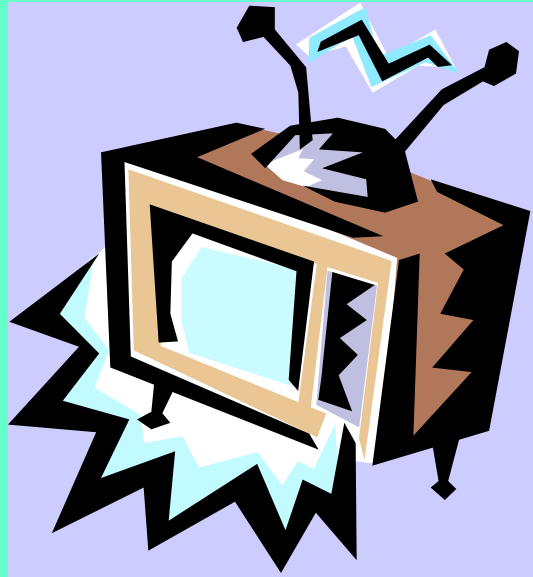




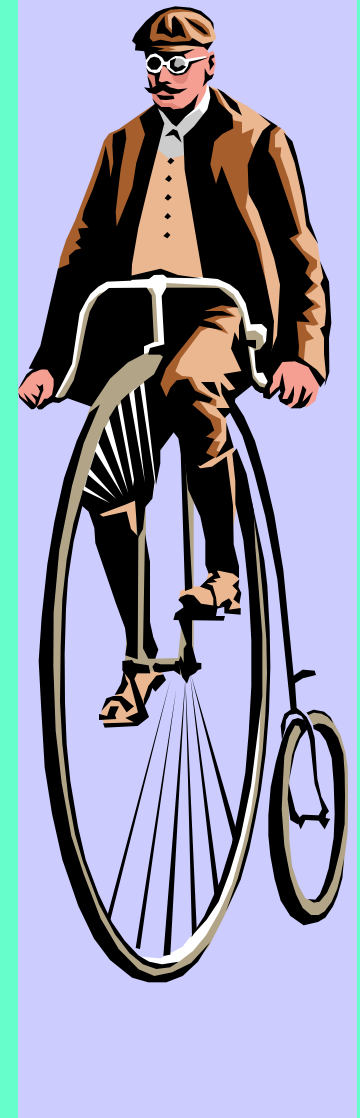
How We Know What We Know

Unit tutorial for students in Mr.
Housch's American Culture class.

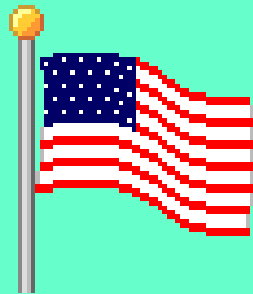
Culture includes how people in certain areas meet their needs for food, clothing, housing, recreation, entertainment, worship, and so many other things. Often we don't even think about certain routine items we do daily, such as getting dressed, watching TV, playing sports, etc... as culture.



In our study of **American culture**, we want to know how Americans have lived throughout their history.



America has been a nation for over 230 years.
Before that, people had been living in North America for an unknown amount of time.
Certainly people have inhabited our continent for thousands of years.



We know how we live today.

We can see our lives and understand pretty easily
how we spend our time.



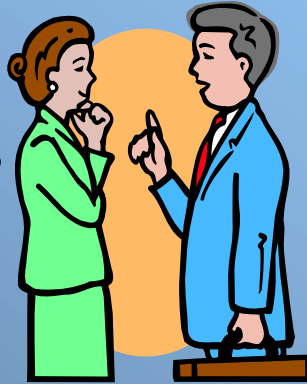
But how do we know how people lived long after they are gone?



There are three ways we commonly know about people's lives—**but be careful**. It is very easy to misunderstand each of them.

Three ways that we know what we know ...

