

1st Century A.D.	2nd Century A.D.	3rd Century A.D.	4th Century A.D.	5th Century A.D.	6th Century A.D.	7th Century A.D.	8th Century A.D.	9th Century A.D.	10th Century A.D.	11th Century A.D.	12th Century A.D.
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13th Century A.D.	14th Century A.D.	15th Century A.D.	16th Century A.D.	17th Century A.D.	18th Century A.D.	19th Century A.D.	20th Century A.D.	21st Century A.D.	→
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12th Century B.C.	11th Century B.C.	10th Century B.C.	9th Century B.C.	8th Century B.C.	7th Century B.C.	6th Century B.C.	5th Century B.C.	4th Century B.C.	3rd Century B.C.	2nd Century B.C.	1st Century B.C.
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←	23rd Century B.C.	22nd Century B.C.	21st Century B.C.	20th Century B.C.	19th Century B.C.	18th Century B.C.	17th Century B.C.	16th Century B.C.	15th Century B.C.	14th Century B.C.	13th Century B.C.
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This charming lesson is a classic Montessori presentation. While a religious component can be added if desired, you can also present it exactly as I outline, and it will simply be a lesson about time and how we identify years and centuries.

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**Instructions for PDF:** print page 1 on cardstock, laminate, and cut out the manger and the timeline strips (you will have four strips). You may want to tape the two sets of strips together, or you can just place them side by side when you present the work. You may also want to print and laminate pages 2-3, as you will be using them as a guide during the lesson. Please read through the instructions completely before presenting this work.

**NOTE:** You will need to provide two additional strips of paper, cardstock, or felt (you choose) to complete this work; one red and one green. They should each be about one inch wide, and about 20 inches long. You can tape or glue smaller strips together to make one long one. The red one should say "A.D." and the green one should say "B.C."

Also, while the picture of the manger is perfectly adequate, it's a nice touch to use a wooden manger (with or without a baby, as desired). Small nativity sets can be purchased very inexpensively at craft stores.

**Presentation:** Ask a child to bring the golden beads for the current year. For example, if it is 2008, they will bring two thousand cubes and eight unit beads. (I'll use 2008 as an example, but you would do the same thing for each year). Note that we have counted the year in which we are living. Since the universe began much earlier than just 2008 years ago, something very important must have happened then, something so important that we start counting the years from that event. What is it? 2008 years ago, Jesus Christ was born. *(At this time, you may want to read a simple story of the birth of Jesus. Use your own discretion).*

Next, introduce the solid color timelines. Place a manger on the rug, and on either side of it place the A.D. and B.C. timelines. The green color represents **hope**; the red represents **love**. It should look like this from the child's perspective:



Explain that we are looking at two eras (periods of history): B.C. and A.D.  
Define the terms: **B.C.** = Before Christ, **A.D.** = Anno Domini, or "The Year of Our Lord".

Next, you will put out the second set of timelines (the ones with each century) out on the rug, under the first set of solid-colored strips. Explain that “century” means 100 years.

Also explain that there are many centuries before the 23rd Century B.C., and may likely be more to come after our current century, so both ends of the timelines have arrows. Children may notice, or you can point out, that centuries in A.D. get higher in number, starting with 1 and moving forward, while centuries from B.C. go lower in number; they start at 1 and move backwards.

**The aim of this work:** to enable children to be oriented to time, that is, past, present, and future. It will also orient them to historical dates and give them an understanding of how our present-day calendar arose.

**Additional Info:** One point of interest for older children is that each century is a little “off” when it comes to the actual years we use. For instance, the 5th Century A.D. is the 400s, etc. This can be confusing! Also, one version of this work includes Roman Numerals for each century. I debated about including those, but since they aren’t commonly used, I didn’t. Feel free to mention to the children that sometimes, Roman Numerals are used for years instead of standard notation.

For several hundred years, the terms “common era” or “C.E.” and “before common era”, or “B.C.E.” have also been used to designate years and centuries, although less commonly than “A.D.” and “B.C.” It would be interesting for an older child to research the origins of both sets of terms, as there are valid reasons for each.

If you do mention “B.C.E.” and “C.E.” in your presentation, you might want to note that “A.D.” usually precedes the year (A.D. 2007), while “C.E.” comes after it (2007 C.E.). Also, all of the abbreviations can be used with or without periods. “AD” is just as acceptable as “A.D.”. I simply chose to use the periods in this work, but either is fine. In our modern day, we usually drop the “A.D.” and simply state the year, as in “Galileo was born in 1564.” However, we always use “B.C.” or “B.C.E.” when referring to the time before Christ.

An older child (I’m thinking 3rd grade and up) might also be interested in researching the monk, Dionysius Exiguus, who made the first calendar using Christ’s birth as a starting point in 525. Most scholars agree that he calculated incorrectly, but they disagree about the correct answer. Some think Christ was born as early as 8 B.C., others think it could have been as late as 6 B.C. While we don’t know the answer for sure, most certainly Dionysius intended to begin his calendar with Christ’s birth.

This lesson is applicable only to dates on the Gregorian calendar, the most widely used calendar in the world today. However, there are many other countries and cultures that have a different way of calculating days and years. Exploring these other calendars would be another great research project for an older child.