

2

The detective story

SESSION AT A GLANCE

Story/ Information
Studying the past

Group work
Be a detective!

Summing up
Calendar of the past

Preparing for the session

Through a story, this session explains the importance of studying history. Three characters are introduced in the story - Kabir, his friend Saeeda, and his grandfather, Nanaji. These characters will also feature in the coming sessions. Make sure you are familiar with the story (read it once or twice before the session), so that you can narrate it in an interesting way.

Do remember to note down the key ideas of this session on a card in advance so that you can add it to the *Calendar of the past* at the end of the session.

You will also have to make photocopies of the cue cards for group work, in advance.

Main ideas

- History is like a detective story. Like detectives, historians search for clues and try to form a picture of past events based on these clues.
- Knowing and understanding the past influences our actions today and guides plans for the future.
- History is a dynamic story. It cannot be considered 'final' because our understanding of our past keeps changing as we discover new facts and find new interpretations.

To conduct the session you will need

- Flipchart : *Studying the past*
- Copies of cue cards for group work (one copy per group)
Calendar of the past



Activity 1**Story/
Information***Studying the past***Conducting the session**

Use the flipchart to tell the following story.

Frame 1

Kabir and Saeeda, neighbours and also best friends, sat in Kabir's house, trying to do their homework. Kabir's grandfather peered at the evening newspaper. Nanaji, who used to be a school principal, was now retired and often came to stay with Kabir's family. Kabir and Saeeda loved Nanaji because he was full of wonderful stories and was a great teacher.



Poring over his history book, Kabir fidgeted and changed position. He grunted with frustration once or twice and turned the pages of the book back and forth. He looked at the ceiling and mumbled something. Nanaji and Saeeda, watching him, smiled at each other. Kabir put down the book and said angrily, "Who cares which year a particular battle was fought in? Who cares about the names of kings who died thousands of years ago? I hate history! All they do is make you learn pages and pages of dates that don't make sense to anybody." "I think you would learn it very easily well if it was about cricket!" said Saeeda.

"Of course, that's because cricket makes sense to me," shot back Kabir.

"Now, now," chuckled Nanaji who could see that this was going to turn into an argument.

"You tell me Nanaji," Kabir appealed to his grandfather, "why does all this boring history have to be learnt?"

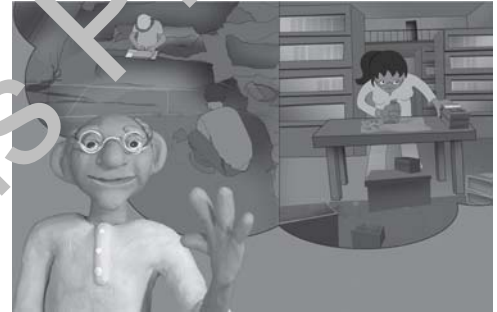
Stop the story at this point and ask the class whether they agree with Kabir that history is boring. Let them respond, then continue with the story.

Nanaji smiled. "History, boring? Why, it is one of the most fascinating subjects in the world. It's like a thrilling detective story!"

Seeing that the children were not quite convinced, Nanaji continued, "How do you think books about the past are written?"

Frame 2

Nanaji explained, "History books are written by **historians** - that's what we call people who look at the past. They are like detectives who gather as much information as they can about the period they are studying. In this, they are often helped by the work of **archaeologists**. Archaeologists are scientists who literally 'dig' up the past. When they find an area where people might have lived, they carefully unearth objects, buildings, tools or animal bones, the remains of human skeletons, burial grounds, etc. They also have methods to find out how old these objects are. Then historians study these finds and try to look for more information from other sources. In this way they formulate theories and ideas about how people lived in the past. If they are studying a more recent period then a historian's research may include letters, diaries, official records, paintings of the time and even newspapers."



"And then they put it in books that we are made to study," grumbled Kabir.

Frame 3

"No," laughed Nanaji. "When historians look at a clue, they have to first decide what the clue means. Does it fit in with the other clues discovered? Or does it tell a different story? Sometimes it is

like doing a jigsaw puzzle which has pieces missing. Only when you find all the pieces do you actually know what the picture really is.

