TRUE / FALSE (FACT EXAMPLES)



- Herodotus is Father of History. (T)
- History is based on imagination. (F)
- Thucydides wrote scientific history. (T)
- History is only a science, not an art. (F)
- Jawaharlal Nehru said history helps us understand the past and plan for the future. (T)

3. COMMON ONE-WORD / FILL IN THE BLANKS



- Father of History – Herodotus
- Scientific History – Thucydides
- History is an unending dialogue – E. H. Carr
- Re-enactment of past – R. G. Collingwood
- Study of past for future – Jawaharlal Nehru
- Father of Scientific History – Thucydides
- Helps to understand present – History

5. MATCH THE FOLLOWING (FACT EXAMPLES)



- Herodotus – Father of History
- Thucydides – Scientific History
- E. H. Carr – Unending dialogue
- R. G. Collingwood – Re-enactment
- Jawaharlal Nehru – Study of past for future

4. IMPORTANT FACTS ASKED

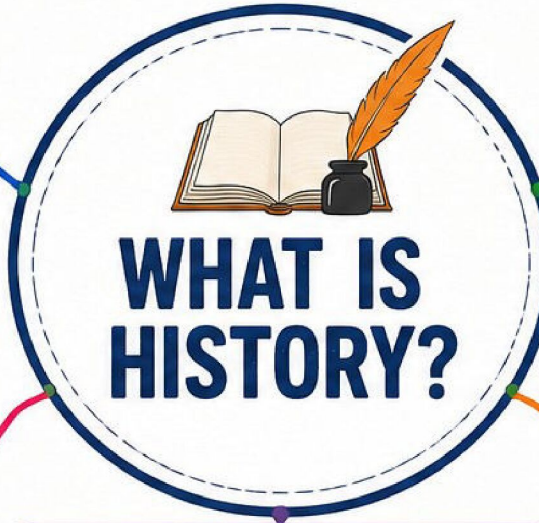


- History is the study of past human events.
- It is based on evidence.
- It is both a science and an art.
- Herodotus is “Father of History”.
- History helps us understand the present and plan the future.



WHAT IS HISTORY?


MCQs FOR EXAMS



1 Who is known as the “Father of History”?

- A. Thucydides
- B. Herodotus
- C. E. H. Carr
- D. R. G. Collingwood


Answer: B. Herodotus

 **Explanation:** Herodotus is called the “Father of History” as he wrote ‘Histories’, the first systematic account of past events.

2 The word ‘History’ is derived from the Greek word:

- A. Historian
- B. Historia
- C. Historical
- D. Historicus


Answer: B. Historia

 **Explanation:** ‘Historia’ is a Greek word which means ‘inquiry’ or ‘investigation’.

3 Who is known as the “Father of Scientific History”?

- A. Herodotus
- B. Thucydides
- C. E. H. Carr
- D. R. G. Collingwood


Answer: B. Thucydides

 **Explanation:** Thucydides is regarded as the Father of Scientific History for his critical, evidence-based approach.

4 History is the study of:

- A. Future events
- B. Present events
- C. Past human events
- D. Imaginary events


Answer: C. Past human events

 **Explanation:** History deals with the study and interpretation of past human events.

5 Who said, “History is an unending dialogue between the past and the present”?

- A. Herodotus
- B. Thucydides
- C. E. H. Carr
- D. R. G. Collingwood

Answer: C. E. H. Carr

 **Explanation:** E. H. Carr believed that history is a continuous interaction between past and present.



EXAM TIP: Most questions in exams are asked from – Historians, Definitions, Sources, Nature and Importance of History.



FOCUS AREAS: Meanings • Sources • Historians
Nature • Importance • Key facts



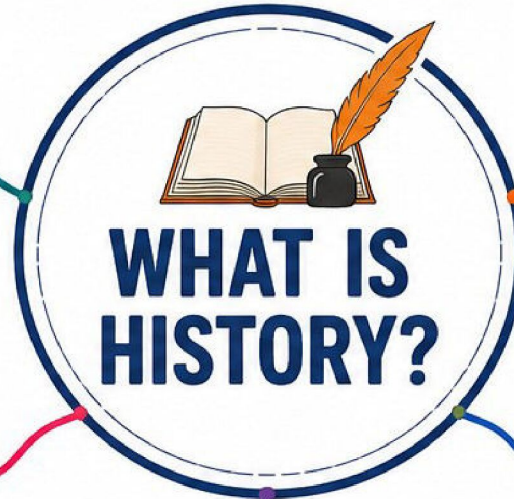
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MCQs FOR EXAMS



6 Who wrote "The History of the Peloponnesian War"?

- A. Herodotus
- B. Thucydides
- C. Polybius
- D. Livy


Answer: B. Thucydides

 **Explanation:** Thucydides wrote "The History of the Peloponnesian War" based on his own observations and critical analysis.

