

Herodotus

Herodotus of Halicarnassus was a Greek born around 484 BC in a town called Halicarnassus. He is considered as the Father of History. In the West, he is regarded as the first who wrote history as we know it today. This means that he tried to describe and explain events that happened in the past, as well as the reasons why they happened. He is considered the first to gather his material in a methodical way and write an account of what happened. He is the first author to write a narrative of history. A narrative is a story that is written in a structured format and that describes events. The word 'history' comes from the word 'historia,' which is a Greek word that means 'knowledge gotten by inquiry' or 'a written account of one's inquiries.'

The narrative of Herodotus is called "The Histories" and represents a collection of his 'inquiries' about the people and places he saw during his travels in the Mediterranean. "The Histories" is a nine volume book. "The Histories" helped in making history an objective, which means unbiased, discipline and paved the way for the work of another contemporary historian, known for his rigor, called Thucydides.

In his book, Herodotus starts by explaining that the purpose of his work was to ensure that the memory of what people did was preserved, as well as to remember the achievements and famous buildings constructed by the Greeks and non-Greeks. It was a tribute and record of the achievements, contributions, and actions of the people in the past. He also wanted to discover the causes of the war between the Persians and the Greeks in the 5th century BC. He goes into many details about the Persian attacks on Greece in 490 and 480 BC and how the Persians were defeated by the cooperation of the many Greek city-states.

Herodotus received a Greek education. After his education, he was not able to go into politics, so he started devoting his time to literature. He traveled greatly between the ages of 20-37 all around the Mediterranean. He believed that there was much to be learned from other cultures and also described details about how other cultures lived. This was extremely useful to archaeologists. Herodotus also presented many accounts of an event. After presenting the different accounts, he would express which one he thought was most likely.

Name _____

Date _____

Herodotus (Cont'd)

He also talked about legends and myths in his work. Many people criticized him for doing that saying that he only added these legends to make his narrative more lively and interesting. However, nowadays, these additions are seen as extremely significant to anthropologists and ethnographers. Anthropology is the social science that studies the origins of humans as well as the social relations between them. Ethnography is a way of writing that gives a descriptive study of human societies and is usually associated with travel writing.

Besides being criticized for including myths in his work, Herodotus was also accused of exaggerating his accounts, making up sources, being biased, and inaccurate. However, with some major discoveries since the 19th century, the reputation of Herodotus was restored as these discoveries supported Herodotus' accounts.

Name _____

Date _____

Herodotus Questions

Multiple Choice:

1. Herodotus is known as the Father of:

- a. Travel
- b. History
- c. Literature
- d. Politics

2. In the beginning of “The Histories,” Herodotus explains that the purpose of the work is:

- a. To become the first person to provide a structured account of history
- b. A tribute and record of the achievements and contributions of Greeks and non-Greeks
- c. To present the different animal life he saw during his journeys
- d. None of the above

List three criticisms against Herodotus:

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

True or False:

___ 6. Thucydides was a contemporary historian to Herodotus and was known for his rigor.

___ 7. Until this day, the reputation of Herodotus is not favorable.

___ 8. “The Histories” was written by Cicero.

___ 9. “The Histories” is significant for archaeologists, anthropologists, and ethnographers.

___ 10. Herodotus’ work discussed the reasons and causes of the war between Persians and Romans during the 5th century.

Herodotus Answers

Multiple Choice:

1. Herodotus is known as the Father of:

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- d. None of the above

List three criticisms against Herodotus:

He included myths and legends only to make his narrative more lively and interesting

He was biased

He was inaccurate

He made up sources

He exaggerated his accounts

True or False:

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