1. Oral stories



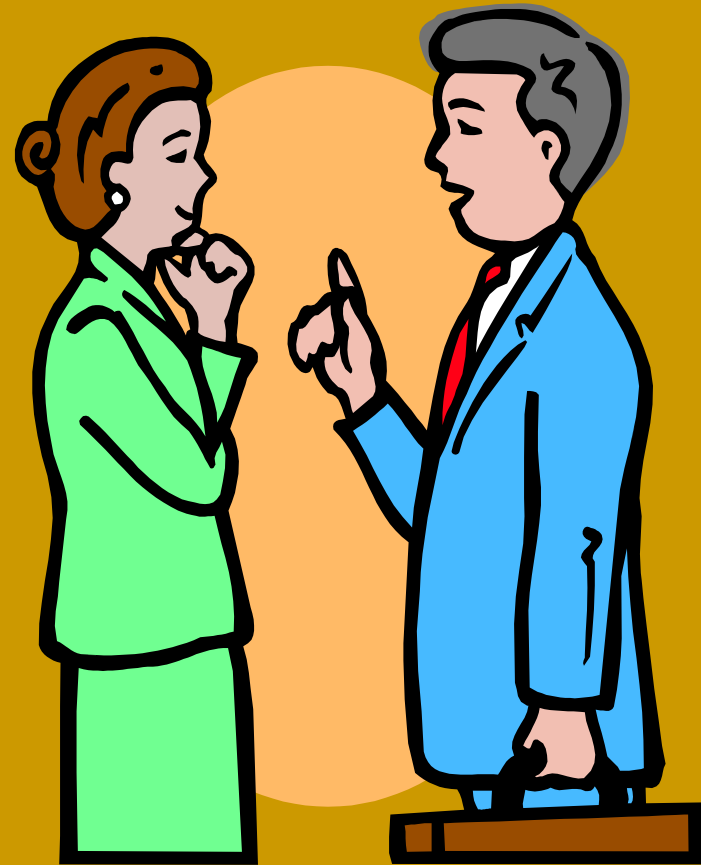
2. Written records and documents

3. Artifacts



Oral Stories

Any tale or story you either tell or hear can be a way of knowing about the past. Often they are not important enough to write down. All of us talk every day, and we're usually good at it!



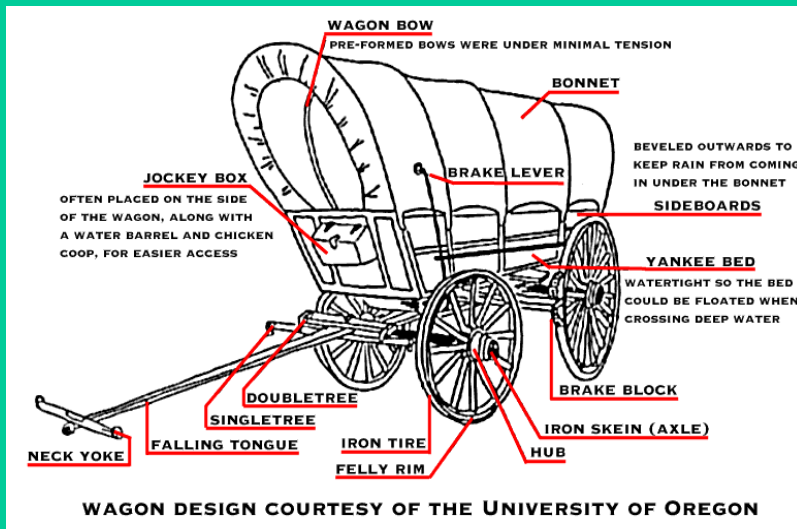
Caution!!!!



Oral stories are unreliable as history because--

- We tend to exaggerate the more times we tell a story.
- We tend to forget our stories quickly.
- Some people misunderstand our stories, and repeat them incorrectly.

