

# BEST QUOTES ON HISTORY

Civilization is a stream with banks. The stream is sometimes filled with blood from people killing stealing, shouting and doing the things historians usually record, while on the banks, unnoticed people build homes, make love, raise children, sing songs, write poetry and even whittle statues. The story of civilization is the story of what happened on the banks. Historians are pessimists because they ignore the banks for the river.

--Will Durant

The historian will tell you what happened. The novelist will tell you what it felt like.

—E. L. Doctorow

History gives us the facts, sort of, but from literary works we can learn what the past smelled like, sounded like, and felt like, the forgotten gritty details of a lost era. Literature brings us as close as we can come to reinhabiting the past. By reclaiming this use of literature in the classroom, perhaps we can move away from the political agitation that has been our bread and butter—or porridge and hardtack—for the last 30 years.

—Scott Herring

Great novelists are the true historians of the times in which they live. Stop and think about it for a minute and I'm sure you'll find that you didn't get your impressions of what life was like here and abroad in the last 300 years from the history books—but from the novels of such literary titans as Hardy, Dostoevsky, Dickens, Sinclair Lewis, Jane Austen, and Tolstoy. Writers like these had a kind of extrasensory perception which enabled them to see beneath the surface of the age—and, of course, the genius to bring people and events to life in stories that enthralled readers of their own time as well as later generations.

--Bennett Cerf

There are more valid facts and details in works of art than there are in history books.

--Charlie Chaplin

That men do not learn from history is the most important of all lessons that history has to teach.

--Aldous Huxley

The historians collect evidence, usually in the form of records of what happened, but he can never prove that the records are infallible or that he has all the pertinent evidence. Furthermore, he can never divest himself of his own point of view. For these reasons the historian's conclusions are always tentative, never universally accepted, and are almost certain to be discarded partially or totally by his successors.

--Walter Prescott Webb

Most history is a record of the triumphs, disasters and follies of top people. The black hole in it is the way of life of mute, inglorious men and women who made no nuisance of themselves in the world.

--Philip Howard

We can see that throughout history the common people have suffered for the follies of great men.

--Jean de La Fontaine

It is always wise, as it is also fair, to test a man by the standards of his own day, and not by those of another.

--Odell Shepard

We must remind ourselves again that history as usually written...is quite different from history as usually lived: the historian records the exceptional because it is interesting—because it is exceptional.

--Will and Ariel Durant

History, as taught in our schools, has been a celebration of the white, male, Protestant Founding Fathers rather than the great mix of people in the American drama....People who are in subordinated groups want history simply to do for them what history has already done for white males.

--Mary Frances Berry

It is a characteristic of all movements and crusades that the psychopathic element rises to the top.

--Robert Lindner

Human history is the sad result of each one looking out for himself.

--Julio Cortázar

If there is anything that is important to America, it is that you are not a prisoner of the past.

—David Halberstam

Religion has caused more misery to all of mankind in every stage of human history than any other single idea.

—Madalyn Murray  
O’Hair

It is very sad that the general view of American history makes it seem as though the settlers landed in an empty region, when the fact is that the land was occupied by Indians who, on the whole, welcomed the newcomers in friendly fashion—in fact more friendly fashion than the Europeans would have welcomed any intruders landing on their shores, but then the Indians were ‘savages,’ you see.

—Isaac Asimov

The settlers in New England fought the Indians without ever feeling that they were wrong in doing so. The Indians were not Christians, and therefore not really human in the eyes of the settlers. The Indians were pagans to be converted, pushed aside, and, eventually, exterminated.

—Isaac Asimov

History is malleable. A new cache of diaries can shed new light, and archeological evidence can challenge our popular assumptions.

--Ken Burns

The defining experience of African-American life has been the necessity of making a way out of no way, of mustering the nimbleness, ingenuity and perseverance to establish a place in this society. That effort, over the centuries, has shaped this nation’s history so profoundly that, in many ways, African-American history is the quintessential American history. Most of the moments where American liberty has been expanded have been tied to the African-American experience. If you’re interested in American notions of freedom, if you’re interested in the broadening of fairness, opportunity and citizenship, then regardless of who you are, this is your story, too.

—Lonnie G. Bunch III

Historical novels are, without question, the best way of teaching history, for they offer the human stories behind the events and leave the reader with a desire to know more.

—Louis L’Amour

The White Man's Burden' is seven stanzas long and is a glimpse into the way Europeans justified their colonial ambitions. The poor white man, said Kipling, is doomed to the hard work of going to foreign places and raising up the local savages into civilized society. It was originally written for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and then altered to serve as a British man's advice for how America should treat the newly acquired Philippines. It begins like this:

Take up the White Man's burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half child.

And it continues in that vein for another six verses. 'The White Man's Burden,' from title to execution, is so over the top in its exhortations of white superiority that it could be mistaken for parody. But it isn't.

—Katharine Trendacosta

If anyone has any doubt about the importance of books, or about the adage that the pen is mightier than the sword, it's worth considering that *Plato's Republic*, the *Bible*, the *Koran*, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Marx's *Das Kapital*, Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and *The Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung* have probably changed the course of history as much as any process or event, any individual or any nation.

—Unknown

Government examiners questioned 22,000 schoolchildren in 50 states about their knowledge of the nation's past, and returned a finding of moral ignorance. More than 50 percent of all high school seniors were unaware of the cold war. Nearly 6 in 10 were bereft of even a primitive understanding of where America came from.

—Lewis Lapham

The events of future history...will be of the same nature—or nearly so—as the history of the past, so long as men are men.

—Thucydides

No era ever vanished so suddenly, so completely, as the twenties.

--David Dempsey

A true history of human events would show that a far larger proportion of our acts are the results of sudden impulses and accident than of that reason of which we so much boast.

—Peter Cooper

To give an accurate description of what has never occurred is the proper occupation of the historian.

--Oscar Wilde

Those who compare the age in which their lot has fallen with a golden age which exists only in imagination may talk of degeneracy and decay, but no man who is correctly informed as to the past will be disposed to take a morose or desponding view of the present.

--Thomas Macaulay

I empathize with those who yearn for a simpler world, for some bygone golden age of domestic and international tranquility. Perhaps for a few people at some time in history there was such an age. But for the mass of humanity it is an age that never was.

--Shirley Hufstedler

If Cleopatra's nose had been shorter the whole face of the earth would have changed.

--Blaise Pascal

We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are.

—Anaïs Nin

In studying the records of the past, then, one is, in fact, examining propaganda of various sorts, distortions based on someone's perception of truth but angled so as to make a better case for something than an unorganized compilation of facts might do all by themselves. In other words, all writers have a purpose in writing, or else why write? Histories are no different in that regard from novels—and sometimes in other ways as well, such as in their disdain for reality—but that's no reason to despair of the truth. There are times we can come very close to seeing what-really-happened-in-the-past, or at least certain historical truths, if we address the data intelligently and in full awareness of the processes that guide the creation of history.

—Mark Damen

Nothing is more shameful than ignorance of one's Fatherland.

--Gabriel Harvey

The first law is that the historian shall never dare utter an untruth. The second is that he shall suppress nothing that is true. Also, there must be no suspicion of partiality...or of malice.

—Marcus Tullius Cicero

Only the history of free peoples is worth our attention; the history of men under a despotism is merely a collection of anecdotes.

--Nicolas-Sebastien  
Chamfort

Every major horror of history was committed in the name of an altruistic motive.

--Ayn Rand

We must consider how very little history there is; I mean real, authentic history. That certain kings reigned, and certain battles were fought, we can depend on as true; but all the coloring, all the philosophy of history is conjecture.

--Samuel Johnson

History is mostly guessing; the rest is prejudice.

--Will and Ariel Durant

The value of history, then, is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is.

--R. G. Collingwood

The typical American knows when and where the Pilgrims landed but has no idea why.

--Unknown

Sin writes histories, goodness is silent.

--Goethe

History justifies whatever we want it to. It teaches absolutely nothing, for it contains everything and gives examples of everything.

--Paul Valery

At each epoch of history the world was in a hopeless state, and at each epoch of history the world muddled through; at each epoch the world was lost, and at each epoch it was saved.

--Jacques Morton

Perhaps one of the most prolific sources of error in contemporary thinking rises precisely from the popular habit of lifting history out of its proper context and bending it to the values of another age and day. In this way history is never allowed to be itself.

--Laurens Van Der Post

The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.

--Lesley Poles Hartley

To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?

—Marcus Tullius Cicero

The illusion that times that were, are better than those that are, has probably pervaded all ages.

--Horace Greeley

Nothing is clearer in history than the adoption by successful rebels of the methods they were accustomed to condemn in the forces they deposed.

--Will and Ariel Durant

Resolved, that the women of this nation in 1876, have greater cause for discontent, rebellion and revolution than the men of 1776.

--Susan B. Anthony

More history is made by secret handshakes than by battles, bills and proclamations.

--John Barth

What experience and history teach is this—that people and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it.

--Georg Wilhelm  
Friedrich Hegel

History is the ship carrying living memories to the future.

--Stephen Spender

When I want to understand what is happening today or try to decide what will happen tomorrow, I look back.

--Oliver Wendell  
Holmes, Jr.

History is a nightmare from which we are trying to awaken.

--James Joyce

History is a record of human progress, a record of the struggle of the advancement of the human mind, of the human spirit, toward some known or unknown objective.

--Jawaharlal Nehru

History is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind.

--Edward Gibbon

The rich experience of history teaches that up to now not a single class has voluntarily made way for another class.

--Joseph Stalin

I think we must save America from the missionary idea that you must get the whole world on to the American way of life. This is really a big World danger.

--Gunnar Myrdal

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

--George Santayana

I believe that order is better than chaos, creation better than destruction. I prefer gentleness to violence, forgiveness to vendetta. On the whole I think that knowledge is preferable to ignorance, and I am sure that human sympathy is more valuable than ideology...in spite of the recent triumphs of science, men haven't changed much in the last 2,000 years, and in consequence we must still try to learn from history. History is ourselves.

--Kenneth Clark

Neither a wise man nor a brave man lies down on the tracks of history to wait for the train of the future to run over him.

--Dwight D. Eisenhower



I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes.

--Carl Sandburg

Ideas shape the course of history.

--John Maynard Keynes

The wrecks of the past were America's warnings.

--George Bancroft

The laws of a nation form the most instructive portion of its history.

--Edward Gibbon

America is much more than a geographical fact. It is a political and moral fact—the first community in which men set out in principle to institutionalize freedom, responsible government, and human equality.

--Adlai Stevenson

The American experiment is the most tremendous and far reaching engine of social change which has ever either blessed or cursed mankind.

--Charles Francis Adams

America is the only nation in history which miraculously has gone directly from barbarism to degeneration without the usual interval of civilization.

--Georges Clemenceau

America is a mistake, a giant mistake!

--Sigmund Freud

We are all citizens of history.

--Clifton Fadiman

The difficulty in modification of the Constitution makes the Supreme Court a very powerful body in shaping the course of our civilization.

--F. D. G. Ribble

History is the great dust-heap...a pageant and not a philosophy.

--Augustine Birrell

History is philosophy teaching by examples.

—Thucydides

History is the discovering of the constant and universal principles of human nature.  
--David Hume

History is the science of man.  
--Jose Ortega y Gasset

The history of the world is the record of a man in quest of his daily bread and butter.  
--Hendrik Willem van Loon

History balances the frustration of 'how far we have to go' with the satisfaction of 'how far we have come.' It teaches us tolerance for the human shortcomings and imperfections which are not uniquely of our generation, but of all time.  
--Lewis F. Powell, Jr.

A page of history is worth a volume of logic.  
--Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

You can never plan the future by the past.  
--Edmund Burke

Most of us spend too much time on the last twenty-four hours and too little on the last six thousand years.  
--Will Durant

War makes rattling good history; but Peace is poor reading.  
--Thomas Hardy

The history of almost every civilization furnishes examples of geographical expansion coinciding with deterioration in quality.  
--Arnold Toynbee

History is past politics; and politics present history.  
--John Seeley

History: an account mostly false, of events, mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers, mostly knaves, and soldiers, mostly fools.  
--Ambrose Bierce

History is a pact between the dead, the living, and the yet unborn.

