

Locating Turning Points in History

Why Learn This Skill?

Geographic factors are crucial to understanding major events in history. If we can't put time and place together, we can't get the full picture of an event's significance.

Learning the Skill

Turning points in history occur when major periods of change or events change the way people live or look at the world. Turning points can include:

- revolutions
- exploration
- discoveries
- the rise and fall of empires
- social and religious change (such as disease, urbanization, industrialization, the introduction of new religions, new technology)

Location is an influential and motivating factor when it comes to turning points in history, as these events or ideas can affect a particular region or a larger part of the world. When attempting to locate places of historical significance in which turning points occurred, ask yourself these questions:

- In what area of the world did the turning point occur? Was it in one particular region, or was it widespread?
- What is special or different about the geography of the location where the turning point occurred?
- Can you recognize a pattern between different turning points that occurred in the same area?

Practicing the Skill

Examine this map of Europe and the Mediterranean world, noting the various cities included on it. Each of these cities holds

historical significance by being a part of at least one turning point in history.

1. Most of the cities on the map are located around seas or major rivers. What general conclusion can you reach about the role of access to major waterways and turning points in history?
2. On the basis of your answer to question 1, how might seas and rivers affect turning points in history?
3. After examining this map, use areas called out to identify at least two turning points in history that could be illustrated on this map.



Applying the Skill

Using your knowledge of current events, select a region of the world and a significant current event happening there. Write a paragraph explaining how that significant event could become a turning point in history for students reading about it in the future. Be sure to explain how location plays a role in a turning point in history. (Use the examples included in the bulleted list under "Learning the Skill" for guidance, if needed.)