"Yes, it like detectives trying to solve a case. They have to find the clues that show them who committed the murder," said Saeeda excitedly.

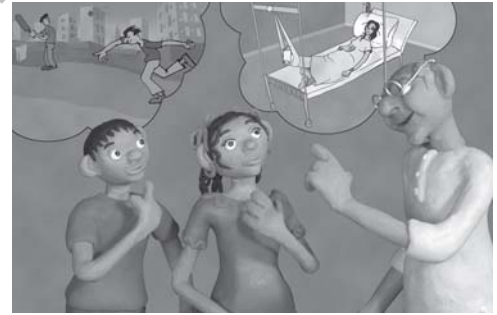


"And it usually turns out to be someone else," added Kabir.

"Exactly," said Nanaji. "So you see, history is not really boring at all."

Frame 4

"Nanaji, I've never looked at history in this way before; you make it so interesting! But I still want to know why we have to learn it," insisted Kabir stubbornly.



"Because knowing and understanding the past **influences our actions today** and **guides our plans for the future**. Tell me, why did you take an umbrella to school today?" asked Nanaji.

"Because it has been raining every day the past week," replied Kabir.

"And why did you go to visit your aunt this afternoon?" Nanaji asked Saeeda.

"Because Nusrat khala had an operation two days ago and was just back from hospital," replied Saeeda.

"And if you had to choose your ideal cricket team, Kabir, how would you do it?"

"Well, I'd look at how players have played in the past and . . . Aah ! Now I see. You are trying to tell me Nanaji, that taking the umbrella, going to visit Nusrat khala, choosing a cricket team, all of these are possible only because we know what has happened in the past !"

Stop the story at this point and ask the class for other examples in their daily lives where their behaviour or knowledge is influenced by the past (an example : bringing their folders to class and being prepared for a **Sangati** session today because it is part of their timetable). After they have responded, continue the story.

Frame 5

Nanaji continued, "When we take decisions in our daily lives, we use our knowledge and experience of the past. On a much larger scale, this is exactly how the study of history helps us. By learning about the past we can avoid repeating mistakes and can decide on actions that are best for the future."



Saenda looked thoughtful. "Our teacher says that after the earthquakes in Latur and Bhuj, people have started thinking about how houses should be built so that they do not collapse easily. That is something that we have learnt from history, isn't it, Nanaji ?"

Nanaji nodded, looking pleased. Not wanting to be left out, Kabir added, "Our teacher always says that we must learn from our past mistakes and protect the environment for the future."

"That, unfortunately, is something that most of us still have to learn," said Nanaji. "So you see, history is not just boring dates but an understanding of the way people lived. The way we live our lives today will be history for the people of tomorrow."

"Well, if you two don't mind," said Kabir, "I am going to do some studying."

"Now that," said Saeeda with a laugh, "is truly a milestone in history!"

At the end of the story, write the following sentences on the blackboard in order to reinforce some of the key ideas about history.

Knowing history influences our actions today. It also helps us to avoid repeating mistakes and to decide on actions that are best for the future.

Introduce the activity in the following way.

To show Kabir and Saeeda how detectives analyse information, Nanaji went out and returned with a plastic bag full of garbage. He said that he had picked it up from the front of the building. He asked Kabir and Saeeda to examine all the garbage and decide whose family it belonged to. Kabir and Saeeda have made a list of the contents of the garbage bag. See if you can do some detective work and help them.

Divide the class into groups and give each group a cue card. Tell them that they have 15 minutes to study the information on the cards and answer the questions given. After the class has had enough time, call the groups, one at a time, to present their responses. The groups will probably agree on some things while differing completely on others.

Sum up the presentations as follows.

Your presentations show that there are some questions to which all the groups have given the same answers, while there are others to which the responses vary from group to group. This means that some things are clear from the evidence found, while others may be just guesswork.

