TIME AND DATING

In ancient calendars, years were generally numbered according to the year of a ruler's reign. The dating system that we use, however, comes from a monk by the name of Dionysius Exiguus, who lived in the early Middle Ages. In the year 532, he started a Christian system of dating events beginning with the most important event in Christianity-the year he believed Jesus Christ was born. He called the years after this event *Anno Domini* or A.D., which is Latin for "in the year of our Lord." Therefore, an event that occurred in 500 A.D. was said to have taken place 500 years after the birth of Christ.

The years before the birth of Christ are called B.C., or *before Christ*. The events of 249 B.C. took place 249 years before Christ was born. B.C. dates are numbered backwards, like negative numbers on a number line. Therefore, the larger the number B.C., the earlier the date in actual time. In designating A.D. and B.C., write B.C. after the year's number and A.D. can go either in front or behind the number. For example, the 5th year before the birth of Christ would be __5BC__. The 7th year after the birth of Christ would be either __7A.D.__ or __A.D.7__. If NO designation is given and the year is alone, it is understood to be A.D. You may be wondering, is there a zero year? Actually, sometimes there is a zero POINT shown, however, there is no actual year designated zero.

It is interesting to note that Dionysius made a slight error in the calculation of the year of Jesus's birth. Historians now believe that Christ was born sometime around 4-6 B.C. Since this was figured with all the modern data and information available, it is actually quite remarkable that Dionysius got as close as he did!

Often, groups of years are viewed together for historical or other purposes. You have probably heard of most, if not all, of these. Note how many years are included in the following terms:

decade __10__   score __20__
century __100__   millennium __1000__

When designating a particular century, many people are often confused. The FIRST century begins with the year 1 A.D. and extends to 100 A.D. Then, the years numbered 101-200 are the 2nd Century A.D. The confusing part is due to the fact that these are the numbers beginning in 1, not 2. The same principle applies with B.C., the 3rd century B.C. includes the years __201B.C. - 300B.C.__. Can you think of a time in fairly recent history when most of the people in the world were fooled by this system? __2000__

One last item of interest...in recent times, some historians have referred to a more generic and politically correct term for dating. This term is the Common Era. Years occurring before Christ's birth are referred to as B.C.E. (before the Common Era) and the years after Christ's birth are referred to as C. E. (Common Era).

TIME AND DATING PRACTICE

A. In which centuries would you find the following years?

1. 301-400   _4th_
2. 1-100 B.C.   _1st B.C._
3. 1799   _18th_
4. 600 A.D.   _6th_
5. 1830-1880   _19th_

6. 479 B.C.   _5th B.C._
7. 200 A.D.   _2nd_
8. 1643 B.C.   _17th B.C._
9. 3401 BCE   _35th BCE_
10. 11,332 B.C.   _N/A_

B. What years are contained in the following centuries?

11. 1st Century   _1-100_
12. 13th Century   _1201-1300_
13. 21st Century   _2001-2100_
14. 10th Century   _901-1000_
15. 6th Century B.C.   _501-600 B.C._

C. How many years are between the following dates?

16. 100 B.C. and 300 A.D.   _400_
17. 4100 B. C and 1450 B.C.   _2,650_
18. 349 A.D. and 13 50 A.D.   _1,001_
19, 4 B.C. and 4 A.D.   _8_
20. 1212 A.D. and 14 B.C.   _1,226_

D. Which happened first?

21. 750 B.C. or 500 B.C.   _500B.C_
22. 3100 B.C. or 143 B.C.   _143 B.C._
23. 15 B.C. and 900 A.D.   _15 B.C._
24. 801 B.C. and 14 A.D.   _801 B.C._
25. 1 A.D. and 3 B.C.   _3 B.C._

E. Put the following dates in order from the earliest to the most recent.

4	3	2	6	5	1
145 A.D.	67 B.C.	1434 B.C.	2003 A.D.	1434 A.D.	5, 434 B.C.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____