

Three at a Time

A standalone chronology activity for ages 13+ - no app, account, internet, or artwork required.

QUICK SETUP

Ask for an order before giving the dates.

Use one challenge in 7-10 minutes, or rotate several over 25-40 minutes. Learners place three date-free cards from earliest to latest, name the clue behind the order, then revise after the reveal.

1. Sort, justify, reveal

Order the three cards. Record one clue and a low, medium, or high confidence rating. Reveal the key, then mark what changed your mind.

2. Evidence swap

Pairs share one clue without revealing their full order. Each pair may revise once, then compares which clues traveled well and which relied on assumptions.

3. Growing timeline

Insert solved cards into a larger class timeline. Require one earlier-than and one later-than comparison, and preserve question marks for approximate dates.

MAKE REASONING VISIBLE

- Ask which word, object, place, or process gave the strongest clue.
- Keep c. for approximate dates and discuss why a catalog may preserve uncertainty.
- Do not make speed part of success; revision is part of the routine.
- Use a BCE/CE number line when learners need one.

ACCESS AND CONTENT

- The activity does not depend on color, images, fine-motor cutting, or a single response format.
- Read cards aloud or use the selectable Markdown companion for text-to-speech.
- Every challenge includes a conflict-related event. Preview, omit, or replace cards as needed.
- Pair learners so reading fluency is not mistaken for chronological reasoning.

DATE LEGEND

c. means circa, or approximately. BCE means Before Common Era; CE means Common Era. The answer key prints the catalog's displayed date exactly, while the hidden signed year is used only for sorting.

Remix challenges 1-3

For each row, write the letter order from earliest to latest. Dates are hidden on purpose.

Challenge 1 One Science + one War + one Art moment

A

SCIENCE

Cai Lun Refines Papermaking

Luoyang, Eastern Han China

Han court official Cai Lun reported a refined method using bark, hemp, rags, and fishing nets; archaeological paper predates the traditionally cited court-report milestone.

B

ART

The Bust of Nefertiti

Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna), ancient Egypt

The vividly painted limestone-and-stucco portrait of Queen Nefertiti was found in the Amarna workshop of the royal sculptor Thutmose.

C

WAR

Battle of Marathon

Marathon, Attica, Greece

An Athenian-led force defeated a larger Persian invasion army, preserving Greek resistance during the First Persian invasion.

Earliest: _____ Middle: _____ Latest: _____

Strongest clue: _____

Challenge 2 One Science + one War + one Art moment

A

ART

Angkor Wat

Angkor, Khmer Empire, present-day Cambodia

Built under Suryavarman II, Angkor Wat united temple architecture, sculpted galleries, and a vast engineered landscape in a monumental Khmer state sanctuary.

B

SCIENCE

Al-Khwarizmi Systematizes Algebra

Baghdad, Abbasid Caliphate

Al-Khwarizmi's treatise organized practical methods for solving linear and quadratic equations; its Arabic title gave algebra its modern name.

C

WAR

Battle of Hastings

Near Hastings, Sussex, England

William of Normandy defeated Harold Godwinson, opening the way for the Norman conquest and a lasting transformation of England.

Earliest: _____ Middle: _____ Latest: _____

Strongest clue: _____

Challenge 3 One Science + one War + one Art moment

A

WAR

Defeat of the Spanish Armada

English Channel and North Atlantic

English attacks, difficult coordination, and severe Atlantic weather broke Philip II's invasion attempt and scattered the returning fleet.

B

ART

The Taj Mahal's Main Mausoleum

Agra, Mughal Empire, present-day India

Shah Jahan's marble mausoleum for Mumtaz Mahal combined a balanced garden plan, soaring dome, calligraphy, and intricate stone inlay in Mughal Agra.

C

SCIENCE

Gutenberg's Printing System

Mainz, Holy Roman Empire

Johannes Gutenberg combined metal movable type, oil-based ink, and a screw press into a repeatable production system that transformed European bookmaking.

Earliest: _____ Middle: _____ Latest: _____

Strongest clue: _____

Remix challenges 4-6

For each row, write the letter order from earliest to latest. Dates are hidden on purpose.

Challenge 4 One Science + one War + one Art moment

A

ART

Liberty Leading the People

Paris, France

Delacroix turned the July Revolution into a charged barricade scene led by an allegorical Liberty carrying the French tricolor above the crowd.

