

How Do We Study the Past?

Every study of the past starts with a question. These thinking concepts can be used as starting points for questions about the past.

Establish Significance

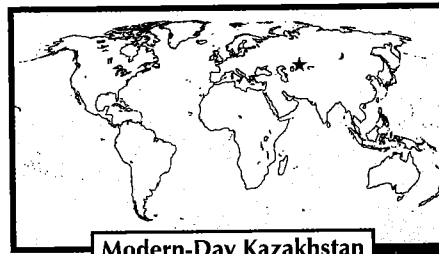
How do we decide what is important to know about the past? When we examine the significance of an event or a person, we reveal what matters to us. To someone else, the same event or person may not be significant.

How can our choice of what we find significant be a matter of perspective?

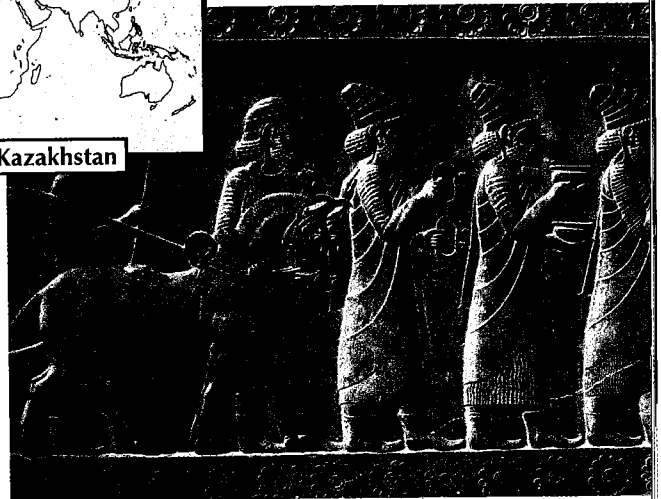
The horse evolved over millions of years, but it is only within the past 10 000 years that horses were domesticated by humans. Domestication meant that horses had become tame enough to live with and be managed by humans.

Historians believe that horses were first domesticated in the area now known as Kazakhstan. How it happened may never be known, but it probably followed the same process as with other domesticated animals, such as dogs, camels, and goats. Over time, domesticated horses were introduced around the world. They became essential parts of human warfare, transportation, hunting, and work.

- What makes the domestication of animals such as horses significant? What impact did horses have on the lives of ancient people?
- Who might not consider the domestication of horses significant?
- How significant are horses today? Are they used in similar ways? What does this tell you about their significance?
- What do you consider significant in your life? Why is it significant? Who does it affect? What lasting effect has it had?



Modern-Day Kazakhstan



▲ Top: A stone carving showing a procession with horses in the ancient city of Persepolis (550 BCE). Bottom: A modern rider at the Tsuut'ina Nation Rodeo. Could the stories of the people in these images be significant? In what ways? to whom?

What Is the Most Important Invention?

Many ancient innovations continue to influence our lives today. Which was the most significant?

Early humans were inventing tools millions of years ago. Why do you think it took until 5000 years ago for the wheel to be invented?

The Wheel?

Why is something as simple as the wheel considered to be so important? When people talk about the wheel's invention, they usually refer to its role in transportation. Before the wheel, ancient peoples had to carry their belongings on their back or on the back of animals such as horses and oxen. Wheeled carts and wagons allowed them to move large quantities of goods over long distances.

However, the wheel was not invented for transportation but for making pottery. The first ceramic pots were made by placing circular strips of clay one on top of another. Around 4000 BCE, the Sumerians realized that by turning the clay on a stone wheel, they could make a better pot in less time. Eventually they learned that wheels could also be used to move simple carts.

CONSIDER THIS!

The wheel was not widely used by early peoples in North or South America. However, the Olmec (1500 BCE to about 400 BCE), who lived in what is now Mexico, used wheels on what have been identified as children's toys. It is thought that the wheel was not widely used in this part of the world because of a lack of large domesticated animals, such as horses or oxen.

▼ This image of a horse-drawn cart appears in a Sumerian mosaic from about 2500 BCE. Wheeled vehicles may have first appeared in Mesopotamia about 5000 years ago. Around 2200 BCE, the Sumerians and other cultures developed lighter, faster spoked wheels that they fitted to chariots. How did the chariot change warfare?