--Edmund Burke

It is a fair summary of history to say that the safeguards of liberty have frequently been forged in cases involving not very nice people.

--Felix Frankfurter

The great achievements of the past were the adventures of adventurers of the past. Only the adventurous can understand the greatness of the past.

--Alfred North Whitehead

The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. We all tried to lie out of that but life won't let us.

--Eugene O'Neill

The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see.

--Winston Churchill

I care for the great deeds of the past chiefly as spurs to drive us onward in the present. I speak of the men of the past partly that they may be honored by our prose of them, but more that they may serve as examples for the future.

--Theodore Roosevelt

The follies of our own times are easier to bear when they are seen against the background of past follies.

--Bertrand Russell

What the historian does as he peers into the kaleidoscopic past is this: he tries to see the relationships among the varied past activities of man. He searches for connections, appraises forces and treats them as causes operating to produce resultant effects....The patterns can never be touched or tested by the senses they can only be described as they appear to the informed and questing mind.

--Walter Prescott Webb

The young today need to learn that there has been change. They need to know about their past before they can understand the present and plot the future.

--Margaret Mead

History has nothing to record save wars and revolutions. The peaceful years appear only as brief lapses or interludes, scattered here and there.

--Arthur Schopenhauer

History is only a confused heap of facts.

--Lord Chesterfield

The principal office of history I take to be this; to prevent virtuous actions from being forgotten, and that evil words and deeds should fear an infamous reputation with posterity.

--Tacitus

History is on every occasion the record of that which one age finds worthy of note in another,

--Jakob Burckhardt

History is a box of tricks with a lost key.

History is a labyrinth of doors with sliding panels, a book of ciphers with the code in a cave of the Saragossa sea.

--Carl Sandburg

Our ignorance of history causes us to slander our own times.

--Gustave Flaubert

We have constantly to check ourselves in reading history with the remembrance that, to the actors in the drama, events appeared very different from the way they appear to us. We know what they were doing far better than they knew themselves.

--Randolph Bourne

All that the historians give us are little oases in the desert of time, and we linger fondly in these, forgetting the vast tracks between one and another that were trodden by the weary generations of men.

--J. A. Spender

Before we can set out on the road to success, we have to know where we are going, and before we can know that we must determine where we have been in the past.

--John F. Kennedy

After you've heard two different eyewitness accounts of the same automobile accident, you begin to wonder about the validity of history. How do we know, for sure, what ever happened anywhere?

--*Bits & Pieces*

Every epoch has its character determined by the way its population reacts to the material events which they encounter.

--Alfred North Whitehead

History is the essence of innumerable biographies.

--Thomas Carlyle

The disadvantage of men not knowing the past is that they do not know the present. History is a hill or high point of vantage, from which alone men see the town in which they live or the age in which they are living.

--G. K. Chesterton

There is properly no history; only biography.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

Man himself is the most important creation and achievement of the continuous human effort, the record of which we call history.

--Erich Fromm

The history of the world is the history of a privileged few.

--Henry Miller

It is impossible to write ancient history because we lack source materials, and impossible to write modern history because we have far too many.

--Charles Peguy

We can chart our future clearly and wisely only when we know the path which has led to the present.

--Adlai Stevenson

The very ink with which all history is written is merely fluid prejudice.

--Mark Twain

History is all explained by geography.

--Robert Penn Warren

Most of the great results of history are brought about by discreditable means.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

The ignorance of the world leaves one at the mercy of its malice.

--William Hazlitt

Human history is in essence a history of ideas.

--H. G. Wells

Nothing is new; we walk where others went;  
There's no vice now but has its precedent.

—Robert Herrick

The only good histories are those that have been written by the persons themselves  
who commanded in the affairs whereof they write.

--Michel de Montaigne

History is only a confused heap of facts.

--Lord Chesterfield

History is Philosophy learned from examples.

--Dionysius of  
Halicarnassus

History teaches everything, even the future.

--Alphonse de Lamartine

Old events have modern meanings; only that survives  
Of past history which finds kindred in all hearts and lives.

--J. R. Lowell

The course of life is like the sea;  
Men come and go; tides rise and fall;  
And that is all of history.

--Joaquin Miller

History, with all her volumes vast,  
Hath but one page.

-- Lord Byron

In analyzing history do not be too profound, for often the causes are quite superficial.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

History, a distillation of Rumour.

—Thomas Carlyle

Historians relate, not so much what is done, as what they would have believed.

--Benjamin Franklin

Historians ought to be precise, faithful, and unprejudiced; and neither interest nor fear, hatred nor affection, should make them swerve from the way of truth.

--Miguel de Cervantes

I judge what will be by what has been.

--Greek Proverb

Of what value is man's life if it is not bound together with the life of his predecessors by the records of antiquity?

—Marcus Tullius Cicero

We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and the future.

--Frederick Douglass

To excel the past we must not allow ourselves to lose contact with it; on the contrary, we must feel it under our feet because we raised ourselves upon it.

--Jose Ortego y Basset

The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history.

--Mao Tse-Tung

Almost the whole of history is but a sequence of horrors.

--S. R. N. Chamfort

History is useless if one does not look at it in the light of current misfortunes.

--Jules Michelet

To observe the past is to take warning for the future.

--Lope de Vega

History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity.

--Marcus Tullius Cicero

History is no more than the portrayal of crimes and misfortunes.

--Voltaire

You can never plan the future by the past.

--Edmund Burke

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know no way of judging of the future by the past.

--Patrick Henry

Nothing changes more constantly than the past; for the past that influences our lives does not consist of what actually happened, but of what men believe happened.

--Gerald White Johnson

I have no expectation that any man will read history aright who thinks that what was done in a remote age, by men whose names have resounded far, has any deeper sense than what he is doing today.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

There is no law of history any more than of a kaleidoscope.

--John Ruskin

The subject of history is the life of peoples and of humanity. To catch and pin down in words—that is, to describe directly the life, not only of humanity, but even of a single people, appears to be impossible.

--Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy

Writers the most learned, the most accurate in details, and the soundest in tendency, frequently fall into a habit which can neither be cured nor pardoned—the habit of making history into the proof of their theories.

--Lord Acton

The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman.

--Willa Sibert Cather

People want to know about the past because they want to know how they came to be who they are, and how things came to be as they are History—the study of the past—tells us how we got into the mess we are in.

--Milton Himmelfarb



Every one of the social sciences has its own contribution to make to the knowledge of man. The contribution of history is perspective.

--David S. Landes and  
Charles Tilley

Like all sciences, history to be worthy of itself and beyond itself, must concentrate on one thing: the search for truth.

--G. R. Elton

History is mostly guessing, the rest is prejudice.

--Will and Ariel Durant

A people without history is like the wind on the buffalo grass.

--Sioux Saying

The only good histories are those written by those who had command in the events they describe.

--Montaigne

The history of the great events of the world is little more than a history of crime.

--Voltaire

The history of the greatest rulers is often only a recital of mistakes.

--Voltaire

History is philosophy teaching by example, and also by warning; its two eyes are geography and chronology.

--James A. Garfield

There is nothing that solidifies and strengthens a nation like reading the nation's history, whether that history is recorded in books, or embodied in customs, institutions, and monuments.

--Joseph Anderson

We find but few historians who have been diligent enough in their search for truth. It is their common method to take on trust what they distribute to the public; by which means, a falsehood, once received from a famed writer, becomes traditional to posterity.

--John Dryden

What historians sell is understanding.

--Harold Perkins

Not to know what has been transacted in former times is to be always a child. If no use is made of the labors of past ages, the world must remain always in the infancy of knowledge.

—Marcus Tullius Cicero

Search for the truth is the noblest occupation of man; its publication is a duty.

--Mad. de Stael

Heroes in history seem to us poetic because they are there. But if we should tell the simple truth of some of our neighbors, it would sound like poetry.

--George W. Curtis

History is little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind.

--Edward Gibbon

A land without ruins is a land without memories—a land without memories is a land without history.

--Abram Joseph Ryan

History is nothing but a pack of tricks that we play upon the dead.

--Voltaire

No historian can take part with—or against—the forces he has to study. To him even the extinction of the human race should merely be a fact to be grouped with other vital statistics.

--Henry Brooks Adams

What is history but a fable agreed upon?

--Napoleon Bonaparte

God cannot alter the past, but historians can.

--Samuel Butler

The first lesson of history is the good of evil.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

There is nothing that strengthens a nation like reading of a nation's own history, whether that history is recorded in books or embodied in customs, institutions and monuments.

--Joseph Anderson

Civilization begins with order, grows with liberty, and dies with chaos.

--Will Durant

Every advance in civilization has been denounced as unnatural while it was recent.

--Bertrand Russell

Blood alone moves the wheels of history.

—Benito Mussolini

Assassination has never changed the history of the world.

--Benjamin Disraeli

It is not so much a Negro History Week as it is History Week. We should emphasize not Negro History, but the Negro in history. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race hate, and religious prejudice.

--Carter G. Woodson

History is a clock that people use to tell their time of day. It is a compass they use to find themselves on the map of human geography. It tells them where they are, and what they are.

--John Henrik Clarke

History smiles at all attempts to force its flow into theoretical patterns or logical grooves; it plays havoc with our generalizations, breaks all our rules; history is baroque.

--Will and Ariel Durant

History has taught me that rulers are much the same in all ages, and under all forms of government; that they are as bad as they dare to be.

--Samuel Taylor  
Coleridge

The history of man is a series of conspiracies to win from nature some advantage without paying for it.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

History is so indifferently rich that a case for almost any conclusion from it can be made by a selection of instances. Choosing evidence with a brighter bias, we might evolve some more comforting reflections.

--Will and Ariel Durant

Historians exercise great power and some of them know it. They recreate the past, changing it to fit their own interpretations. Thus, they change the future as well.

--Frank Herbert

History is the propaganda of the victors.

--Ernest Toller

The whole history of the world is summed up in the fact that, when nations are strong, they are not always just, and when they wish to be just, they are no longer strong.

--Winston Churchill

The world's history is constant, like the laws of nature, and simple, like the souls of men. The same conditions continually produce the same results.

--Friedrich von Schiller

History is a vast early warning system.

--Norman Cousins

The effect of boredom on a large scale in history is underestimated. It is a main cause of revolutions, and would soon bring to an end all the static Utopias and the farmyard civilization of the Fabians.

--Dean William R. Inge

The game of History is usually played by the best and the worst over the heads of the majority in the middle.

--Eric Hoffer

When the historian, Charles A. Beard was asked about the lessons from history, he said there were four:

1. The bee fertilizes the flower it robs.
2. Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad with power.
3. The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small.
4. When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.

--Charles A. Beard

History teaches us that men and nations behave wisely once they have exhausted all other alternatives.

--Abba Eban

I never realized that there was history, close at hand, beside my very own home. I did not realize that the old grave that stood among the brambles at the foot of our farm was history.

--Stephen Leacock

All history is but the lengthened shadow of a great man.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

When great changes occur in history, when great principles are involved, as a rule the majority are wrong.

--Eugene V. Debs

An age is called Dark, not because the light fails to shine, but because people refuse to see it.

--James A Michener

History is much decried; it is a tissue of errors, we are told no doubt correctly; and rival historians expose each other's blunders with gratification. Yet the worst historian has a clearer view of the period he studies than the best of us can hope to form of that in which we live.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

History, after all, is the memory of a nation.

--John F. Kennedy

History is more or less bunk.

--Henry Ford

It is one thing to write like a poet, and another thing to write like a historian. The poet can tell or sing of things not as they were but as they ought to have been, whereas the historian must describe them, not as they ought to have been, but as they were, without exaggerating or hiding the truth in any way.

--Miguel de Cervantes

A man without history is like a tree without roots.

--Marcus Garvey

Where there is history, children have transferred to them the advantages of old men; where history is absent, old men are as children.

--Juan Vives

History never repeats itself; at best it sometimes rhymes.

--Mark Twain

If history is no more than an account of human actions in purely physical terms there is absolutely nothing to be learned from it. Try to make children appreciate these actions in terms of moral relations.

--Jean Jacques Rousseau

It is ironic that the United States should have been founded by intellectuals for throughout most of our political history the intellectual has been for the most part either an outsider, a servant, or a scapegoat.