B

WAR

British Surrender at Saratoga

Saratoga, New York, United States

After two battles stopped the British advance, General John Burgoyne surrendered his army to American General Horatio Gates on 17 October.

C

SCIENCE

Newcomen's Atmospheric Engine

Dudley, England

Thomas Newcomen's atmospheric engine used condensed steam to drive a piston and pump water from mines, becoming the first commercially successful steam engine.

Earliest: _____ Middle: _____ Latest: _____

Strongest clue: _____

Challenge 5 One Science + one War + one Art moment

A

SCIENCE

Mendeleev Arranges the Periodic Table

Saint Petersburg, Russian Empire

Dmitri Mendeleev arranged elements by recurring properties, left deliberate gaps, and predicted characteristics of elements not yet discovered.

B

ART

Impression, Sunrise

Le Havre, France

Monet rapidly painted Le Havre's misty harbor, setting a bright orange sun against loose blue-gray strokes; its title later helped name Impressionism.

C

WAR

Bombardment of Fort Sumter

Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, United States

Confederate batteries opened fire on the U.S. garrison at Fort Sumter on 12 April, beginning the first engagement of the American Civil War.

Earliest: _____ Middle: _____ Latest: _____

Strongest clue: _____

Challenge 6 One Science + one War + one Art moment

A

WAR

Attack on Pearl Harbor

Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii, United States

Japanese naval aircraft attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December, inflicting severe losses on the U.S. Pacific Fleet and bringing the United States into World War II.

B

ART

Composition VIII

Weimar, Germany

Kandinsky orchestrated circles, diagonals, and color like musical notes, making geometry feel rhythmic rather than mechanical.

C

SCIENCE

Fleming Observes Penicillin

St Mary's Hospital, London, England

Alexander Fleming noticed a *Penicillium* mold inhibiting nearby staphylococci, a chance observation that opened the path to modern penicillin antibiotics.

Earliest: _____ Middle: _____ Latest: _____

Strongest clue: _____

Reveal the dates, then examine the clues.

Orders run from earliest to latest. Displayed dates preserve every approximate marker.

ANSWER KEY

1. B -> C -> A

The Bust of Nefertiti - c. 1340 BCE; Battle of Marathon - 490 BCE; Cai Lun Refines Papermaking - 105 CE

2. B -> C -> A

Al-Khwarizmi Systematizes Algebra - c. 820 CE; Battle of Hastings - 1066 CE; Angkor Wat - c. 1150 CE

3. C -> A -> B

Gutenberg's Printing System - c. 1450; Defeat of the Spanish Armada - 1588 CE; The Taj Mahal's Main Mausoleum - 1648 CE

4. C -> B -> A

Newcomen's Atmospheric Engine - 1712; British Surrender at Saratoga - 1777 CE; Liberty Leading the People - 1830 CE

5. C -> A -> B

Bombardment of Fort Sumter - 1861 CE; Mendeleev Arranges the Periodic Table - 1869; Impression, Sunrise - 1872 CE

6. B -> C -> A

Composition VIII - 1923 CE; Fleming Observes Penicillin - 1928; Attack on Pearl Harbor - 1941 CE

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Which word, object, place, person, or process gave you the strongest chronological clue?
- Which clue looked reliable but depended on an assumption?
- How should c. or an uncertain date appear on a timeline?
- Which two moments are closest together? Which have the largest gap?
- For one card, distinguish the event from the date chosen to represent it.
- What institutional or scholarly source would you seek before making a deeper claim?

DATING CAUTIONS

- Cai Lun's 105 CE milestone is a traditional court report and refinement; archaeological paper is older.
- Gutenberg marks a repeatable printing system, not the first use of paper or movable type.
- The Taj Mahal date refers to the main mausoleum, not every element of the complex.
- Liberty Leading the People depicts the July Revolution of 1830, not the French Revolution of 1789.
- Fleming observed penicillin in 1928; later teams developed it into a practical treatment.

SOURCE AND REUSE NOTE

All titles, locations, and displayed dates come from the archived version 1.0 (90-event) catalog. Student summaries follow the catalog; the Cai Lun clue omits its date so the answer stays hidden. Historical-date references are documented by category in the companion source guide; catalog sourceURL fields describe artwork provenance only. No artwork is included. Original worksheet text and layout copyright 2026 Grossman Labs LLC, licensed CC BY 4.0; linked third-party material remains under its own terms.

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