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| Name: |  | Date: |  |

## Purpose

In this activity, you’ll look at the 10 most populous cities in the world over time to consider worldwide historical patterns. Demography is a useful analytical tool in history that is often overlooked. Looking at population patterns can help us take a global perspective on human history rather than just looking at particular regions and the history of those areas.

## Process

You’ve seen models of how to use data to understand history in a lot of the articles you have read. In this activity, you’re going to learn how to use population patterns to help you ask questions and generate hypotheses about what was going on in the world based on different population patterns at different times.

By using large-scale population change data, we can focus on people instead of nations, societies, and other institutions that are typically the focus of historical change. Normally, we look at how those things affect populations. With this activity, we draw conclusions about those other things while using population to help us decide what to ask about. For example, in the fourteenth century, there was a large drop in Asian and European populations and a rise in American populations. Why was that happening? If we weren’t looking at demographic data, we might not have asked that particular question.

Make sure you have the Comparing Most Populous Cities by Century, 1500 to Present worksheet. You’re going to examine the population data and draw some conclusions or ask some questions about the past.

Once you’re done with the worksheet, discuss the following questions with your class:

* What causes populations to increase?
* What causes changes in birth and death rates?
* What might explain fluctuations in specific regions?
* How might people’s lives have changed as a result of dramatic increases in population from c. 1500 to the present?

**Directions:** Examine the following population data and then answer the questions that follow.

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|  | 100 CE | | 1000 CE | | 1500 CE | | 1800 CE | |
|  | **Name** | **Population** | **Name** | **Population** | **Name** | **Population** | **Name** | **Population** |
| 1 | Rome | 450,000 | Córdoba, Spain | 450,000 | Beijing, China | 672,000 | Beijing, China | 1,100,000 |
| 2 | Luoyang (Honan), China | 420,000 | Kaifeng, China | 400,000 | Vijayanagar, India | 500,000 | London, United Kingdom | 861,000 |
| 3 | Seleucia (on the Tigris), Iraq | 250,000 | Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey | 300,000 | Cairo, Egypt | 400,000 | Guangzhou, China | 800,000 |
| 4 | Alexandria, Egypt | 250,000 | Angkor, Cambodia | 200,000 | Hangzhou, China | 250,000 | Edo (Tokyo), Japan | 685,000 |
| 5 | Antioch, Turkey | 150,000 | Kyoto, Japan | 175,000 | Tabriz, Iran | 250,000 | Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey | 570,000 |
| 6 | Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka | 130,000 | Cairo, Egypt | 135,000 | Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey | 200,000 | Paris, France | 547,000 |
| 7 | Peshawar, Pakistan | 120,000 | Baghdad, Iraq | 125,000 | Gaur, India | 200,000 | Naples, Italy | 430,000 |
| 8 | Carthage, Tunisia | 100,000 | Nishapur (Neyshabur), Iran | 125,000 | Paris, France | 185,000 | Hangzhou, China | 387,000 |
| 9 | Suzhou, China | n/a | Al-Hasa, Saudi Arabia | 110,000 | Guangzhou, China | 150,000 | Osaka, Japan | 383,000 |
| 10 | Smyrna, Turkey | 90,000 | Patan (Anhilwara), India | 100,000 | Nanjing, China | 147,000 | Kyoto, Japan | 377,000 |

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|  | 1900 CE | | 1950 CE | | 2014 CE | |
|  | **Name** | **Population** | **Name** | **Population** | **Name** | **Population** |
| 1 | London, United Kingdom | 6,480,000 | New York, United States | 12,463,000 | Chongqing | 30,165,500 |
| 2 | New York, United States | 4,242,000 | London, United Kingdom | 8,860,000 | Shanghai | 24,183,300 |
| 3 | Paris, France | 3,330,000 | Tokyo, Japan | 7,000,000 | Beijing | 21,707,000 |
| 4 | Berlin, Germany | 2,707,000 | Paris, France | 5,900,000 | Istanbul | 15,029,231 |
| 5 | Chicago, United States | 1,717,000 | Shanghai, China | 5,406,000 | Karachi | 14,910,352 |
| 6 | Vienna, Austria | 1,698,000 | Moscow, Russia | 5,100,000 | Dhaka | 14,399,000 |
| 7 | Tokyo, Japan | 1,497,000 | Buenos Aires, Argentina | 5,000,000 | Tokyo | 13,515,271 |
| 8 | St. Petersburg, Russia | 1,439,000 | Chicago, United States | 4,906,000 | Moscow | 13,200,000 |
| 9 | Manchester, United Kingdom | 1,435,000 | Ruhr, Germany | 4,900,000 | Guangzhou | 13,081,000 |
| 10 | Philadelphia, United States | 1,418,000 | Kolkata, India | 4,800,000 | Shenzhen | 12,528,300 |

**Sources:**

* Chandler, Tertius. *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: An Historical Census*. Lewiston, NY: St. David’s University Press, 1987.
* United Nations. “World Urbanization Prospects 2018.” New York, 2019.

1. What continent has housed the largest majority of the most populous cities over time?

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1. Why might this be the case?

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1. What city appears most often and why might that be the case?

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1. The United States didn’t contain one of the largest cities until 1950. What might explain that?

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