--Richard Hofstadter

I was terrible at history. I could never see the point of learning what people thought way back when. For instance, the ancient Phoenicians believed that the sun was carried across the sky on the back of an enormous snake. So what? So they were idiots.

--Dave Barry

History, although sometimes made up of the few acts of the great, is more often shaped by the many acts of the small.

--Mark Yost

The study of history is a powerful antidote to contemporary arrogance. It is humbling to discover how many of our glib assumptions, which seem to us novel and plausible, have been tested before, not once but many times and in innumerable guises; and discovered to be, at great human cost, wholly false.

--Paul Johnson

When you think of the long and gloomy history of man, you find more hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have ever been committed in the name of rebellion.

--C. P. Snow

Only those of a certain mental toughness find it easy to accept the plentiful evidence that history is usually a random, messy affair; that blunder, misjudgment and ignorance often play a far larger role in it than design.

--Molly Ivins

Every great historic change has been based on nonconformity, has been bought either with the blood or with the reputation of nonconformists.

--Ben Shahn

One belief, more than any other, is responsible for the slaughter of individuals on altars of the great historical ideas—justice or progress or happiness of future generations...or emancipation of a nation or race or class....this is the belief that somewhere...there is a final solution.

--Sir Isaiah Berlin

There is less intention in history than we ascribe to it. We impute far-sighted plans to Caesar and Napoleon; but the best of their power was in nature, not in them.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

Nations have passed away and left no traces,  
And history gives the naked cause of it—  
One single simple reason in all cases;  
They fell because their peoples were not fit.

--Rudyard Kipling

Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the men of old; seek what they sought.

--Matsuo Basho

Were history as nearly static as some branches of learning it would be a drab affair. But it is alive in every respect. It is...constantly being reborn like the phoenix from its own ashes. As (humankind) lengthens its experience, perspectives change. The lenses through which we look at the past have to be refocused from generation to generation. What seemed wisdom to our (ancestors) is often folly to us....What is dramatic to our age may seem mundane to the next. While the best history has enduring elements, there is a sense in which every generation has to have history rewritten for it.

--Allan Nevins

Peoples and governments have never learned anything from history.

--George Wilhelm  
Friedrich Hegel

Pick any movement you want in history, pick any great event, and as soon as you dig in you begin to see that the person in the street or the worker in the factory or the farmer in the field was involved in that movement.

--Gary Nash

It takes an endless amount of history to make even a little tradition.

—Henry James

History is the rear view mirror on the road of life.

--Unknown

History is not just what-really-happened-in-the-past, but a complex intersection of truths, bias and hopes. A glance at two very different historians, the Roman Tacitus and the Byzantine Procopius, shows the range and difficulty inherent in the study of the past. History encompasses at least three different ways of accessing the past: it can be remembered or recovered or even invented. All are imperfect in some way. For instance, no historian or historical source reveals the full and unvarnished truth, so memory is a fallible guide. Also, no evidence brought to light through archaeology or historical investigation is complete without context, and sometimes the significance of recovered data is hard to determine. Furthermore, many purported 'histories' can be shown to have been invented; at the same time, however, these fabrications still tell us much about a society's beliefs and dreams. All in all, the best histories are the best stories.

—Mark Damen

Invented History...entails the body of myths, often well-known to be untrue but that exist in the public conscience as 'history.' These are the historical fabrications which, though they are essentially lies, enough people wish to believe they are what-really-happened that they have come to have the force of truth. Invented histories satisfy our collective need to see the past in some particular way and, even when directly challenged with hard evidence of their falsehood, people persist in speaking of them as 'historical reality.'...

Modern American civilization is...saturated with invented history. The brave days of cowboys in the Old West, the 'good ole times' when there was religious uniformity and moral behavior, even George Washington and the cherry tree are all invented histories. The last is an anecdote concocted by an early biographer who needed to say something about Washington's childhood when nothing significant was known.

—Mark Damen



Nothing that has actually happened matters in the slightest.

—Oscar Wilde

(History) is the set of questions we in the present ask of the past . . . It is informed by our anxieties, by our failures, by our successes, by our hopes, by our wishes, by all the questions we have.

—Ken Burns

A trend in history is like a wave to a swimmer in the ocean: He does not see it until it is about to engulf him; this is why social historians possess only 20-20 hindsight.

--Sydney J. Harris

History is not made by great leaders making speeches. It is made by us: tribes endlessly migrating across the planet.

--Gore Vidal

Political history is far too criminal and pathological to be a fit subject of study for the young. Children should acquire their heroes and villains from fiction.

--W. H. Auden

I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past.

--Thomas Jefferson

History recorded tonight would not be the same if recorded tomorrow.

--Ned Rorem

The white race is the cancer of history.

--Susan Sontag

By its dominant voices, its most unforgettable faces, and its chief acts of bravery does a generation recognize itself and history mark it.

--Eric Sevareid

The only thing we learn from history is that we do not learn.

--Earl Warren

History is a relentless master. It has no present, only the past rushing into the future. To try to hold fast is to be swept aside.

--John F. Kennedy

With history piling up so fast, almost every day is the anniversary of something awful.

--Joe Brainard

America ranks with Greece and Rome as one of the great distinct civilizations of history.

--Max Lerner

Study the past if you would divine the future.

--Confucius

It is true that history cannot satisfy our appetite when we are hungry, nor keep us warm when the cold wind blows. But it is also true that if younger generations do not understand the hardships and triumphs of their elders, then we will be a people without a past. As such, we will be like water without a source, a tree without roots.

--*New York Chinatown  
History Project*

I am not belittling the brave pioneer men, but the sunbonnet as well as the sombrero has helped to settle this glorious land of ours.

--Edna Ferber

The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or woman.

--Willa Cather

History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.

--Maya Angelou

When men bring forward as a second proof of their superiority the assertion that women have not achieved as much as men, they use poor arguments which leave history out of consideration. If they kept themselves more fully informed historically, they would know that great women have lived and achieved great things in the past, and that there are many living and achieving great things today.

--'Abdu'l-Bahá

The world is not growing worse and it is not growing better—it is just turning around as usual.

--Finley Peter Dunne

One truth stands firm. All that happens in world history rests on something spiritual. If the spiritual is strong, it creates world history. If it is weak, it suffers world history.

--Albert Schweitzer

No one at all interested in the study of history could have failed to see that there was always some great material interest at the bottom of the most abstract, the most sublime and idealistic theological and religious struggles.

--Mikhail A. Bakunin

The past is always being changed.

--Jorge Luis Borges

The memories of men are too frail a thread to hang history on.

--John Still

Every successful revolution puts on in time the robe of the tyrant it has deposed.

--Barbara Tuchman

Only a fool would try to compress a hundred centuries into a hundred pages of hazardous conclusions. We proceed.

--Ariel and Will Durant

One of the lessons of history is that nothing is often a good thing to do and always a clever thing to say.

--Ariel and Will Durant

Mankind has conceived history as a series of battles; hitherto it has considered fighting as the main thing in life.

--Anton Chekhov

And what is history...? It is the autobiography of the human race....History...is composed of individual creeds, passions, follies, heroisms in contrast with a universe that knows us not and goes its own way. The account of how man has managed to subdue this outer-world to his needs, to his pleasures, to his ideals, the struggle to master nature, to exploit it despite nature's utter indifference, is a great chapter of history. So is anything that has helped to humanize us, to give us command of our passions, to feel for others.

--Bernard Berenson

Every time history repeats itself the price goes up.

--Ronald Wright

In historical events great men—so-called—are but labels used for naming an event, and like labels, they have the least possible connection with the event itself.

--Leo Tolstoy

The history of the world is the record of the weakness, frailty, and death of public opinion.

--Samuel Butler

History studies not just facts and institutions, its real subject is the human spirit.

--Fustel de Coulange

Thanks to television, for the first time the young are seeing history made before it is censored by their leaders.

--Margaret Mead

During the whole period of written history, it is not the workers but the robbers who have been in control of the world.

--Scott Nearing

There is an urgency for historians, like never before, to speak to a larger public. And if we don't we are going to leave the terrain to the Disney Corporation, and journalists, who when they are good, they are superb. But the historians have a training that is of value, and we have got to practice accessibility in our language and presentation. We must present history vividly, more concisely. There's nothing wrong with popularizing the material, if the research behind it is sound.

--David Levering Lewis

Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research.

--Malcolm X

History is not what you thought. It is what you can remember.

--W. C. Sellar

The glory of a people, and of an age, is always the work of a small number of great men, and disappears with them.

--Baron de Grimm

The history of the past interests us only in so far as it illuminates the history of the present.

--Ernest Dimnet

If men could learn from history, what lessons it might teach us! But passion and party blind our eyes, and the light which experience gives us is a lantern on the stern which shines only on the waves behind us.

—Samuel Taylor  
Coleridge

God cannot alter the past; that is why he is obliged to connive at the existence of historians.

--Samuel Butler

God cannot alter the past, but historians can.

--Samuel Butler

When Herodotus found himself short on facts, he didn't hesitate to use imagination, which may be why he is called the first historian.

--John F. Kennedy

The first requisite in a historian is to have no ability to invent.

--Stendhal

History supplies little more than a list of people who have helped themselves with the property of others.

--Voltaire

We can learn little from history unless we first realize that she does not repeat herself.

--Harold Nicolson

A historian is one who avoids small mistakes of fact while on his way to great errors of interpretation.

--Unknown

Three types of men have shaped the course of history: kings, generals and historians.

--Unknown

History teaches us the mistakes we are going to make.

--Jean Bodin

History never repeats itself; if it did, it would be sociology.

--Unknown

Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.

--H. G. Wells

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of His divine manhood. While still a young man, the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying—and that was his coat. When he was dead He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today He is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life.

--James Allan Francis

A great civilization is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself within. The essential causes of Rome's decline lay in her people, her morals, her class struggle, her failing trade, her bureaucratic despotism, her stifling taxes, her consuming wars.

--Will Durant

The history of General Motors over the past 50 years is far more important than the history of Switzerland or Holland.

--Antony Jay

It is the wicked who make history.

--Isaac Bashevis Singer

It was scarcely possible that the eyes of contemporaries should discover in the public felicity the latent causes of decay and corruption. This long peace, and the uniform government of the Romans, introduced a slow and secret poison into the vitals of the empire. The minds of men were gradually reduced to the same level, the fire of genius was extinguished, and even the military spirit evaporated. The natives of Europe were brave and robust. Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Illyricum, supplied the legions with excellent soldiers, and constituted the real strength of the monarchy. Their personal valour remained, but they no longer possessed that public courage which is nourished by the love of independence, the sense of national honour, the presence of danger, and the habit of command. They received laws and governors from the will of their sovereign, and trusted for their defence to a mercenary army. The posterity of their boldest leaders was contented with the rank of citizens and subjects. The most aspiring spirits resorted to the court or standard of the emperors; and the deserted provinces, deprived of political strength or union, insensibly sunk into the languid indifference of private life.

--Edward Gibbon

These times of ours are serious and full of calamity, but all times are essentially alike. As soon as there is life there is danger.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

Look into almost any field of practical endeavor and we will find accurate data going back only a century or two. Civilization has just begun.

--Arthur E. Morgan

As a historian, you have to be conscious of the fact that every civilization that has ever existed has ultimately collapsed.

--Henry A. Kissinger

History has been called a story of hungry men in search of food.

--*Wallace's Farmer*

All periods of history show a strain of madness and all are chaotic.

--Jacques Barzun

History repeats itself in the large because human nature changes with geological leisureliness.

--Will and Ariel Durant

The past is really the only source of information we have about the future.

--Max Jakobson

The *Bible* writers didn't care that they were bunching together sequences some of which were historical, some preposterous, and some downright manipulative. Faithful recording was not their business; faith was.

--Jeanette Winterson

The histories of the poor and the powerless are as important as those of their conquerors, their colonizers, their kings and queens.

--Johnetta B. Cole

The history of free men really is never written by chance but choice—their choice.

--Dwight D. Eisenhower

History, in general, only informs us what bad government is.

--Thomas Jefferson

Men make history and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.

--Harry S. Truman

If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten.

--Rudyard Kipling

The study of history is the beginning of political wisdom.