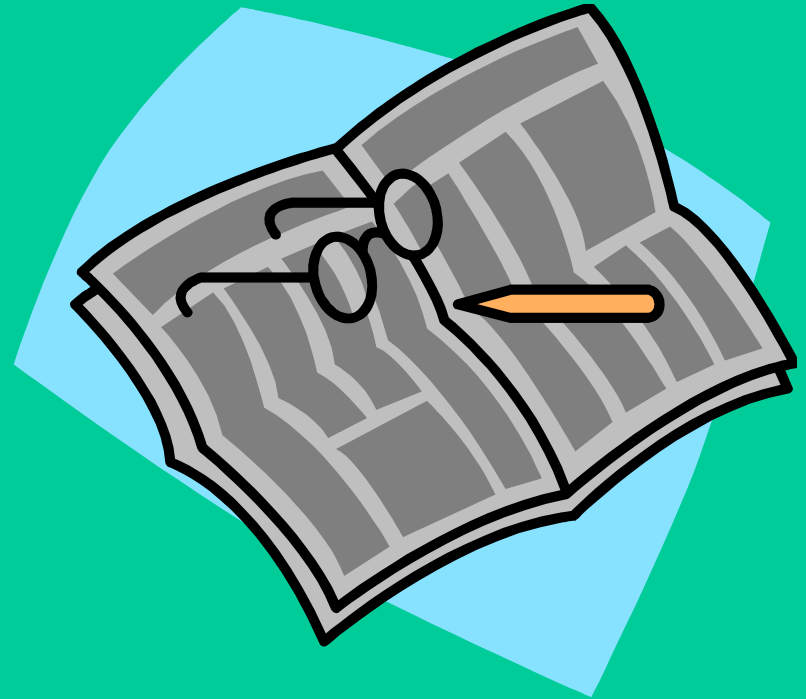
Written Records and Documents



- They're good because they DON'T change over time.
- They may last for hundreds of years
- They can have lots of detail
- They can include words, numbers, etc.
- They can provide good explanations of items

Examples include.....

- Newspapers
- Books
- Birth, death, marriage certificates
- The Constitution
- Internet sites
- Paintings
- Photographs
- And so many more.....



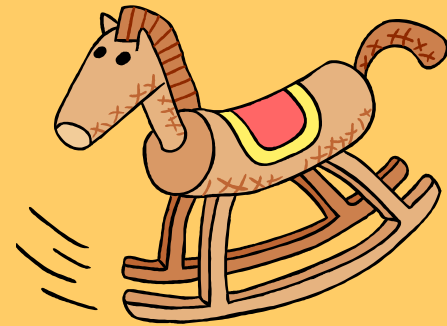
Caution!!!!

We can also misinterpret
written records



- We may not understand what is written.
- We may only have part of an entire record.
- We may have no way of knowing if the document is accurate or not (especially newspapers, internet sites, etc).

