

When does modern  
history begin?



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History is broken down and separated into periods of time. Each period begins with an event that will significantly change the future. Modern History begins after the end of the Middle Ages in the 16th century and continues on today. The Modern Era consists of major advances in the areas of technology, science and population growth. Modern History is a result of hundreds of years of human innovation and ultimately represents the human race at its best. The events that took place in the Middle Ages created necessary conditions for the Modern Era to begin.

To understand what caused the rise of the Modern Era, one must study the events of the period prior. The Middle Ages is the time period that started at the 5th century and ended at the 15th century. This era is usually split into three sub-periods known as the Early Middle Ages, High Middle Ages, and the Late Middle Ages. Each sub-period contributed to the creation of the Modern Era. The Early Middle Ages, also called the Dark Ages, is known for the rise of Islam, the Byzantine Empire, barbaric invasions and a population decline. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the people of Europe saw no improvement in their quality of life. It wasn't until later, when Charlemagne came to power, that Europe saw some kind of progress. Europe was slightly revitalized by the introduction of feudalism and agricultural developments. Following the Early Middle Ages was the High Middle Ages. This period was a time of great innovation and change for Europe. It is known for Catholic crusades, a rise of intelligence and an increase in population. In this time, intellectual and artistic movements created a new wave of learning. A new idea of learning, Scholasticism, was introduced. This form of verbal debates as a way of learning created a deeper understanding of topics and ideas. The

last period in the Middle Ages is the Late Middle Ages. The Late Middle Ages contain the most important events resulting in the Modern Era. Within the 14th and 16th century, Europe was exposed to many crises such as the Black Death, the Great Famine, the Hundred Years' War and the fall of Constantinople. The Black Death reduced the European population by about half and the world population by about 100 million. The Great Famine brought crop failures which killed millions of people. The fall of Constantinople had a direct effect in bringing about the Modern Era. The fall of the Byzantine capital after the Ottoman Empire's attack resulted in the end of the Byzantine Empire. Without the capability to trade with Eastern Europe, Western Europeans had to find a new trade route. This problem led to Columbus discovering the Americas. With a basic understanding of the close past before the Modern Era, it allows us to wrap our heads around how the Modern Era began.

There is no exact time the Modern Era began. Some of the more popular beliefs are after the American Revolution, after the discovery of the atom, the end of World War I or the Industrial Revolution. I believe the Modern Era begins somewhere between after the fall of Constantinople, the discovery of the Americas and the Industrial Revolution. This new period contains everything that defines who we are today. As previously stated, the fall of Constantinople had a direct effect to Columbus discovering the Americas in 1492. Without Columbus, direct knowledge of the Americas and relationships with the natives would not be possible for many years to come. The discovery of the Americas is in my opinion one of the starting points of Modern History because it connected the known world to the unknown.

Although Columbus was not the first explorer to find the Americas and his original goal was to find the East Indies, he succeeded in bringing the first connection between Europe and America. This is especially important to me because I am currently happily living in North America and if Columbus did not discover America, the present could be very different from what it is today. The Industrial Revolution had an incredible impact on the world. Before the Industrial Revolution, life was nowhere near as efficient as it is today. The Industrial Revolution brought new ways of communicating with people over longer distances. The invention of the printing press, steam engine and other innovative technologies allowed for news and ideas to spread. This was a huge transition from the pre-Industrial Revolution. Before, most work was done by hand by usually one person who specialized at that skill. For example, a shoemaker would be skilled at every aspect of making a shoe, from the leather to the soles and so on. The Industrial Revolution brought forth mass production and specialization of skills. Now, jobs could be done faster and more efficiently. Instead of one shoemaker, there would be a person or group of people working on every section of the shoe. This idea of mass production is utilized by almost every manufacturing company today. The Modern Era has eradicated the need for a one man job and has created a system that can produce enough to keep up with the ever growing population of the modern world. I believe that Modern History began when the world became truly connected through technology.

People's perspective on Modern History is relative. All people throughout history have regarded Modern History in a different way. For me, Modern History is the most recent events

that affect me. For instance, I would not consider the first civilization and empire in the ancient world modern. However, someone who had just seen that same empire fall might call that period of time to be modern. It is a mystery to me to know when exactly someone in the future will regard my lifetime to be pre-modern. The term modern is relative because not everyone views the world's timeline in the same fashion. In my point of view, modern is different for different topics. Modern technology for me would be technology created in the past five years simply because technology is always changing rapidly in our present world. I view history differently because the world's history is so immensely vast that a few hundred years is not so long when compared to the 4.5 billion years the Earth has existed.

Modern History begins somewhere between the 1500's and 1850's. The exact time cannot be specified because I do not believe it was simply one event that changed the periods but rather many events built on each other to bring a gradual change. I believe that Modern History to my generation began after the world became connected because in today's world, everyone is connected. People of all ages from seniors to children are constantly on smartphones texting or on the internet browsing. It seems fit that in a world where everyone is connected that the beginning of this period is when we first linked together. I do believe that eventually the idea of when Modern History began will change again and that it will continue to change until humans cease to exist.