

# IDEAS 81

**International Online Teachers Society  
Debate  
Educational Materials For  
Advance and Upper Intermediate  
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society  
Publishing Committee**



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What can history teach us?

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History is important because it provides us with lessons for the future. Our history is rich with answers and such answers can help us better understand the world and also ourselves. Man's history is filled with interesting characters such as Julius Ceasar, Alexander the great, Napoleon Bonaparte, Aristotle, Alexander Graham Bell, Albert Einstein and several other individuals. By understanding their lives, we will be able to improve our own lives and we will be able to know how they lived during their time.

Through the past, we will also be able to measure our own failures and successes. We often try to work very hard in life. From the moment we learn how to speak we already start studying. Most people study for a couple of years while some even study until they grow old. Once we finish our studies, we end up with the type of work which is suited for our talents and skills. The decisions that we do and the hard work that we did before will be our measurement for success. By looking at the many challenges that we have faced before we will be able to measure our lives and we will be able to find out what will happen in the future.

One of the things that we can learn from history is experience. Most people experience a lot of things every day. Because of their experiences they learn how to face life and they learn various things about themselves. For instance, people who had a car accident before will most likely try to drive more safely in the road. Because we have experienced a traumatic experience before we are often afraid to do the same mistakes. We learn to do things better and eventually the product of our hard work will often be perfect. This type of concept is common in all types of occupation, whether a person is a teacher, a writer, an artist, a programmer or an electrician.

Most students also learn a lot of things because of history. They learn more about things that they should do and not do. They also learn from their mistakes and they often try to work hard in order to be better in the future. By understanding their mistakes, they will eventually be able to do better.

Lastly, various countries also look at history as a guide for the future. Most calamities happen every day and they are often due to human error. By looking at the errors and the reasons why calamities happen in the past, we will be able to prevent calamities from happening in the future. Such are the different things that the past can teach us.

Questions:

- 1) What are the different things that we can learn from history?
- 2) What is your definition of history?
- 3) Who are the famous historical people that you know?
- 4) What do students learn about history?
- 5) Why is learning history important?



## WHY STUDY HISTORY?

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo  
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Studying history always had a hypnotic effect on me. I easily fell asleep during History class. That's why history examinations were always big trouble for me. It didn't matter whether it was World History, Asian History or my country's history; the story was the same every time. This is not a testament to the ability of my History teachers to do their job effectively; it's just the way I am.

However, I have always been amazed at how many of my ESL students have been able to remember so much of their own country's history. I guess for them, History plays a huge role in making them what they are today. I have much to learn from the students I have taught English to. For them, history is a significant part of themselves. I like that concept.

We study history in order to learn from the lessons of the past. When we learn from the lessons of the past, we are not bound to repeat past mistakes in the present and the future. It has been repeated many times: Those who don't learn from the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them. And doing the same mistake over and over again can be a sign of refusal to move ahead and live for the present. Others have even called it sheer stupidity.

My country has had a colorful history. No matter that my country's history has been filled with tyranny, oppression and suffering; we as a people still consider ourselves fortunate for having survived those varied challenges toward becoming a united race. Our ancestors were the ones who fought bravely and suffered in silence so that we in the present and the generations after us may enjoy freedom and democracy. The road may not have been easy at all, but I still feel proud that the people in my country have been able to go through the journey in their own way. The road may have been strewn with thorns and sharp stones, but we have been able to arise as a race quite apart from others.

It is a country's history that shapes its people into becoming what they are in the present and what they ultimately will become in the future. We need to be grateful for whatever history lessons we derive for we are defined by those very lessons. The numerous baptisms of fire that our ancestors have undergone all contribute to how our descendants will face their own challenges in their own time.

For those who still have to contend with History lessons at school, find that specific degree of love for what you study. Once you have done so, you will surely be able to find your identity as a human being.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define history. Why is it important?
2. For you, what was the most significant part of your country's history? Why is it so?
3. Do you believe that studying History always plays a huge role in defining the present and future? Why or why not?
4. How do you characterize your own studies of History?
5. Would you open up about History of your country to your own kids? How?



## THE HISTORY WE MAKE TOGETHER-AND ALONE

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When people say “We share a history together,” it means something in the past connects us to someone else. This is often something that former lovers use to justify familiarity with one another. It’s also effective to signify old business partnerships that have probably gone sour. Sharing a history with someone else can be fun. Imagine when what history you’ve shared was filled with exciting things you did together. But once the history is marred with pain and suffering, the history can be a bitter reminder of foolishness that people just want to forget. Who wants to relive a past that’s been shameful and filled with regret? Absolutely no one!

However, we need to consider the past as a valuable element towards crafting our present and future. The lessons we learn and the nuggets of wisdom we pick up along the way help make us stronger individuals.

My own history has been colorful, to say the least. I got married at 19, became a mother at the same age. I had my seventh and youngest child when I was 36. I was widowed at 37. I experienced both exceptional joy and uncommon pain and suffering in between being a very young mother and a young widow. I have often regretted many things but will gladly embrace everything all over again. I guess you can call me a masochist that way, even berate me all you want. But my history defines who I am now, and I am mighty proud to have shaped the history that my children will be talking about to their own family in the future.

We need not brood on the mistakes we made in the past. That only brings depression and ill mental health. Staying too long in the past can make one lose their sanity. Unable to move forward, such people end up chasing their tails needlessly and losing their grip on the present. That is a very scary concept that could potentially ruin not only one’s life but the life of others. Do not attempt to go back to the past too often. It would only make you mad. We can never change the past for it is all gone and finished. What we can do is live for the present and prepare for the future.

