Who Names the Ages?

Explore how calendars and ways of life organize the past.

SS24.7.3 "Analyze how historians organize human history and events, including the use of calendars. 3a Describe multiple methods for organizing and labeling periods of time, including differentiating between the BC/AD and BCE/CE notations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways to organize history, circle each pair of calendar labels that names the same year, and number the farming dates in Southwest Asia and Britain from earlier to later.

Arranging the Past

1. At a museum, a curator must decide how to arrange objects from thousands of years ago. A stone tool from a hunting camp and a grinding stone from a farming village tell different stories. Historians can group years by a calendar, but they can also name periods for changes in how people lived. The Paleolithic is commonly linked with hunting and gathering; the Neolithic is commonly linked with farming and settled villages. These labels describe patterns, not a single change that happened everywhere at once.

2. In Southwest Asia, people began farming by about 9000 BCE. Farming began much later in Britain, around 4000 BCE. A curator who labels both places Neolithic is grouping them by a way of life, not claiming their farms began in the same year. Another label, prehistory, means a time before written records in a particular place. Writing developed in southern Mesopotamia by about 3200 BCE, but many other places did not have writing then. That is why prehistory has no single ending date for the whole world.

3. Calendars offer another way to place events in order. In the BC/AD system, BC years come before AD years. The BCE/CE system uses the same year numbers and dividing point: 9000 BC is 9000 BCE, and AD 100 is 100 CE. The newer labels avoid naming a religious figure, but they do not move any event to a different year. In either system, 9000 BCE comes before 4000 BCE because larger BCE numbers are farther in the past. After 1 BCE comes 1 CE; there is no year zero in these systems.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. A museum label says 500 CE. How would you write that year using AD, and would the event move to a different place in time?

2. Which happened first, the start of farming in Britain or the development of writing in southern Mesopotamia? Explain how the dates show this.

3. Why can a curator call both Southwest Asia and Britain Neolithic even though farming began there at different times?

4. Why would 3200 BCE not be a useful ending date for prehistory everywhere?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Create three original names for exhibit sections that group human history by changes in daily life. In 4 to 6 sentences, explain one boundary between your sections, give one date from the passage in both BC/AD and BCE/CE notation, and explain why your sections may start at different times in different places.

ANSWER KEY

Who Names the Ages?

GRADE 7 · SS24.7.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways to organize history, circle each pair of calendar labels that names the same year, and number the farming dates in Southwest Asia and Britain from earlier to later. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	A museum label says 500 CE. How would you write that year using AD, and would the event move to a different place in time?	**AD 500. The event stays in the same place in time because the two systems use the same year numbers.**
2	Which happened first, the start of farming in Britain or the development of writing in southern Mesopotamia? Explain how the dates show this.	**Farming began in Britain around 4000 BCE, before writing developed in southern Mesopotamia by about 3200 BCE. The larger BCE number is farther in the past.**
3	Why can a curator call both Southwest Asia and Britain Neolithic even though farming began there at different times?	**Neolithic groups places by a way of life that includes farming and settled villages, not by one shared starting year.**
4	Why would 3200 BCE not be a useful ending date for prehistory everywhere?	**Writing had developed in southern Mesopotamia by about 3200 BCE, but many other places did not have writing then. Prehistory ends at different times in different places.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would name my sections Moving for Food, Planting Fields, and Keeping Written Records. The boundary between the first two is the shift from relying on wild food to growing crops. In Southwest Asia, farming began by about 9000 BC, or 9000 BCE. These sections would not start everywhere at once because farming began in Britain much later. I would start the written-records section only where people had begun to write.

Accept other original section names and reasonable boundaries tied to changes in daily life. The date must appear with equivalent BC/BCE or AD/CE labels, and the explanation must recognize that changes occurred at different times in different places.