The clues provided are not always enough to form a definite picture of the situation being examined. For instance, how can we be sure that there are no other members in this household? Examining only a day's garbage will not tell us if any member is away from home at the moment. Is there a Mr. Adilkar? What evidence do we have of him? Do Mrs. Adilkar and her daughter

Activity 2 **Group work**

Be a detective!

live here or are they guests visiting the Patils or is it the other way around? Maybe there is no infant in the family. That rattle may have been left by a little visitor, or it may be Sunita's old toy brought out to amuse a child who has broken it. Was a tailor called to the house, or has someone in the family been stitching clothes?

Each group in the class has made up stories on the basis of the clues found but it is difficult to be sure whether they are fiction or fact. This can happen while studying history too.

Historians have to constantly guard against jumping to conclusions. It is very important to collect all the information possible and to keep an open mind. History is a dynamic story. It cannot be considered final because new discoveries and deeper understanding constantly add to it.

Display the Calendar of the past and add to it the card with some of the key ideas of this session.

History : A detective story, Learning about the past guides our present and future. History is a dynamic story.

Summing up
Calendar of the
past

History
A detective story
Learning about the past guides our
present and future,
History is a dynamic story.

Cue card for group work

Do you want to be a Detective ?

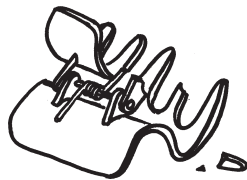
Here is a list of items Kabir and Saeeda found in a garbage bag. Examine each item carefully and then try to answer the questions given below.

1. A knot of long grey hair



2. A page from a school exercise book

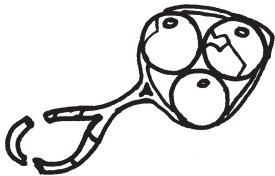
3. A broken hair clip



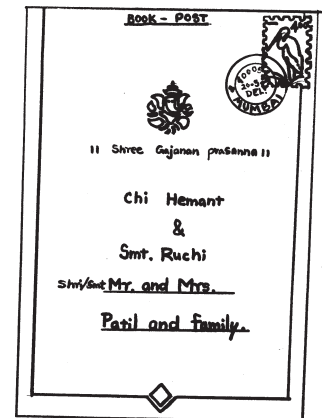
4. A washing soap wrapper



5. A broken toy



6. Wedding invitation addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Patil



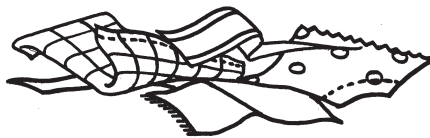
7. Chit for free medicine for Mrs. Adilkar

8. Onion skins, metal stems, empty tobacco packet

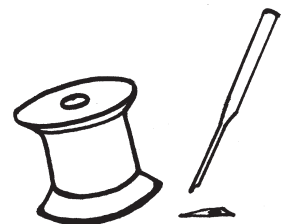


9. Torn cycle styled paper, with *Sunita Adilkar, Std. V* written on top. Also written is : *Announcing school trip - expenses 75/-*

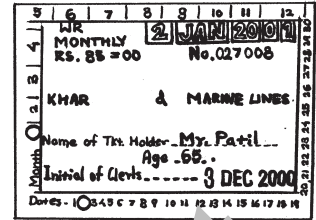
10. A few scraps of cut cloth



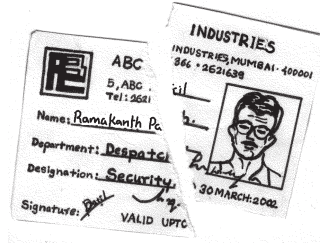
11. A broken sewing machine needle and two empty spools of thread



12. Expired second-class train pass in the name of Mr. Patil.



13. Expired company identity card in the name of Mr. Patil



Questions for your group to answer.

1. How many people are there in the family ? How old would they be ?

2. Are any of their names known ?

3. How are they related ?

4. What is the work / profession of the family members ?

5. What is their economic position ?

6. What else can you tell about their lives ?