Reflecting on history can be useful as long as it is not done much too often or indulged in for much too long. Live for today for it is what you have, a present that comes from a life which, although not well-lived, will still be part of the history that you will have in the future. Recognize the colors of history for what they were, paint the present with the colors you already have, and infuse the future with a fresh tint of pure and gleaming purity that speaks of fresh hope and even fresher perspective.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Talk about a specific moment in your past that you wish you didn’t have. Be able to talk about the lessons you learned from it.
2. Why is history sometimes too bothersome to go back to?
3. How can people avoid repeating the mistakes of the past? Use concrete examples, as needed.
4. How do you deal with a painful history? Cite examples, if you must.
5. What part of your history do you wish could be repeated now or in the future? Why so?



## EMBRACING HISTORY AS A PEOPLE

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We as a people share a common history. Since we basically have the same ancestors, the same race and the same culture, it is natural that our history is one and the same. The inability to accept where we came from and where we've been smacks of plain arrogance. We can not say that we are historically unique; that may be true on a personal level. But on the communal aspect, our histories are almost always nearly identical. The way we responded and reacted to stimuli in the past may have been different, but the destiny that came out of those reactions all contribute to the same outcome: the present.

Exploring our common history allows us to learn from one another's experiences. We can explore the past together with a clear perspective. There's no use for throwing brickbats at one another. We need to see our past mistakes as stepping stones to get to where we are now. Well, maybe not exactly stepping stones but as booster shots—picking up where we left off and moving forward and upward from there. We should never let history drag us down.

At specific points in my own country's history, there were instances when our integrity as a people was strewn and spilled into the spotlight. Fortunately, a great many inspired and inspiring individuals chose to show the world that we couldn't be easily put down as a people. Great men and women of history went out and showed everyone else that if we were worthy to be called citizens of a great country, we needed to rise up to the occasion as they did.

Bravery and a genuine sense of self-sacrifice were the elements that brought bloodshed at particular points of my country's history. But they were also the very factors that brought freedom and democracy that we now enjoy. Perhaps, we have not completely shaken off the tyranny, foreign rule and influence that have managed to permeate our very culture. But that fact should never hinder us from moving forward as we should.

I believe that our history as a people has made us what we are now. That history has enabled us to face the present with valuable lessons on what has been and what needs to be. Unless we learn to accept past mistakes as our own and become responsible for what we did, we can never learn to take full responsibility for the present and what is to come.

Many of us resort to finger-pointing when specific blunders in the past are brought up. That's not the attitude. It neither solves problems nor makes things better in the present. It will also never guarantee a perfect future. A sense of accountability should be part of how we learn lessons from the past.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What specific points of your country's history are you most proud of?
2. What specific points of your country's history are you most shamed by?
3. Why should we learn both from the bad and the good in our history?
4. Do you believe that a country's progress into the future depends on its people's ability to learn from the past? Justify your answer.
5. How can history be made in the present?



## HISTORY - OUR PAST TIME REVISITED

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Every mankind has its own history and we can consider it as our past time revisited. It is an account of events that are narrated and arranged in a chronological manner which actually deals with the past of mankind. As Aristotle defines it, it is a systematic account of a set of natural phenomena and as E. H. Carn defined history, it is an “unending dialogue between the present and the past.” History is very important then because we draw conclusions from our past events. Through history, we learn a lot of things from our past, enabling us to study lessons derived from it which actually help us avoid the pitfalls of the present.

History broadens our outlook and it enables one to grasp one’s relationship with one’s past. A very good example will be how our flags came about and what do the symbols and colors for it stand for. It definitely has its own origins and stories. History, per se, deals with our past time that transpired way, way back when things and people originally started and what their outcome is right now. Actually, it makes it easier for us to have a record of events so we could review and check what happened in the past.

By means of knowing and learning history, we would never repeat the same mistakes which occurred. This frees us of committing the same mistakes so we could understand people, things and events in every aspect of life. History is mainly a very important thing, so we could understand the world better, how it was even before our existence today. It can be an aide or even a panacea to everything that we see at present, based on what happened during the past. It is very true that people learn from their mistakes and past experiences.

One of the very important reasons why history is important is for us to learn to appreciate who we are and how people became such persons. If we are not aware and do not know all the struggles, trials and tribulations that people before us underwent (no matter who they are), we will never be able to learn to be grateful for how things have become because of them. We all have different cultures, different values, characteristics and ambitions in life. Therefore, our points of view differ from each other. If we learn each other’s history, then we could learn to understand one another better and avoid things that will harm and hurt people.

Moreover, history will make us understand the different cultures and races of the people. It also makes us understand why the countries all over the world have different rules and different types of government. Studying history will help people in becoming more flexible to change for the better. These are only some of the reasons why History is very important. I am sure that we have reasons each to its own on why it is significant in a person’s life.

Let us learn to appreciate each other’s lives even more so we could live harmoniously with one another. To make it simple, History equips us to handle things in a better perspective in these present times and it enables us to prepare for a better future. Indeed, when we talk of History, we can consider it as our past time revisited.

Questions for discussion:

1. Can history help us a lot in many ways? How?
2. Do you consider history and drool with it to extract something very important? What will that be?
3. Have you tried to recall all the incidents that happened in your life? Is it a very crucial part of your own history?
4. Can history best describe a country or even a person? Justify your answer.
5. Do you agree that history is our past time revisited? Why or why not?



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