7 Which of the following is an Archaeological Source?

- A. Manuscripts
- B. Coins
- C. Inscriptions
- D. Oral Traditions


Answer: B. Coins

 **Explanation:** Coins are material remains of the past and are an important archaeological source of history.

8 Which of the following is a Literary Source of History?

- A. Tools
- B. Pottery
- C. Inscriptions
- D. Books


Answer: D. Books

 **Explanation:** Books are written records of the past and come under Literary Sources of History.

9 Which of the following is a Numismatic Source?

- A. Manuscripts
- B. Coins
- C. Monuments
- D. Inscriptions


Answer: B. Coins

 **Explanation:** The study of coins is called Numismatics, which is a branch of archaeological sources.

10 Who believed that history helps us understand the past and plan the future?

- A. Herodotus
- B. E. H. Carr
- C. Thucydides
- D. R. G. Collingwood

Answer: B. E. H. Carr

 **Explanation:** E. H. Carr believed that history is a continuous interaction between the past and the present and helps in planning the future.



EXAM TIP: Learn key historians, their works, and types of sources. This is a high scoring area in all competitive exams!



FOCUS AREAS: Historians • Sources • Definitions
Nature • Importance • Key Facts



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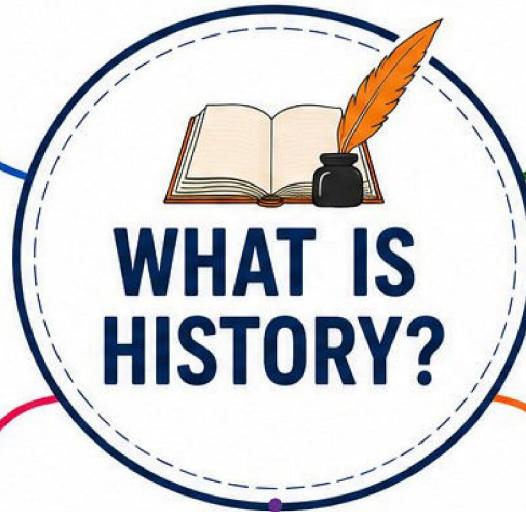
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MCQs FOR EXAMS



11 Which of the following is a Primary Source of History?

- A. Textbook
- B. Newspaper report
- C. Archaeological remains
- D. Historical novel


Answer: C. Archaeological remains

 **Explanation:** Archaeological remains are direct evidence of the past and are considered Primary Sources of History.

12 Who emphasized that history is a science and not an art?

- A. R. G. Collingwood
- B. E. H. Carr
- C. Herodotus
- D. Thucydides


Answer: B. E. H. Carr

 **Explanation:** E. H. Carr in his book 'What is History?' stated that history is a science, not an art.

13 What type of evidence is provided by inscriptions?

- A. Literary evidence
- B. Archaeological evidence
- C. Epigraphical evidence
- D. Numismatic evidence


Answer: C. Epigraphical evidence

 **Explanation:** Inscriptions are written on hard surfaces like rocks, pillars, etc., and provide Epigraphical evidence.

14 Which of the following is NOT an Archaeological Source?

- A. Coins
- B. Pottery
- C. Manuscripts
- D. Monuments


Answer: C. Manuscripts

 **Explanation:** Manuscripts are written records and come under Literary Sources, not Archaeological Sources.

15 Which historian wrote 'Histories' and is known as the Father of History?

- A. Herodotus
- B. Thucydides
- C. Polybius
- D. Livy

Answer: A. Herodotus

 **Explanation:** Herodotus wrote 'Histories', the first systematic account of past events, and is called the Father of History.



EXAM TIP: Focus on key historians, definitions, types of sources, and their importance. These questions are frequently asked.



REMEMBER: ★ History is based on facts and evidence.
★ Sources of History are of two types – Literary & Archaeological.
★ Know the major historians and their contributions.



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