Artifacts

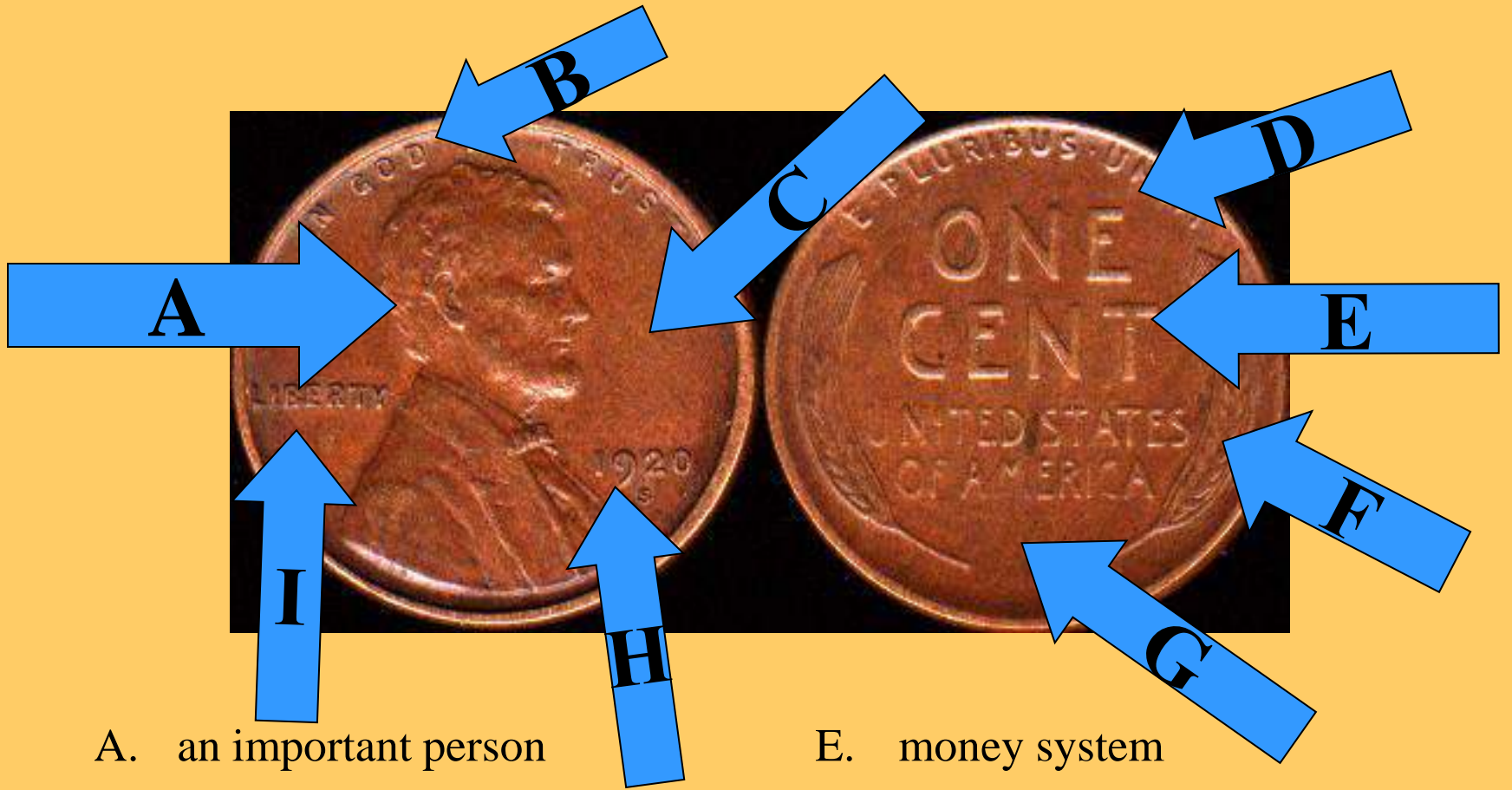


- Artifacts are the “things” left behind by others.
- Almost any item can be considered an artifact, including written records and documents.
- Examples can include coins, toys, tools, pictures, clothing, cars, and so much more.
- We can learn a surprising amount about a culture by the artifacts it leaves behind—provided we know how to **interpret** them correctly.

For example, what can we learn about America from an old penny?



It looks like a common, everyday item to us. To an archaeologist, it holds a treasury of info about our culture.



A. an important person

B. a religion

C. type of metal used

D. foreign language

E. money system

F. important crop (wheat)

G. name of nation

H. date nation existed

I. an important ideal

Again, use CAUTION!!!!

It is very easy to misinterpret artifacts.

- We may have no idea what the item is.
- We may misunderstand how it was used.
- We may not realize an artifact is only a small part of a much bigger item.
- We may not understand what different parts of an item may mean.



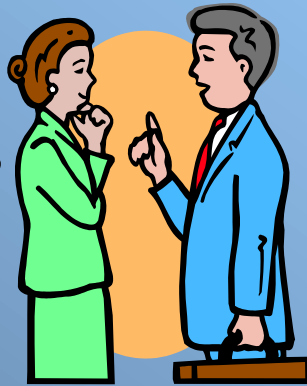
Potential misinterpretations



- President Lincoln was America's God.
- Lincoln was President in 1920.
- Latin was America's second language.
- Wheat was America's only important crop.
- Pennies were America's most important coins.
- Many other things can be misinterpreted, giving a false view of what America was like.

In Conclusion--How do we know what we know about America's past?

1. Oral stories



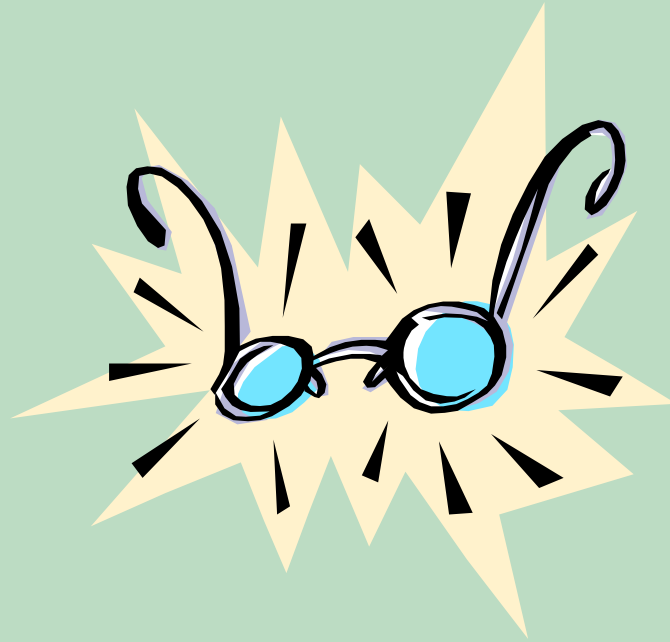
2. Written records and documents

3. Artifacts



Each item can be very useful, but each has its problems as well.

Take the quiz !



These five questions will check your understanding of what you have just seen.



Question # 1

How do we know what we know about America's Past?

