

... insights are reasoned guesses you have made about people in history.

Begin With Observations

When you read your research notes look for clues that tell you what the people involved in this topic were like. Try to discover their beliefs and value systems. Clues are found in their behaviour, in their decisions and actions, and in their communications:

Look for:

- what people did
- what people thought (perhaps recorded in diaries, journals, or personal letters)
- what people said
- what people decided.

Your focus is on the people, not the wars, nor the inventions. As you focus on people, you will consider individuals, specific groups, or entire nations.

Reason Out the Motives

In examining behaviour, one looks for evidence of motive. What was driving individuals, groups, or nations to make their decisions and to act in the ways that they did? Identify decisions made, and significant actions, then try to figure out their motives. Use your common sense and the circumstances of the times you have researched.

How did the people involved treat other people? How did they view themselves as compared to how they viewed others? How were any disadvantaged people treated by those more fortunate or by those in positions of power? Why? What can this reveal about those in power? When considering communication, you look for speeches that were made or written forms of communication like letters, diaries, government memos, and formal legal documents.

Identify any of these that pertain to your topic. Look carefully at each instance. Who was the communicator? What was the purpose of the communication? Who was the intended audience? What was the effect, if any, of the communication? What does this reveal about the communicators? What laws did they frame for their society? Who benefited from these laws? Why were they made?

Insights: Make Your Best Guess

An insight is an understanding based upon figuring out the inner nature of people. Such insights are a necessary part of the study of history. Insights are reasoned guesses you have made about people in history.

How does one see the inner nature of people?

You see this when you try to answer the *why?* question about the observations you have made. The inner nature of people is made up of their:

- principles.** These are the fundamental or foundational truths upon which people act. They may include concepts such as honesty, equality, charity and fairness.
- values.** These are those things which people see as important to them. These may include family, wealth, health, excellence, winning and high marks.
- ideals.** These are images of perfection that people hold up as worthy of achieving. Ideals could relate to people as in a courageous leader; or to a society as in a loving, caring, crime free society; or to a political system, as in democracy.