

## Why history matters (just a few reasons)

Why does history matter? It is a fair question to ask because at first glance, it may seem that all that we are learning about is a bunch of people who have died in the past and someone would ask, "Why do they matter to my life now?" Some people enjoy learning facts about the past, but that is not a strong justification to include it as a course of study in school. Listed below are a few ideas to think about why history matters. It does not include every reason that would answer the question, but it does provide some good food for thought.

1. **We study history because it helps to better understand why our world is the way it is.** We can understand why various cultures have certain beliefs or practice certain traditions by looking at their history. We can understand why the United States is the way it is today. An example from life would be a professional counselor, seeking to help someone work through a very tough issue in their life. The counselor may ask the individual questions about what their life was like growing up to better understand why this person is perhaps having difficulty now.

2. **We study history because it helps us appreciate multiple perspectives and viewpoints of the world.** When someone flies over a forest of trees, they have a much different perspective of it than someone who is on the ground hiking through the vast groves. When we look at the history of a people group, we see that they perhaps had a different way of doing things, but we can seek to learn from what they did to apply to life now. We learn to understand various cultures. Sadly, in our world, racism is still very much alive. One way to combat that is through learning about the past and seeing that people made different choices, but when we learn more about a group of people, that can help combat racism.

3. **History helps us understand where positive decisions were made in the past and where negative (perhaps even downright evil) decisions were made.** It has been said that, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." (George Santayana). If we learn from the successes of the past, we can apply that learning to life today to create a better world. If we do not learn from an evil of the past (e.g. the Holocaust), then our world is in grave danger because it could be repeated. (Sadly, the Holocaust has been repeated multiple times since the Nazi era).

4. **History can be a tool to inspire us.** 99.9% of people in life would say that they want to see a better world. They want to see more kindness and more equality in the world. When we look at heroes of the past such as Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez and even those more recently such as Malala Yousafzai, we can be inspired and challenged to reach out and make a positive difference right where we are at in life. We may not be famous like these 3 individuals are, but we can impact people around us as we seek to stand up for others, showing kindness to make a difference, to use our life for what counts.

### Ideas taken from the following sources:

1. Why study history (Stearns 1998) [https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/historical-archives/why-study-history-\(1998\)](https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/historical-archives/why-study-history-(1998))
2. Why study history? (video clip): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgmNkYUL\\_Cw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgmNkYUL_Cw)

(turn over)

**Reader response journal assignment- due Thursday Aug, 1<sup>st</sup>!**

**Directions:** Please choose 3 quotes (from 3 different parts) that come from the text “Why history matters” to do the following with:

- a. Write down your quote in the space provided below along with the paragraph it occurs in.
- b. Write a reaction to the quote. Your reaction can include your opinion about it, why it is important, an example you could provide from life, a connection to a movie you have seen or a book you have read, or why you disagree with the quote, etc. Your reaction should be **at least 3 strong sentences**. An example is provided below. Please do not use my example.

**Example:** “Some people enjoy learning facts about the past, but that is not a strong justification to include it as a course of study in school.” (1<sup>st</sup>) Response: It can be fun to know different facts about the past, but how will that truly benefit life today? It doesn’t really seem to be anything beyond like someone playing a game of Trivial Pursuit. We need impactful reasons to learn about history.

**1<sup>st</sup> quote and paragraph** where it is found:

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My response:

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**2<sup>nd</sup> quote and paragraph** where it is found:

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My response:

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**3<sup>rd</sup> quote and paragraph** where it is found:

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My response:

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