1. Through written records and documents.
2. Through stories people tell orally.
3. Through artifacts left behind by others.
4. All of the above are correct.



Question # 2

Which of the following is an example of a written record or document?

1. A birth certificate
2. A report card
3. A photograph
4. All of these are examples of a written record



Question # 3

All of the following are potential dangers of using oral stories as history except

1. We forget most of what we hear.
2. We don't always understand what we hear.
3. All stories we hear are true.
4. Stories tend to change over time.



Question # 4

Which of these is
NOT an artifact?

1. A New York Yankees hat.
2. A picture of your grandfather in a military uniform.
3. A conversation about last night's TV programs.
4. A brick with the name of the manufacturer on it.



Question # 5

Which is the best definition of the word “artifact?”

1. A piece of pottery.
2. An item left behind by earlier people.
3. A penny.
4. An item that could have been purchased in a relic store.

Correct!

- Nice work !
- Go to question #1
- Go to question #2
- Go to question #3
- Go to question #4
- Go to question #5



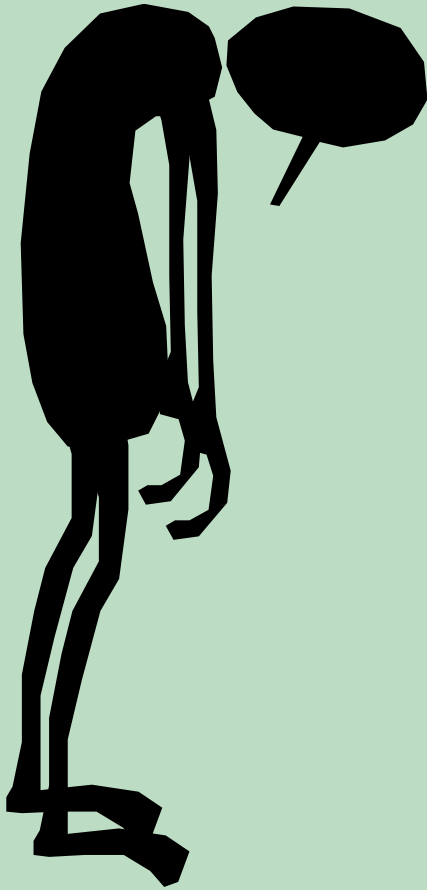
I am finished

You are partially correct!

- There are more correct answers, however.
- Try again
 - Return to question #1.
 - Return to question # 2.
 - Return to question # 3.
 - Return to question # 4.
 - Return to question # 5.



Incorrect



[Return to question # 1.](#)

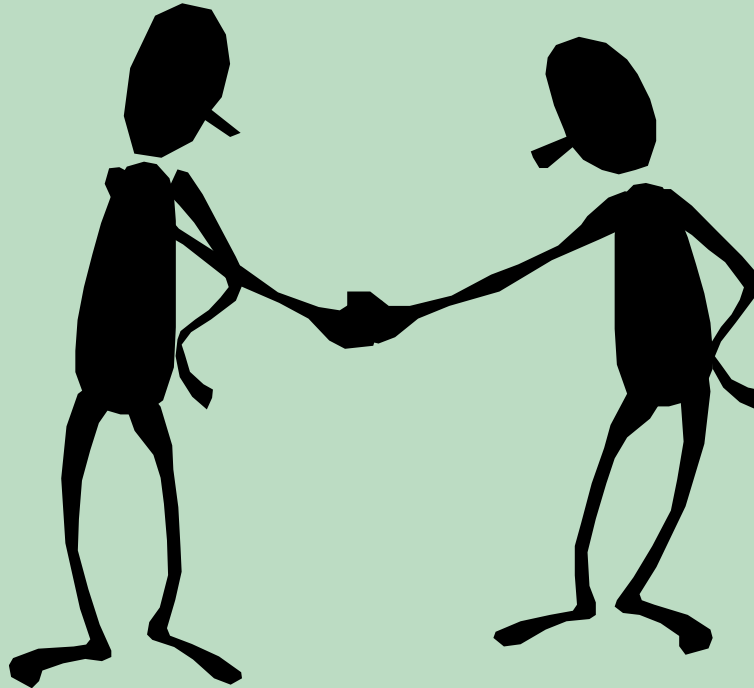
[Return to question # 2](#)

[Return to question # 3](#)

[Return to question # 4](#)

[Return to question # 5](#)

Congratulations



You are finished... You have succeeded... You have done well.