

Basic Structure of the GeoHistoGram

A historical timeline is a way to visualize when something occurred. It can also tell you what else was going on in the world at the same time. Unfortunately, timelines in books often try to show too many details all at once. Moreover, most of them do not have a consistent way to include geographic information. To help us organize information in both a temporal and spatial context, we will use the simple form shown on the next page.

- The vertical axis (y-axis) indicates dates. The oldest dates are near the bottom of the diagram; they are crowded together because we do not know as much about what happened way back then. The timeline “stretches” as we get closer to the present. That lets us show more of the details that still influence our lives today.

- The horizontal axis (x-axis) colored boxes show major world regions. They are arranged in rough geographical order from west to east. The “middle” is the area that has been called Mesopotamia, the Fertile Crescent, the Promised Land, and the Crossroads of History. It is where farming first began, iron was first made, and cities were first built. It has been an area of conflict for many thousands of years, right up to the present day.

To give you a better idea how to use the GeoHistoGram, let us add ten key events.

1. People first began planting crops for food in the area that is now called Turkey and Iran. This happened about 10,000 years BCE (“Before the Common Era,” the “Year One” that people use for calendars). Draw a small oval to represent a wheat seed in the Middle column about 8000 years ago.

2. The idea of farming spread to southern Europe by 7000 BCE. Draw another small oval in the Europe column at that time. Later, you will add symbols to the timeline to show how farming spread to other regions of the world.

3. The Great Pyramids of Egypt were built about 2500 BCE. Draw a pyramid on the right-hand side of the column for Africa about 2500 BCE. Later, you will add other globally important buildings to the diagram.

4. A Roman fleet crossed the Mediterranean Sea in 125 BCE and captured Carthage in northern Africa. This was a key event in the spread of the Roman Empire. Draw a horizontal line from the Europe column to the Africa one, just below the BCE/CE line. Later, you will add other empires to the diagram.

5. The Byzantine Emperor Justinian I updated and improved the legal code of the Empire, in 529 CE naming it the Codex Justinianus (after himself). This legal code became the foundation for most of Western Europe's current legal system. Draw a line where it makes sense for 529 CE that spans Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

6. The Prophet Muhammad traveled to Mecca in the year 622CE. His trip marks the beginning of the religion called Islam (Year One in the Islamic calendar). Draw a crescent in the middle column at the year 622CE.

7. Gunpowder was invented in China about 850 CE. Draw a small explosion in the second column from the right, a little bit below the line for the year 1000. Later, you will add other important inventions to the diagram.

8. Columbus sailed from Spain to the Americas in 1492. Draw a line to show that “bridge” between continents. Later, you will add other important travels.

9. The United States became an independent country in 1776. Draw a star at the appropriate place in the Americas column to note that event.

10. In 1918 World War I came to end. It was one of the largest conflicts in human history up to that point, and spanned involved nations from North America, Europe Africa and the Middle East. Draw a line at a point that makes sense for 1918, (near the top) that spans those regions.