**THE WORK OF A HISTORIAN**

⚫ **History** is the study of events that happened in the past

⚫ The **prehistoric period** is before writing was used. The **historic period** is when people used writing

⚫ A **source** is evidence that helps historians to build up a picture of the past, eg documents, pictures.

⚫ The two main types of sources are **primary sources** and **secondary** sources

⚫ A **primary source** comes directly from the past and is written or made at the time an event took place. They are all written or made by those who witnessed the events as they happened, e.g., interview, diaries, letters, emails, photos, posters, paintings, government records, newspapers, artefacts.

⚫ A **secondary source** provides second hand evidence, or evidence that comes from a later date. They are usually written or made after the event or by someone who did not witness the events happening, e.g., Biography, movies, TV/radio documentaries, internet, history book, reconstructions of historical sites or buildings, artists’ impressions of how things looked in the past.

⚫ Historians find sources of information in **archives, libraries and museums**

⚫ They examine the source carefully and ask questions **- Who, What, When, Where, Why**.

⚫ They examine how close the author of the source was to the event – **time and place rule** – to judge how reliable the source is.

**⚫** The historian compares many sources to gain an accurate picture of events – this is called cross-checking.

⚫Historians judge the **reliability of sources** by considering the following

1. **Bias** – does the source favour one side over another?
2. **Accuracy** – is the information correct?
3. **Exaggeration** – is the information made out to be more important than it really is?
4. **Propaganda –** is the information used to influence people’s opinions –does it try to make one side look good and another look bad?
5. **Time and place** – if a person today describes an event that they witnessed forty years ago, do they still remember all the facts.
6. **Opinions** – it is important for a historian to separate fact from opinion when reading diaries, newspapers, speeches and letters.