

Types of Historical Evidence

Evidence is any object, statement, thought or idea that supports a particular line of thought. For Example: Charles Darwin used fossils to explain his theory of evolution.

Evidence is something that can be produced in a court of law to prove innocence or guilt. For Example: His fingerprints on a knife proved that he held the knife.

For a historian all things that existed in the past can be used as evidence for that period in time. After thorough examination of a range of evidence, historians will be able to build up a picture of a particular time that includes:

How people lived ... What foods people ate ... What clothes people wore ... What their beliefs were ... What their lives were like ... What their thoughts were ...And more...

Because almost everything has some use in finding out about the past, historians group different types of evidence together under the following headings:

Written Evidence

Visual Evidence

Oral Evidence

Physical Evidence

- 1. Written Evidence** -- Written Evidence is the name given to things that were written in the past and include:

Manuscripts Books Letters Diaries Plans Receipts Official Records

- 2. Visual Evidence** -- Visual Evidence is the name given to things that have been produced for us to look at. Examples include:

Paintings Drawings Photographs Films Video Footage Geographical Features

- 3. Oral Evidence** -- Oral Evidence is the name given to things that have been produced in order to be heard. For example:

Music Radio Tape Recordings Speeches Nursery Rhymes Memories

- 4. Physical Evidence** -- Physical Evidence is the name given to things that exist but do not fit into other categories for example:

Statues Buildings Monuments Objects Clothing Pottery Jewelry Phones