--John Bodin

There are stars whose light reaches the earth long after they have disintegrated and are no more. And there are men whose scintillating memory lights the world long after they have passed from it. These lights which shine in the darkest night are those which illuminate for us the path.

--Hannah Senesh

Respect the past in the full measure of its deserts, but do not make the mistake of confusing it with the present nor seek in it the ideals of the future.

--José Ingenieros



Does history repeat itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce? No, that's too grand, too considered a process. History just burps, and we taste again that raw onion sandwich it swallowed centuries ago.

--Julian Barnes

History: A lamp to light the present.

--Lawrence A. Cremin

History is one of those marvelous and necessary illusions we have to deal with. It's one of the ways of dealing with our world with impossible generalities which we couldn't live without.

--Howard Nemerov

History is an argument without end. That is why we love it so.

--Pieter Geyl

History is a weapon.

--Arthur J. Schlesinger

This I regard as history's highest function, to let no worthy action be uncommemorated, and to hold out the reprobation of posterity as a terror to evil words and deeds.

—Tacitus

For this purpose the reading in the first stage, where they will receive their whole education, is proposed, as has been said, to be chiefly historical. History, by apprising them of the past, will enable them to judge of the future; it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men; it will enable them to know ambition under every disguise it may assume; and knowing it, to defeat its views.

--Thomas Jefferson

History is argument without end.

--Pieter Geyl

The history of this country was made largely by people who wanted to be left alone. Those who could not thrive when left to themselves never felt at ease in America.

--Eric Hoffer

You must never write history until you can hear the people speak.

--Arthur Hibbert

Civilizations don't decline but collapse....When you look back on the history of past civilizations, a striking feature is the speed with which most of them collapsed, regardless of the cause. The Roman Empire didn't decline and fall sedately, as historians used to claim. It collapsed within a few decades in the early fifth century, tipped over the edge of chaos by barbarian invaders and internal divisions. In the space of a generation, the vast imperial metropolis of Rome fell into disrepair, the aqueducts broken, the splendid marketplaces deserted. The Ming dynasty's rule in China also fell apart with extraordinary speed in the mid-17th century, succumbing to internal strife and external invasion. Again, the transition from equipoise to anarchy took little more than a decade.

--Niall Ferguson

The great fact was the land itself, which seemed to overwhelm the little beginnings of human society that struggled in its sombre wastes.

--Willa Cather

The real, central theme of History—not what happened, but what people felt about it when it was happening.

—G. M. Young

There are many places which nobody can look upon without being consciously influenced by a sense of their history...In some places history has wrought like an earthquake, in others like an ant or mole; everywhere, permanently; so that if we but knew or cared, every swelling of the grass, every wavering line of hedge or path or road were an inscription...When we muse deeply upon the old road worn deep into the chalk, among burial mound and encampment; we feel rather than see.

--Edward Thomas

It is a commonplace that the history of civilisation is largely the history of weapons. In particular, the connection between the discovery of gunpowder and the overthrow of feudalism by the bourgeoisie has been pointed out over and over again. And though I have no doubt exceptions can be brought forward, I think the following rule would be found to be generally true that ages in which the dominant weapon is expensive or difficult to make will be ages of despotism, whereas when the dominant weapon is cheap and simple, the common people have a chance. Thus, for example, tanks, battleships and bombing planes are inherently tyrannical weapons, while rifles, muskets, long-bows and hand-grenades are inherently democratic weapons. A complex weapon makes the strong stronger, while a simple weapon—so long as there is no answer to it—gives claws to the weak.

--George Orwell

If you tell people the world is complicated, you're not doing your job as a social scientist. They already know it's complicated. Your job is to distill it, simplify it, and give them a sense of what is the single [cause], or what are the couple of powerful causes that explain this powerful phenomenon.

--Samuel P. Huntington

Let the past be a guidepost, not a hitching post.

--L. Thomas Holdcroft

The past is malleable and flexible, changing as our recollection interprets and re-explains what has happened.

--Peter Berger

The history of the world is the world's court of justice.

--Friedrich Schiller

American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful, and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it.

--James A. Baldwin

The marvel of all history is the patience with which men and women submit to burdens unnecessarily laid upon them by their governments.

--George Washington

It is always the adventurers who do great things, not the sovereigns of great empires.

--Charles de Montesquieu

Whoever looks at America will see: the ship is powered by stupidity, corruption, or prejudice.

--Johann Most

The search for the truth for truth's sake is the mark of the historian.

--B. H. Liddell Hart

In every society in human history, including the United States, those in power seek to imbue themselves with the attributes of religion and patriotism as a way of getting greater support for their policy and insulating themselves from any criticism.

--George J. Mitchell

Neither current events nor history show that the majority rule, or ever did rule.  
--Jefferson Davis

A great empire, like a great cake, is most easily diminished at the edges.  
--Benjamin Franklin

Natural selection, as it has operated in human history, favors not only the clever but the murderous.  
—Barbara Ehrenreich

In history, the moments during which reason and reconciliation prevail are short and fleeting.  
—Stefan Zweig

A society that does not correctly interpret and appreciate its past cannot understand its present fortunes and adversities and can be caught unawares in a fast changing world.  
—Ibrahim Babangida

Our American past always speaks to us with two voices: the voice of the past and the voice of the present. We are always asking two quite different questions. Historians reading the words of John Winthrop usually ask, ‘What did they mean to him?’ Citizens ask, ‘What do they mean to us?’ Historians are trained to seek the original meaning, all of us want to know the present meaning.  
—Daniel J. Boorstin

No great man lives in vain. The history of the world is but the biography of great men.  
—Thomas Carlyle

History not used is nothing, for all intellectual life is action, like practical life, and if you don’t use the stuff well, it might as well be dead.  
—Arnold J. Toynbee

God cannot alter the past, though historians can.  
—Samuel Butler

From their experience or from the recorded experience of others (history), men learn only what their passions and their metaphysical prejudices allow them to learn.  
—Aldous Huxley

There has never yet been a man in our history who led a life of ease whose name is worth remembering.

—Theodore Roosevelt

History is about happiness and suffering, which exist only at the level of the individual. A nation never suffers. A corporation never suffers. Only individuals suffer.

—Yuval Noah Harari

Great men hallow a whole people, and lift up all who live in their time.

—Sydney Smith

The flag is the embodiment, not of sentiment, but of history. It represents the experiences made by men and women, the experiences of those who do and live under that flag.

—Woodrow Wilson

Historian—a broad-gauge gossip.

—Ambrose Bierce

The history of liberty is a history of resistance.

—Woodrow Wilson

History in its broadest aspect is a record of man's migrations from one environment to another.

—Ellsworth Huntington

History is the interpretation of the significance that the past has for us.

—Johan Huizinga

How do you make any sense of history, art or literature without knowing the stories and iconography of your own culture and all the world's main religions?

—Polly Toynbee

And it seems to me important for a country, for a nation to certainly know about its glorious achievements but also to know where its ideals failed, in order to keep that from happening again.

—George Takei

A lot of history is just dirty politics cleaned up for the consumption of children and other innocents.

—Richard Reeves

Every great and commanding moment in the annals of the world is the triumph of some enthusiasm.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

No nation knows itself until it knows its past.

—Ben Ames Williams

We drive into the future using only our rearview mirror.

—Marshall McLuhan

Well-behaved women seldom make history.

—Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

What is a historian, anyway? It is someone who uses facts to record the development of humanity.

—Lion Feuchtwanger

The past is malleable and flexible, changing as our recollection interprets and re-explains what has happened.

— Peter Berger

Many jurisdictions made slaves into ‘criminals’ by prohibiting them from pursuing a wide range of activities that whites were typically free to pursue. Among these activities were: learning to read, leaving their masters’ property without a proper pass, engaging in ‘unbecoming’ conduct in the presence of a white female, assembling to worship outside the supervisory presence of a white person, neglecting to step out of the way when a white person approached on a walkway, smoking in public, walking with a cane, making loud noises, or defending themselves from assaults.

—Randall Kennedy

Each age tries to form its own conception of the past. Each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time.

—Frederick Jackson  
Turner

I think feminists are unaware of the tremendous extent of the role of women in history.

—Vivienne Westwood

You have to look at history as an evolution of society.

—Jean Chretien

The past is never dead. It's not even past.

—William Faulkner

Every journey into the past is complicated by delusions, false memories, false namings of real events.

—Adrienne Rich

Men make history and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.

—Harry S. Truman

This is the lesson that history teaches: repetition.

—Gertrude Stein

Human blunders usually do more to shape history than human wickedness.

—A. J. P. Taylor

A pioneer destroys things and calls it civilization.

—Charles Marion Russell

It is not history which uses men as a means of achieving - as if it were an individual person - its own ends. History is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit of their ends.

—Karl Marx

From 1478 on, the tool that defended Spanish orthodoxy against dissenters was the Inquisition (the 'asking of questions') which used torture and terror as its chief weapons. The Spanish Inquisition became a byword for unjust cruelty that was not to be exceeded until the deeds of the German Nazis came to light. The Spanish Inquisition worked in the sense that it kept Spain completely Catholic, but in the long run it failed since it placed a blanket of terror and conformity over the land that completely choked off intellectual advance and reduced Spain to a darkness and backwardness from which it has never entirely recovered.

—Isaac Asimov

The thumbscrew, a device by which the thumb could be squeezed beyond endurance by the turning of a screw, was an example of the tortures used by the Inquisition. The stake represented death by being burned alive. It was the common way of executing unrepentant heretics—to tie them to a wooden stake, around which combustible material was piled, and then set afire. And, of course, those who did these things were of the opinion that they were serving God's glory and delighting him with what they did—a belief that must surely anger a just God even more than the deeds themselves.

—Isaac Asimov

The Pilgrims landed, worthy men,  
And saved from wreck on raging seas,  
They fell upon their knees, and then  
Upon the Aborigines.

—Arthur Guiterman

It is common to say that the Pilgrims came seeking freedom of religion, but that is not so if what we mean is freedom of religion for everybody. They came seeking it for themselves, and for no one else. In New England a theocracy was set up that was far less tolerant of dissent than Old England had been. Dissenters were driven out, and a few were even executed.

—Isaac Asimov

Roger Williams...was the first man in America to take up the position that everyone must have the right to worship (or not worship) in his own way. His crime, you see, was in really believing in freedom of religion. In 1635 he founded Rhode Island where freedom of religion was established, and for years afterward it was treated as a leper colony by the rest of New England because of its radical beliefs.

—Isaac Asimov

Napoleon's many victories had their price. He never hesitated to spend his men freely, and as the years went by, he was forced to call younger and younger men to the colors.

—Isaac Asimov

Napoleon had the instinctive feel for public relations. He knew how to remember soldiers' names; how to give awards and medals; how to make them feel he was personally concerned....That this represented a real concern, we may doubt. He abandoned an army in Egypt in 1798 without a twinge, and when he lost half a million men in Russia...he sent a message back to Paris assuring his people that his own health was excellent, as though that were all that mattered.

—Isaac Asimov



When Columbus, in 1492, first discovered what came to be called the New World, he thought it to be the eastern coast of Asia and maintained that belief to the day of his death. The first person to maintain something else—that the lands reached by Columbus were not parts of Asia but were newly found continents, separated from Asia by a second ocean at least as large as the Atlantic—was the Italian navigator Americus Vesputius in 1502. It was for this reason that the new continents were justly named for him rather than for Columbus.

—Isaac Asimov

It was in 1519 that the Portuguese navigator, Ferdinand Magellan (in Spanish employ) first sailed across the South Sea and proved it to be an ocean larger than the Atlantic. Because he entered it in calm weather, after a very stormy trip through what is now called the Strait of Magellan, he named it the Pacific Ocean.

—Isaac Asimov

In 1832 the Navy was callously ready to do way with the most famous of all American warships. The ship was *Old Ironsides*. That was the nickname of the American warship whose official name was *Constitution*. It was launched in Boston in 1797 at a time when a navel war with France threatened, but it saw its chief action in the War of 1812 against Great Britain. In exactly which battle it obtained its nickname is disputed. One story is that during a fight against the British warship Java, off the coast of Brazil, on December 29, 1812, the American sailors, seeing the British cannon balls bouncing off the seasoned timbers of its hull, while their own shots were wreaking havoc with the foe, jubilantly termed their ship *Old Ironsides*. The nickname has stuck to the ship so tightly that the real name is little-known.

