

Time Labels Detectives

Read how historians name, measure, and organize the past.

SS.6.W.1.2 “Identify terms (decade, century, epoch, era, millennium, BC/BCE, AD/CE) and designations of time periods.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each word or abbreviation that names a unit of time or a calendar designation. Underline each specific date or named time period to separate time-measuring terms from period labels.

Naming the Past

- ① Historians organize the past by using units of time. A decade lasts 10 years, such as 1920 through 1929. A century lasts 100 years. The nineteenth century ran from 1801 through 1900, so a century number is not always the same as the first two digits of a year. A millennium lasts 1,000 years. The third millennium CE began in 2001 and will end in 3000. These units help people state how long ago an event occurred.
- ② Dates also use designations that show a year’s place in a calendar system. BC means “before Christ,” and BCE means “before Common Era.” They name the same years. AD comes from a Latin phrase meaning “in the year of the Lord,” while CE means “Common Era.” AD and CE name the same years. On this system, 44 BCE comes before 1 BCE, followed by 1 CE. There is no year 0 between BCE and CE. Many historians use BCE and CE because they are neutral terms.
- ③ Some labels describe much broader stretches of history. An era is a long period that historians name because of shared events, ideas, or conditions. For example, the Industrial Era is a designation for a time of growing factory production. An epoch is also a named period, often marked by important changes. Scientists use epochs when studying Earth’s history, such as the Pleistocene Epoch, when repeated ice ages occurred. Period names help readers connect events to larger patterns, but their lengths are not all equal.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 How many years are in a decade, a century, and a millennium?

2 Which two designations name years before the Common Era, and what does the passage say about them?

3 Put these dates in order from earliest to latest: 1 CE, 44 BCE, 1 BCE.

4 What is one way an era and an epoch are alike? Give one named example of either term from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a three-sentence museum label for an invented object from the past. Include one date with BCE or CE, name its decade or century, and place it in a named era or epoch.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Circle each word or abbreviation that names a unit of time or a calendar designation. Underline each specific date or named time period to separate time-measuring terms from period labels. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How many years are in a decade, a century, and a millennium?	A decade is 10 years, a century is 100 years, and a millennium is 1,000 years.
2	Which two designations name years before the Common Era, and what does the passage say about them?	BC and BCE name years before the Common Era. They name the same years.
3	Put these dates in order from earliest to latest: 1 CE, 44 BCE, 1 BCE.	44 BCE, 1 BCE, 1 CE.
4	What is one way an era and an epoch are alike? Give one named example of either term from the passage.	Both are named periods of time. Examples include the Industrial Era and the Pleistocene Epoch.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

This brass factory whistle was made in 1867 CE. It belongs to the 1860s decade and the nineteenth century. Its label places it in the Industrial Era, a period when factories grew.

Accept correct definitions, date order, and period examples supported by the passage. For the museum label, accept any sensible invented object that includes a correct BCE or CE date, an accurate decade or century, and a named era or epoch.