—Isaac Asimov

There is no question but that it was Lincoln's aim to forgive, to consider that at the moment peace came, the surrendered Confederates would cease being enemies and start being Americans again, and that only so could the nation's wounds be healed.

—Isaac Asimov

Lincoln was engaged to Mary Todd, but was apparently reluctant to marry her and, in a fit of depression, broke the engagement—then reconsidered and on November 4, 1842, married her....Mary was of an aristocratic family with whom homespun Lincoln felt ill at ease. Mary had towering ambitions for her husband (any husband), and Lincoln's desires were far more limited in scope. Lincoln's practical sense might have told him it would be an unhappy marriage—and so, in fact, it was.

—Isaac Asimov

One great advantage of the Union over the confederacy was that the Union was industrialized and had an excellent transportation system it could keep in good repair. The Confederacy was undeveloped, rural in its economy, with a sparse railroad system and no facilities with which to maintain it. This meant that the Union, however often it might be defeated, could always rush reinforcements and supplies to its armies, something the Confederacy could not necessarily do. The Union soldiers were always well fed; the confederate soldiers were always on short rations.

—Isaac Asimov

Stonewall Jackson was the most skilled tactician ever born in the United States, and one of the most colorful generals. The feats he performed with his under-equipped, underfed men were little short of miraculous. There hardly needed to be any communication between himself and Lee. Each knew the other's mind and they worked together perfectly. There was no Confederate general so feared and so (grudgingly) admired as Stonewall Jackson....Stonewall Jackson was a highly neurotic person, a thoroughgoing hypochondriac, and a religious fanatic who was quite convinced of the justice of the cause for which he fought....Once, when Union soldiers were dying under the rifles of Jackson's men, one confederate officer admiring the gallantry of the foe expressed regret that so many brave Union men must die, Jackson said gruffly, 'Shoot them all! I do not wish them to be brave!'

—Isaac Asimov

Stonewall Jackson rode forward on the night of May 2 to reconnoiter and was shot, by mistake, by some Confederate troops who thought he was an enemy. His left arm was shattered and had to be amputated. He might have survived that, but he caught pneumonia, and on May 10, 1863, ...he died, at the age of thirty-nine.

—Isaac Asimov

Alexander Hamilton's feud with Thomas Jefferson predicted the great schisms of American history: city versus country, North versus South, slavery versus emancipation, nativism versus diversity. Long after the Broadway stage goes dark, those dichotomies will likely still shape our political landscape.

—Dan Charnas

Few characters in history are indispensable.

—Albert B. Hart

I think a secure profession for young people is history teacher, because in the future, there will be so much more of it to teach.

—Bill Muse

The Past is to be respected and acknowledged, but not to be worshiped. It is our future in which we will find our greatness.

—Pierre Trudeau

The more you learn about the real lives of real people, the less able you are to subscribe to self-serving and nationalistic myths that feed a racist culture.

—Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

No matter who did the capturing, it was white people who created the market for African slaves and perpetuated the practice even after the import trade was banned.

—Lolita Buckner  
Inniss

It is a paradox of evil that stretches back at least as far as Socrates, who opined in one of his dialogues that no one commits evil knowing they are doing wrong—evildoers think they are doing the right thing....Hitler or Joseph Stalin or [West African dictator] Charles Taylor. They're all similar. They don't have the [remorse] gene. They only have, 'I am a hero, I am a martyr, I am fighting for my people.' That's their truth.

—Ron Rosenbaum

We urge the next president to establish a White House Council of Historical Advisers....Operationally, the Council of Historical Advisers would mirror the Council of Economic Advisers, established after World War II. A chair and two additional members would be appointed by the president to full-time positions, and respond to assignments from him or her. They would be supported by a small professional staff and would be part of the Executive Office of the President.

—Graham Allison and  
Niall Ferguson

For too long, history has been disparaged as a 'soft' subject by social scientists offering spurious certainty. We believe it is time for a new and rigorous 'applied history'—an attempt to illuminate current challenges and choices by analyzing precedents and historical analogues. We not only want to see applied history incorporated into the Executive Office of the President, alongside economic expertise; we also want to see it developed as a discipline in its own right at American universities.

—Graham Allison and  
Niall Ferguson

Mainstream historians take an event, phenomenon, or era and attempt to explain what happened. They sometimes say that they study the past ‘for its own sake.’ Applied historians would take a current predicament and try to identify analogues in the past. Their ultimate goal would be to find clues about what is likely to happen, then suggest possible policy interventions and assess probable consequences. You might say that applied history is to mainstream history as medical practice is to biochemistry, or engineering is to physics.

—Graham Allison and  
Niall Ferguson

Historical analogies are easy to get wrong. ‘History is not, of course, a cookbook offering pretested recipes,’ observed Henry Kissinger, the most influential modern practitioner of applied history. ‘It can illuminate the consequences of actions in comparable situations, yet each generation must discover for itself what situations are in fact comparable.’

—Graham Allison and  
Niall Ferguson

The folks who captured and sold blacks into slavery in the first place were also Africans, working for profit.... We need to get some distance from the binary opposition we were raised in: evil white people and good black people. The world just isn’t like that.

—Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

The longer you can look back, the farther you can look forward.

—Winston Churchill

The early settlers included so many roguish highwaymen, mean vagrants, Irish rebels, known whores, and an assortment of convicts, including one Elizabeth ‘Little Bess’ Armstrong, sent to Virginia for stealing two spoons.

—Nancy Isenberg

Independence did not magically erase the British class system. A ruthless class order was enforced at Jamestown, where one woman returned from 10 months of Indian captivity to be told that she owed 150 pounds of tobacco to her dead husband’s former master and would have to work off the debt. The Puritans were likewise obsessed with class rank—membership in the Church and its core elect were elite privileges—not least because the early Massachusetts settlers included far more nonreligious riffraff than is generally realized.

—Alec MacGillis

The ‘muckrakers’ were the crusading journalists who fought to correct long-standing injustices and change society. Many of them were women: Nellie Bly, who exposed the horrors of mental institutions; Ida Tarbell, who took on the monopoly power of Standard Oil; and Jane Addams, who shone a light on the misery of impoverished immigrants. Intrepid reporters who revealed realities that were so powerful that the facts alone were a form of activism.

—Ron Rosenbaum

There was one population shut out from the newspaper boom, though: blacks. During slavery, American newspapers ignored blacks, except when they ran wild tales claiming they had poisoned their owners or committed burglaries. (Sections devoted to them were given names like ‘The Proceedings of the Rebellious Negroes.’) By 1827, a group of freed blacks decided to found their own newspaper, *Freedom’s Journal*. ‘We wish to plead our own cause,’ they wrote in their first issue. ‘Too long have others spoken for us.’ The black press was born, and soon there were dozens of black papers dotted across the country.

Getting their papers out required seat-of-the-pants ingenuity, even at the turn of the 20th century, because whites were often hostile to this upstart media. When Robert Abbott started the *Chicago Defender* in 1905, he found it hard to distribute in the South. ‘Once they realized it was out there, they tried to censor it—they’d arrest you if they saw you reading it, using vagrancy laws,’ says Clint C. Wilson II, a journalism professor emeritus at Howard University, and shipments of the paper were thrown in the trash.

—Clive Thompson

We seem to be going through a period of nostalgia, and everyone seems to think yesterday was better than today. I don’t think it was, and I would advise you not to wait ten years before admitting today was great. If you’re hung up on nostalgia, pretend today is yesterday and just go out and have one hell of a time.

—Art Buchwald

While my interest in natural history has added very little to my sum of achievement, it has added immeasurably to my sum of enjoyment in life.

—Theodore Roosevelt

When we learn African-American history, it’s either Malcolm or Martin, the bad guy and the good guy. But if you look at our society and our history, we know about Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, and we’re taught to celebrate both of them.

—Ilyasah Shabazz

Understanding the past was more than an abstract obsession. History became a way for me to understand the challenges within my own life. I grew up in a town in New Jersey where there were very few black people. Race shaped my life at an early age. I remember a time from elementary school, when we were playing ball and it was really hot. We lined up on the steps in back of one kid's house, and his mother came out and started handing out glasses of water. And when she saw me, she said, 'Drink out of the hose.' As I got older, I wanted to understand why some people treated me fairly and others treated me horribly. History, for me, became a means of understanding the life I was living.

—Lonnie G. Bunch III

Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.

—C. Wright Mills

History is changed by people who get pissed off.

—Brian Eno

History has always been told by the winner.

--Peggy Altoff

I don't think when we grow up anybody will come up on the street and say, 'Excuse me, do you know who Constantine was?' We're learning about Constantine and his son, and his son's son, and his son's cousin. They didn't do anything in history, but we learned about it.

—Anonymous Middle  
School Student

It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the *Bible* is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities.

--Tom C. Clark

By the end of eighth grade, we should certainly expect that our children will know the basic saga of American history and the stories of its great men and women; the sources of our form of government in the Greek, Judeo-Christian, Roman, and Enlightenment traditions; the contours and locations of the physical world, and the major features of international landscapes; essential facts of the world's major nations; and their rights and obligations as American citizens.

—William J. Bennett

History: Though education critics are frequently faulted for imagining a 'golden age' that never really existed, in the field of history it turns out that there truly was such a time. In the first quarter of the 20th century most American schools offered a history course in every grade. The history curriculum in the elementary years was largely fashioned upon the recommendations of a 1909 report by the Committee of Eight of the American Historical Association. According to Diane Ravitch: 'the Committee's proposals organized what was already commonplace in most American schools into a regular pattern. In the first three grades, the Committee recommended the teaching of Indian life and legends, stories about Columbus, George Washington and other heroes, heroes of other lands, the celebration of national, state, and local holidays, and the stories evoked by the holidays. Thanksgiving became a time to learn about the Pilgrims; Memorial Day was a time to learn about the Civil War.' This may sound familiar. Many of today's schools make paper turkeys at Thanksgiving and do reports on Columbus. But an elementary history curriculum ...should consist of more than commemoration; it should develop rigorous knowledge based in a celebration of our own heritage. All year long, children should experience legends such as Paul Bunyan and Johnny Appleseed, should hear true stories of Revolutionary era heroes like Benjamin Banneker and Nathan Hale, should learn how women like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Emily Dickinson shaped the sensibilities of our young republic. Having acquired a clear sense of our own national traditions, students will possess the knowledge with which to compare our progress as a nation with that of other societies.

—William J. Bennett

He was what I often think is a dangerous thing for a statesman to be - a student of history; and like most of those who study history, he learned from the mistakes of the past how to make new ones.

—A. J. P. Taylor

Take General Robert E. Lee. Here is a man of limited vision who believed the secession was unconstitutional but said that he could not war against his own country and its people. And he meant Virginia, not the United States of America! Here is a man who came close to destroying the Union, yet many Americans, particularly in the South, revere him as something of a deity.

—Robert V. Remini

History tells what man has done; art, what man has made; literature, what man has felt; religion, what man has believed; philosophy, what man has thought.

--Benjamin C. Leeming

You learn about equality in history and civics, but you find out life is not really like that.

—Arthur Ashe

You cannot survive if you do not know the past.

—Oriana Fallaci

When at some future date the high court of history sits in judgment on each one of us—recording whether in our brief span of service we fulfilled our responsibilities to the state—our success or failure, in whatever office we may hold, will be measured by the answers to four questions—were we truly men of courage ... were we truly men of judgment ... were we truly men of integrity ... were we truly men of dedication?

--John Fitzgerald  
Kennedy

When I did a workshop as part of a standards-writing project in a large eastern state, I mentioned the problem of arcane elements in the history standards, in particular a mention of an obscure Chinese dynasty. A gentleman cried out, 'But that was my dissertation topic, and it is important for students to know!' Worse: The speaker was the social studies coordinator for the state and had made sure to put this topic in the previous version of the standards.

—Grant Wiggins

The increase of territory and power of empires by force of arms has been the policy of all great powers, and it has always been possible to get the approval of their state religion.

—John B. Orr

Believe me, as one who has seen a number of international crises firsthand, they cannot be handled without an understanding of history.

—Pierre Salinger

The Haight is just a place; the '60s was a spirit.

—Ken Kesey

Mankind has collected together all the wisdom of his ancestors, and can see what a fool man is!

--Elias Canetti



I think students should know something about religion as a historical phenomenon, in the same way that they should know something about socialism and humanism and the other great ideas that have shaped political philosophies and therefore the course of human events.

—Steven Pinker

It is an inside joke of history that all its most exciting adventures inevitably end their careers as homework. Beheadings, rebellions, thousand-year wars, incest on the royal throne, electricity, art, opera, dogs in outer space.

—B. J. Novak

On the board, Mr. Beery had written ‘Those who don’t remember history are doomed to repeat it.’ I wasn’t sure if this was meant to be inspirational, thematic, or a joke about making sure to study.

—Gabrielle Zevin

This bright-looking sophomore came up after a lecture and said she’d never realized the 13 Colonies were all on the East Coast. We’ve been raising generations of young Americans who are, by and large, historically illiterate.

—Davide McCullough

African-Americans have served in every American war, but pre-Civil War numbers are inexact. During the Revolution, an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 black soldiers fought for the Colonies, and an uncertain number fought for the British. During the Civil War, more than 179,000 served in the Union Army and 20,000 to 30,000 in the Union Navy.

—Krewasky Salater

A significant number of contemporary public historians are policy experts who provide invaluable advice to government agencies, municipalities, lawyers, courts, and businesses. In fact, the federal government employs hundreds, if not thousands, of historians (including independent contractors). There is even a Society for History in the Federal Government, which has existed since 1979....the State Department has an excellent Office of the Historian, and the branches of the armed services also employ numerous historians. These public historians collect and edit primary resources and prepare historical studies intended to support and guide policy makers.

—William S. Walker

Without words, without writing and without books there would be no history, there could be no concept of humanity.

—Hermann Hesse

All the glory of the world would be buried in oblivion, unless God had provided mortals with the remedy of books.

—Richard De Bury

The credit of ancient literature, the certainty of history, and the truth of religion, are all involved in the secure transmission of ancient books to modern times.

--Isaac Taylor

Keeping history off the dusty shelf of dull, irrelevant facts is one of the jobs that children's books do admirably. Even when the story is only made for dreaming, history seeps in around the edges to make the past an experience instead of an exercise.

--*Christian Science  
Monitor*

Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. Without books, the development of civilization would have been impossible. They are engines of change (as the poet said), windows on the world and lighthouses erected in the sea of time. They are companions, teachers, magicians, bankers of the treasures of the mind. Books are humanity in print.

—Barbara W. Tuchman

I subscribe to William Faulkner's view that history is not just about what we were before but who we are now.

—Ken Burns

To give an accurate description of what has never occurred is not merely the proper occupation of the historian, but the inalienable privilege of any man of arts and culture.

—Oscar Wilde

History is a novel which did take place; a novel is history that could take place.

--Edmond and Jules  
de Goncourt

It's not a ladder we're climbing, it's literature we're producing.... We cannot possibly leave it to history as a discipline nor to sociology nor science nor economics to tell the story of our people.

--Nikki Giovanni

An artist is a sort of emotional or spiritual historian. His role is to make you realize the doom and glory of knowing who you are and what you are. He has to tell, because nobody else can tell, what it is like to be alive.

--James Baldwin

The past is not another country; it is another life. The texture of daily living is different now than in the past, more different the further back we look, until we find people whose experiences created a psychology we might find baffling or rude. Many details that once made up the daily round are lost to us because people considered them too trivial to write down. Knowing the past means knowing what people carried in their pockets, what they did with their sewage, where their dogs slept. Those details may seem unimportant, but what they convey is not.

—Scott Herring

A great nation does not hide its history. It faces its flaws and corrects them.

—George W. Bush

It's life or death for America, people tell you. Angry debates about taxes, religion, and race relations inflame the newspapers. Everyone is talking politics: your spouse, your teenage daughter, your boss, your grocer. Neighbors eye you suspiciously, pressing you to buy local. Angry crowds gather, smelling of booze and threatening violence; their leaders wink, confident that the ends justify the means. The stores have sold out of guns. It's 1775 in Britain's American colonies.

—Caitlin Fitz

Poetry is more philosophical and of higher value than history.

—Aristotle

The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse... the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars.

—Aristotle

The library is not a shrine for the worship of books. It is not a temple where literary incense must be burned or where one's devotion to the bound book is expressed in ritual. A library, to modify the famous metaphor of Socrates, should be the delivery room for the birth of ideas - a place where history comes to life.

—Norman Cousins

Many Americans have embraced a mythology about the Great Depression that there was national unity and shared suffering. The reality is the country was as divided then as it is today, with liberals or progressives calling for more government assistance and conservatives—John Steinbeck called them ‘rabid, hysterical Roosevelt hater(s)’—quick to blame and even villainize the poor.

—Dale Maharidge

History classes are only going to get longer and harder as time goes on.

—Stephen Lockyer

In the long course of history, having people who understand your thought is much greater security than another submarine.

—J. William Fulbright

The history of a people is found in its songs.

--George Jellinek

Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts, the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others, but of the three the only trustworthy one is the last.

--John Ruskin

History teaches that wars begin when governments believe the price of aggression is cheap.

—Ronald Reagan

Historian: An unsuccessful novelist.

—H. L. Mencken

History is a pack of lies about events that never happened told by people who weren't there.

—George Santayana

When Columbus started out he didn't know where he was going; when he got there he didn't know where he was; and when he got back he didn't know where he had been.

—Unknown

The history of science is the only history which displays cumulative progress of knowledge, hence the progress of science is the only yardstick by which we can measure the progress of mankind.

--Laurence J. Peter

Philosophy of science without history of science is empty; history of science without philosophy of science is blind.

—Imre Lakatos

I believe very strongly, and have fought since many years ago—at least over 30 years ago—to get architecture not just within schools, but architecture talked about under history, geography, science, technology, art.

—Richard Rogers

History is not a web woven with innocent hands. Among all the causes which degrade and demoralize men, power is the most constant and most active.

--Lord Acton

Under democracy, one party always devotes its chief energies to trying to prove that the other party is unfit to rule, and both commonly succeed. U.S. history is simply a record of vacillations between two gangs of frauds.

--H. L. Mencken

There is no surer sign of a country's cultural and political decay than an obtuse blindness to its unmistakable beginnings.

--Edward Gibbon

The American *Constitution* is, so far as I can see, the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man.

--William Gladstone

Machiavelli was hardly the first theorist to maintain that politics is a ruthless business, requiring leaders to do things their private conscience might abhor. Everyone, it is safe to say, knows that politics is one of those realms of life where you put your soul at risk. What's distinctively shocking about Machiavelli is that he didn't care. He believed not only that politicians must do evil in the name of the public good, but also that they shouldn't worry about it. He was unconcerned, in other words, with what modern thinkers call the problem of dirty hands.

--Michael Ignatieff

Native Americans had only stone and wooden weapons and no animals that could be ridden. Those military advantages repeatedly enabled troops of a few dozen mounted Spaniards to defeat Indian armies numbering in the thousands.

—Jared Diamond

The history of liberty is a history of limitation of government power, not the increase of it.

—Woodrow Wilson

A woman's biography—with about eight famous historical exceptions—so often turns out to be the story of a man and the woman who helped his career.

--Catherine Drinker  
Bowen

The greatest man in history was the poorest.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

We have unmistakable proof that throughout all past time, there has been a ceaseless devouring of the weak by the strong.

--Herbert Spencer

Becky Sharp's acute remark that it is not difficult to be virtuous on ten thousand a year has its application to nations; and it is futile to expect a hungry and squalid population to be anything but violent and gross.

--Thomas Henry Huxley

It is possible...for a culture to be overwhelmed physically but not culturally. That is what has happened to the American Indian. It is a strange kind of conquest over the white conquerors. Almost half the states have names borrowed from Indian lore, and so do thousands of cities, rivers, towns, lakes, and mountain ranges. Americans drink hooch, meet in a caucus, bury the hatchet, have clambakes, run the gauntlet, smoke the peace pipe, hold powwows, and enjoy Indian summer. Today's highways, a triumph of American technology, are concrete tracings of trails Indians pioneered and trod for tens of thousands of years.

--Jamake Highwater

Social history might be defined negatively as the history of a people with the politics left out.

—G. M. Trevelyan

No less than war or statecraft, the history of economics has its heroic ages.

--Aldous Huxley

The economic interpretation of history does not necessarily mean that all events are determined solely by economic forces. It simply means that economic facts are the ever recurring decisive forces, the chief points in the process of history.

--Edward Bernstein

The wealth accorded America by slavery was not just in what the slaves pulled from the land but in the slaves themselves. 'In 1860, slaves as an asset were worth more than all of America's manufacturing, all of the railroads, all of the productive capacity of the United States put together,' the Yale historian David W. Blight has noted. 'Slaves were the single largest, by far, financial asset of property in the entire American economy. The sale of these slaves—in whose bodies that money congealed,' writes Walter Johnson, a Harvard historian—generated even more ancillary wealth. Loans were taken out for purchase, to be repaid with interest. Insurance policies were drafted against the untimely death of a slave and the loss of potential profits. Slave sales were taxed and notarized. The vending of the black body and the sundering of the black family became an economy unto themselves, estimated to have brought in tens of millions of dollars to antebellum America. In 1860 there were more millionaires per capita in the Mississippi Valley than anywhere else in the country.

--Ta-Nehisi Coates

The difference between history and geography is that geography tells me where I am and history tells me how I got here.

—Unknown

There is no tracing the connection of ancient nations but by language; therefore I am always sorry when any language is lost, for languages are the pedigree of nations.

--Samuel Johnson

Man's nature, his passions, and anxieties are a cultural product; as a matter of fact, man himself is the most important creation and achievement of the continuous human effort, the record of which we call history.

—Erich Fromm

Psychology keeps trying to vindicate human nature. History keeps undermining the effort.

—Mason Cooley

There never was a social change in America without angry people at the heart.  
—Keith Miller

History is strewn thick with evidence that a truth is not hard to kill, but that a lie, well told, is immortal.

--Mark Twain

History is the transformation of tumultuous conquerors into silent footnotes.  
—Paul Eldridge

No collective experience transformed the Greeks' perception of themselves more than their unlikely victory over the Persians. In vanquishing the vastly superior forces of this world empire, the Greeks had given their poets a contemporary feat to sing about. Herodotus initiated his *Histories*—which is to say, initiated the practice of history itself—with these words:

*These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes, in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due meed of glory.*

—Rebecca Newberger  
Goldstein

If we take a moment to reflect on human history we see so much complexity that it's difficult to comprehend it all. Yet, simple truths are obvious; everyone influences each other either directly or indirectly, we all share this planet regardless of national boundaries, we all require the same nutritional needs with the most important being water, we can easily wage war and kill and at the same time love and have passion for another.

—Kat Lahr

Ninety percent of the historical researcher's time is spent at the intellectual level of collecting postage stamps.

--Lawrence Stone

His [James A. Brussel] analysis of Mary Todd Lincoln found her to be 'psychotic with symptoms of hallucinations, delusion, terror, depression and suicidal intentions.

—Michael Cannell



The great majority of the Negroes of the South who do not vote do not care to vote and would not know for what to vote if they could.

--William F. Buckley, Jr.,  
(1957)

No great leader in history fought to prevent change.

—John Maxwell

I saw no African people in the printed and illustrated Sunday school lessons. I began to suspect at this early age that someone had distorted the image of my people.

—John Henrik Clarke

What treaty have the Sioux made with the white man that we have broken? Not one. What treaty have the white man ever made with us that they have kept? Not one. When I was a boy, the Sioux owned the world. The sun rose and set on their land, they sent ten thousand men to battle. Where are the warriors today? Who slew them? Where are our lands? Who owns them?...What law have I broken? Is it wrong for me to love my own? Is it wicked for me because my skin is red? Because I am a Sioux? Because I was born where my father lived? Because I would die for my people and my country?

—Sitting Bull

The very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world. Lies will pass into history.

—George Orwell

Victorian rigidities were such that ladies were not even allowed to blow out candles in mixed company, as that required them to pucker their lips suggestively. They could not say that they were going 'to bed'--that planted too stimulating an image—but merely that they were 'retiring.' It became effectively impossible to discuss clothing in even a clinical sense without resorting to euphemisms. Trousers became 'nether integuments' or simply 'inexpressibles' and underwear was 'linen.' Women could refer among themselves to petticoats or, in hushed tones, stockings, but could mention almost nothing else that brushed bare flesh.

—Bill Bryson

Just in general, any government throughout history hasn't really wanted its people to be educated, because then they couldn't control them as easily.

—Maynard J. Keenan

They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they kept only one; they promised to take our land, and they did.

—Red Cloud

The history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history. What, then, is a race? It is a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life.

—W. E. B. DuBois

History is neither watchmaking nor cabinet construction. It is an endeavor toward better understanding.

—Marc Bloch

Asking the author of historical novels to teach you about history is like expecting the composer of a melody to provide answers about radio transmission.

—Lion Feuchtwanger

Battle—between man and man, tribe and tribe, village, city, state and nation—regarded by the unthinking as the abnormal or aberrant in human behavior, has been, historically, the norm.

--Hanson W. Baldwin

History reveals that wars create more problems than they solve.

--Unknown

To be a successful soldier you must know history....What you must know is how man reacts. Weapons change but man who uses them changes not at all. To win battles you do not beat weapons—you beat the soul of man of the enemy man.

--George Smith Patton

Throughout history the world has been laid waste to ensure the triumph of conceptions that are now as dead as the men that died for them.

--Henry de Montherlant

The greatest honor history can bestow is that of peacemaker.

--Richard M. Nixon

Very little is known about the War of 1812 because the Americans lost it.

--Eric Nicol

The real war will never get in the books.

--Walt Whitman

The failure to dissect the cause of war leaves us open for the next installment.

—Chris Hedges

War is one of the constants of history, and has not diminished with civilization and democracy. In the last 3,421 years of recorded history, only 268 have seen no war.

--William and Ariel  
Durant

America's greatest crime against the black man was not slavery or the lynching, but that he was taught to wear a mask of self-hate and self-doubt.

--Malcolm X

There are three constant issues that have run through American politics, ever since the founding of the Republic...war and peace...bread and butter...and black and white.

--Theodore White

The history of most countries has been that of majorities—mounted majorities, clad in iron, armed with death, treading down the tenfold more numerous minorities.

--Oliver Wendell Holmes

This country was settled by people who found themselves to be minorities, for one reason or another, in the lands they came from.

--Unknown

All history is a record of the power of minorities, and of minorities of one.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

African people can have a Golden Age or another Age of Continued Despair, depending on how they view themselves in relationship to the totality of history and its ironies. The cruelest thing slavery and colonialism did to the Africans was to destroy their memory of what they were before foreign contact.

--John Henrik Clark

If a race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated.

--Carter G. Woodson

If you know whence you came, there is really no limit to where you can go.

--James Baldwin

Where King advocated redemptive suffering for blacks through their own bloodshed, Malcolm promulgated 'reciprocal bleeding' for blacks and whites. As King preached the virtues of a Christian love, Malcolm articulated black anger with unmitigated passion. While King urged nonviolent civil disobedience, Malcolm promoted the liberation of blacks by whatever means were necessary.

--Michael Eric Dyson

Nowhere in the civilized world, save in the United States, do men go out in bands. . .to hunt, shoot, hang or burn to death, a single individual, unarmed and absolutely powerless.

--Ida B. Wells  
(1862-1931)

Black people will never gain full equality in this country. Even those herculean efforts that we hail as successful will produce no more than temporary 'peaks of progress,' short-lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain white dominance. This is a hard to accept fact that all history verifies. We must acknowledge it, not as a sign of submission, but as an act of ultimate defiance.

--Derrick Bell

An odd thing occurs in the minds of Americans when Indian civilization is mentioned: little or nothing.

--Paula Gunn Allen

America does not seem to remember that it derived its wealth, its values, its food, much of its medicine, and a large part of its 'dream' from Native America.

--Paula Gunn Allen

Pa said white men called the Indians savages because that made it easier to hate them, and hating them made it easier to drive them off or kill them and take their land. He said that as long as folks thought of the Shawnees as savages, they didn't have to think of them as people.

--Cynthia DeFelice

In 1492 there were six million native people residing in what is now the U.S. They spoke 2000 languages, and had been part of thriving civilizations long before the coming of Columbus. This rich culture of the native people, nonetheless, was demolished methodically and ruthlessly within a historically short period.

--Wilma Mankiller

Our chiefs are killed....The old men are dead....The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them have run away to the hills and have no blankets, no food....My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.

--Chief Joseph  
(1840-1904)

What treaty that the whites ever made with red men have they kept? Not one.

--Sitting Bull  
(1831-1890)

Where today are the Pequot? Where are the Narragansett, the Mohican, the Pokanet, and the many other once powerful tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and the oppression of the White Man, as snow before a summer sun.

—Tecumseh (1768-1813)

The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had...gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery.

--Frederick Douglass  
(1818-1895)

I vividly remember seeing a dozen black men and women chained to one another, once, and lying in a group on the pavement, awaiting shipment to the Southern slave market. Those were the saddest faces I have ever seen.

--Mark Twain

Good words do not last long unless they amount to something. Words do not pay for my dead people. They do not pay for my country, now overrun by white men....I am tired of talk that comes to nothing. It makes my heart sick when I remember all the good words and broken promises of the white men.

--Chief Joseph  
(1840-1904)

Blacks were systematically dehumanized for hundreds of years, a practice that had unique social and psychological effects on men. They were worked and whipped in fields like cattle. Any semblance of pride, any cry for justice, any measure of genuine manhood was tortured, beaten, or sold out of them. Marriage was strictly prohibited. Most were forbidden from learning to read and write. The wealth derived from their labor—the massive wealth derived from cotton, our chief export throughout much of the 19th and early 20th centuries—was channeled elsewhere. But because slavery ended 150 years ago, we often assume that this dehumanization is ancient history. It is not.

--Joshua DuBois

Because slavery ended 150 years ago, we often assume that this dehumanization is ancient history. It is not. Blacks were kept in virtual bondage through Jim Crow laws, sharecropping, and quite often, a form of quasi-slavery called peonage, which endured well into the middle of the 20th century. Here's how it worked; black men (it was usually men) were arrested for petty crimes or no crimes at all; 'selling cotton after sunset' was a favorite charge. They were then assessed a steep fine. If they could not pay, they were imprisoned for long sentences and forced to work for free. This allowed savvy industrialists to replace thousands of slaves with thousands of convicts....This practice endured until 1948, when the federal criminal code was rewritten to helpfully clarify that the law forbade involuntary servitude.

--Joshua DuBois

There are more African-Americans in the corrections system today—in prison or on probation or parole—than there were enslaved in 1850. As of 2004, more black men were denied the right to vote because of a criminal record than in 1870, when the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified, giving blacks the right to vote. In the three decades since the war on drugs began, the U.S. prison population has exploded from 300,000 to more than 2 million people, giving our country the highest incarceration rate in the world—higher than Russia, China, and other regimes we consider repressive.

--Joshua DuBois

Alabama joined other southern states in passing laws allowing or requiring school boards to shut schools to avoid having even a handful of black children sit in classrooms with white ones. Some states helped fund the all-white academies popping up across the South. State officials encouraged white parents to remove their children from public schools, helping to set off the white flight that continues to plague school systems today. Two years after the Brown ruling, not a single black child attended school with white children in eight of the 11 former Confederate states, including Alabama.

--Nikole Hannah-Jones

Having been enslaved for 250 years, black people were not left to their own devices. They were terrorized. In the Deep south, a second slavery ruled. In the North, legislatures, mayors, civic associations, banks, and citizens all colluded to pin black people into ghettos, where they were overcrowded, overcharged, and undereducated. Businesses discriminated against them, awarding them the worst jobs and the worst wages. Police brutalized them in the streets. And the notion that black lives, black bodies, and black wealth were rightful targets remained deeply rooted in the broader society.

--Ta-Nehisi Coates

I stationed myself by the side of the road, along which the slaves, amounting to three hundred and fifty, were to pass. The purchaser of my wife was a Methodist minister, who was about starting for North Carolina. Pretty soon five wagon-loads of little children passed, and looking at the foremost one, what should I see but a little child, pointing its tiny hand towards me, exclaiming, 'There's my father; I knew he would come and bid me good-bye.' It was my eldest child! Soon the gang approached in which my wife was chained. I looked, and beheld her familiar face; but O, reader, that glance of agony! may God spare me ever again enduring the excruciating horror of that moment! She passed, and came near to where I stood. I seized hold of her hand, intending to bid her farewell; but words failed me; the gift of utterance had fled, and I remained speechless. I followed her for some distance, with her hand grasped in mine, as if to save her from her fate, but I could not speak, and I was obliged to turn away in silence.

--Virginia slave Henry  
Brown (1816-1897)

The consequences of 250 years of enslavement, of war upon black families and black people, were profound. Like homeownership today, slave ownership was aspirational, attracting not just those who owned slaves but those who wished to. Much as homeowners today might discuss the addition of a patio or the painting of a living room, slaveholders traded tips on the best methods for breeding workers, exacting labor, and doling out punishment. Just as a homeowner today might subscribe to a magazine like *This Old House*, slaveholders had journals such as *De Bow's Review*, which recommended the best practices for wringing profits from slaves. By the dawn of the Civil War, the enslavement of black America was thought to be so foundational to the country that those who sought to end it were branded heretics worthy of death. Imagine what would happen if a president today came out in favor of taking all American homes from their owners: the reaction might well be violent.

--Ta-Nehisi Coates

When they told me my new-born babe was a girl, my heart was heavier than it had ever been before. Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women.

--Harriet Ann Jacobs  
(1813-1897)

You can't talk about one without the other—Malcolm X without Martin Luther King. For me, Malcolm had a revolutionary fire that Martin didn't have initially; Martin had a moral fire from the very beginning that Malcolm didn't get until later. Malcolm's love for black people was so strong and so intense that early on it led him to call white folk devils and give up on them, and I think he was wrong about that. Martin never did that. But Martin didn't have the revolutionary fire that Malcolm had until the very end of his life.

—Cornel West

What do you think you would do after 400 years of slavery and Jim Crow and lynching? Do you think you would respond nonviolently? What's your history like? Let's look at how you have responded when you were oppressed. George Washington—revolutionary guerrilla fighter!

—Malcolm X

Teaching history in a world that is focused on the present and often consumed with thoughts of the future is challenging. I have found that one of the best ways to connect students with the past is to introduce them to real people from history whose experiences and emotions are often similar to their own

Students are regularly surprised to find that people who lived 100 or even 1000 years ago bore the same fears, expressed the same ambitions and enjoyed the same affections as people today.

When asked to read an 18th-century letter written by Johannes Hänner, a German-speaking immigrant to Pennsylvania, my students remark on his optimism, courage and commitment to his family, all of which are characteristics that they also value. Similarly, students report that they are touched by the heart-breaking story of Elizabeth Sprigs, a young Englishwoman who struggled to survive in colonial Virginia as an indentured servant. The pain she expresses from being far from home and separated from family is still tangible today.

First hand accounts also give students an opportunity to become more familiar with well-known historical figures such as Thomas Jefferson and George Washington. Washington's 'Farewell Address,' where he announces that he will not run for re-election in 1796, gives students insights into the first president's views of his own administration as well as his aspirations for the country's future.



At the same time, first-hand accounts introduce students to figures who would have been forgotten had it not been for a letter, diary entry or court record that has kept their name alive in the historical record...Once students begin to understand and even identify with historical figures — famous or otherwise— they will be better able to make connections between the past and today. They can begin to see the relevance of events from long ago and realize how these events, and individuals, have shaped the world we live in today.

—Amy Powers

Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shore, the scar of our racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society. From the sixteenth century forward, blood flowed in battles over racial supremacy. We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, our drama, our folklore all exalt it. Our children are still taught to respect the violence which reduced a red-skinned people of an earlier culture into a few fragmented groups herded into impoverished reservations.

—John Kennedy

A decade before the Civil War, the leading Southern periodical *De Bow's Review* published a series titled 'Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race'—a much-needed study, the editors opined, given its 'direct and practical bearing' upon 3 million people whose value the distinguished New Orleans physician Samuel Adolphus Cartwright, described in precise anatomical terms the reasons for African Americans' supposed laziness ('deficiency of red blood in the pulmonary and arterial systems'), love of dancing ('profuse distribution of nervous matter to the stomach, liver and genital organs'), and exceptional dislike of being whipped ('skin...as sensitive, when they are in perfect health, as that of children').

—Adam Goodheart

In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body—it is heritage. Enslavement was not merely the antiseptic borrowing of labor—it is not so easy to get a human being to commit his body against its own elemental interest. And so enslavement must be casual wrath and random manglings, the gashing of heads and brains blown out over the river as the body seeks to escape. It must be rape so regular as to be industrial. There is no uplifting way to say this. I have no praise anthems, nor old Negro spirituals. The spirit and soul are the body and brain, which are

destructible—that is precisely why they are so precious. And the soul did not escape. The spirit did not steal away on gospel wings. The soul was the body that fed the tobacco, and the spirit was the blood that watered the cotton, and these created the first fruits of the American garden. And the fruits were secured through the bashing of children with stovewood, through hot iron peeling skin away like husk from corn.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

Enslavement is not a parable. It is damnation. It is the never-ending night. And the length of that night is most of our history. Never forget that we were enslaved in this country longer than we have been free. Never forget that for 250 years black people were born into chains—whole generations followed by more generations who knew nothing but chains.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

You must resist the common urge toward the comforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some irrepressible justice. The enslaved were not bricks in your road, and their lives were not chapters in your redemptive history. They were people turned to fuel for the American machine. Enslavement was not destined to end, and it is wrong to claim our present circumstance—no matter how improved—as the redemption for the lives of people who never asked for the posthumous, untouchable glory of dying for their children.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

In the '20s you had white people saying, 'Look, I don't want black people living next to me.' The thing is that, even in the '20s, not all whites were that racist. But the forces of the marketplace came in, and realtors said, 'Look, if a black family wants to see a house in a white neighborhood, we won't show it to them.' Banks started to say, 'If African Americans want to buy in a white neighborhood, we won't loan to them.' So you had this racism that some white people felt, and then you combined it with these forces of the marketplace and you institutionalized it.

I really believe that whites are much less racist than they used to be. but those forces of the marketplace still sit there, though most of them are illegal now. The challenge is to try to break those structures.

—Kevin Boyle

One of the things that history can do for people is give them a sense that the struggles against segregation and discrimination are all in the past. It's painfully obvious that they're not in the past. All you have to do to see the continuation of segregation, if you happen to be a Northwestern student, is take the Red Line from Howard down to its end point at 95th Street. You'll watch segregation roll by you.

—Kevin Boyle

Our approach to social problems is to decrease their visibility: out of sight, out of mind. This is the real foundation of racial segregation, especially in its most extreme case, the Indian ‘reservation.’ Result of our social effort has been to remove the underlying problems of our society farther and farther from the daily experience and daily consciousness, and hence to decrease, in the mass of the population, the knowledge, skill, resources and motivation necessary to deal with them.

—Philip Slater

The migration began, like the flap of a sea gull’s wings, as a rivulet of black families escaping Selma, Alabama, in the winter of 1916. Their quiet departure was scarcely noticed except for a single paragraph in the Chicago Defender, to whom they confided that ‘the treatment doesn’t warrant staying.’ The rivulet would become rapids, which grew into a flood of six million people journeying out of the South over the course of six decades. They were seeking political asylum within the borders of their own country, not unlike refugees in other parts of the world fleeing famine, war and pestilence.

Until that moment and from the time of their arrival on these shores, the vast majority of African-Americans had been confined to the South, at the bottom of a feudal social order, at the mercy of slaveholders and their descendants and often-violent vigilantes. The Great Migration was the first big step that the nation’s servant class ever took without asking.

—Isabel Wilkerson

Throughout the migration, wherever black Southerners went, the hostility and hierarchies that fed the Southern caste system seemed to carry over into the receiving stations in the New World, as the cities of the North and West erected barriers to black mobility. There were ‘sundown towns’ throughout the country that banned African-Americans after dark. The constitution of Oregon explicitly prohibited black people from entering the state until 1926; whites-only signs could still be seen in store windows into the 1950s.

—Isabel Wilkerson

When African-Americans sought to move their families to more favorable conditions, they faced a hardening structure of policies and customs designed to maintain racial exclusion. Restrictive covenants, introduced as a response to the influx of black people during the Great Migration, were clauses written into deeds that outlawed African-Americans from buying, leasing or living in properties in white neighborhoods, with the exception, often explicitly spelled out, of servants. By the 1920s, the widespread use of restrictive covenants kept as much as 85 percent of Chicago off-limits to African-Americans.

At the same time, redlining—the federal housing policy of refusing to approve or guarantee mortgages in areas where black people lived—served to deny them access to mortgages in their own neighborhoods. These policies became the pillars of a residential caste system in the North that calcified segregation and wealth inequality over generations, denying African-Americans the chance accorded other Americans to improve their lot.

—Isabel Wilkerson

The Freedom Rides were probably...among the most dangerous aspects of the civil rights movement. To get on buses traveling through the South was very dangerous. It was dangerous, but it worked. By November 1, 1961...segregated waiting room signs were gone.

I didn't like seeing those signs that said 'white waiting,' 'colored waiting,' 'white men,' 'colored men,' 'white women,' 'colored women.' I wanted to do whatever I could to help bring them down.

Growing up, I would always ask my mother and father, my grandparents, my great-grandparents to explain racial discrimination to me and they would tell me sometimes, 'That's the way it is. Don't get in the way, don't get in trouble.' But Dr. King and Rosa Parks inspired me to get in the way and to get in trouble.

—John Lewis

The ghettos of America are the direct result of decades of public-policy decisions: the redlining of real estate zoning maps, the expanded authority given to prosecutors, the increased funding given to prisons. And all of this was done on the backs of people still reeling from the 250-year legacy of slavery. The results of this negative investment are clear—African Americans rank at the bottom of nearly every major socioeconomic measure in the country.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro... two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.

--W. E. B. Du Bois  
(1868-1963)

The darkest thing about Africa is America's ignorance of it.

--Reverend James J.  
Robinson

Look at the artifacts being discovered there [Africa], that are proving over and over again, how the black man had great, fine, sensitive civilizations before the white man was out of the caves. Below the Sahara, in the places where most of America's Negroes' foreparents were kidnapped, there is being unearthed some of the finest craftsmanship, sculpture and other objects, that has never been seen by modern man. Some of these things now are on view in such places as New York City's Museum of Modern Art. Gold work of such find tolerance and workmanship that it has no rival. Ancient objects produced by black hands... refined by those black hands with results that no human hands today can equal.

History has been so 'whitened' by the white man that even the black professors have known little more than the most ignorant black man about the talents and rich civilizations and cultures of the black man of millenniums ago.

—Malcolm X

There is no life that does not contribute to history.

—Dorothy West

There is no more dangerous misconception than this which misconstrues the arms race as the cause rather than a symptom of the tensions and divisions which threaten nuclear war. If the history of the past fifty years teaches us anything, it is that peace does not follow disarmament—disarmament follows peace.

--Bernard M. Baruch

I have always believed that we cannot have peace in the world until all of us understand how wars start.

--Jean F. Merrill

If some peoples pretend that history or geography gives them the right to subjugate other races, nations, or peoples, there can be no peace.

—Ludwig von Mises

Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it in summer school.

—Josh Stern

From the beginning of our history the country has been afflicted with compromise. It is by compromise that human rights have been abandoned.

--Charles Sumner

I felt somehow for many years that George Washington and Alexander Hamilton just left me out by mistake. But through the process of amendment, interpretation, and court decision, I have finally been included in 'We, the people.'

--Barbara Jordan

The truth is that any figure of Africans imported into the Americas which is narrowly based on the surviving records is bound to be low, because there were so many people at the time who had a vested interest in smuggling slaves (and withholding data. Nevertheless, if the low figure of ten million was accepted as basis for evaluating the impact of slaving on Africa as a whole, the conclusions that could legitimately be drawn would confound those who attempt to make light of the experience of the rape of Africans from 1445 to 1870.

--Walter Rodney

There is no such thing as a traditional marriage. In various places and at various points in human history, marriage has been a means by which young children were betrothed, uniting royal houses and sealing alliances between nations. In the Bible, it was a union that sometimes took place between a man and his dead brother's widow, or between one man and several wives. It has been a vehicle for the orderly transfer of property from one generation of males to the next; the test by which children were deemed legitimate or bastard; a privilege not available to black Americans; something parents arranged for their adult children; a contract under which women, legally, ceased to exist. Well into the 19th century, the British common-law concept of 'unity of person' meant a woman became her husband when she married, giving up her legal standing and the right to own property or control her own wages.

--Liz Mundy

When asked by an anthropologist what the Indians called America before the white man came, an Indian said simply, 'Ours.'

—Vine Deloria, Jr.

Columbus's real achievement was managing to cross the ocean successfully in both directions. Though an accomplished enough mariner, he was not terribly good at a great deal else, especially geography, the skill that would seem most vital in an explorer. It would be hard to name any figure in history who has achieved more lasting fame with less competence. He spent large parts of eight years bouncing around Caribbean islands and coastal South America convinced that he was in the heart of the Orient and that Japan and China were at the edge of every sunset. He never worked out that Cuba is an island and never once set foot on, or even suspected the existence of, the landmass to the north that everyone thinks he discovered: the United States.

--Bill Bryson

The purpose of dating is not much clearer than its definition. Before the early 1900s, when people started 'dating,' they 'called.' That is, men called on women, and everyone more or less agreed on the point of the visit. The potential spouses assessed each other in the privacy of her home, her parents assessed his eligibility, and either they got engaged or he went on his way. Over the course of the 20th century, such encounters became more casual, but even tire kickers were expected to make a purchase sooner rather than later. Five decades ago, 72 percent of men and 87 percent of women had gotten married by the time they were 25. By 2012, the situation and basically reversed: 78 percent of men and 67 percent of women were unmarried at that age.

—Judith Shulevitz

During the Progressive era, with women beginning to vote and race riots breaking out across growing urban centers, lawmakers seized on flirting as a menace to social order. New York City police set up flirting dragnets, using 'pretty blonde girls as bait,' according to a syndicated newspaper column from June, 1920. 'The enormous recent growth of the crime of flirting...must be ascribed to a growing laxity of conduct in general, and also to the rise of the short skirt,' the article continued. 'It should be promptly and drastically suppressed.'

—Amanda Ripley

The zoot suit was, perhaps, the first time in American history that fashion was believed to be the cause of widespread civil unrest.

—Kathy Peiss

Hanging is perhaps the quintessential American punishment. In the pre-revolutionary era, criminals were also shot, pressed between heavy stones, broken on the wheel, or burned alive. (An estimated 16,000 people have been put to death in this country since the first recorded execution, in 1608.) But the simplicity of the noose

triumphed, and its use spread as the republic grew. In theory, a hanging is quick and relatively painless: the neck snaps immediately. But hangings can be grisly. If the rope is too short, the noose will slowly strangle the condemned. If the rope is too long, the force of the fall can decapitate the person.

—Matt Ford

...the ‘Groans of the Britons’ letter, sent circa 450 A.D. by ancient Britons appealing for Roman help in resisting invaders. When no help came, the Britons asked the Germanic mercenaries to come to their assistance—leading to the Germanic takeover of Britain. This was affectively the start of the English language.

—Stephen Jarvis

History offers the best training for those who are to take part in public affairs.

--Polybius

Extended families have never been the norm in America; the highest figure for extended-family households ever recorded in American history is 20 percent. Contrary to the popular myth that industrialization destroyed ‘traditional’ extended families, this high point occurred between 1850 and 1885, during the most intensive period of early industrialization. Many of these extended families, and most ‘producing’ families of the time, depended on the labor of children; they were held together by dire necessity and sometimes by brute force.

--Stephanie Coontz

Nostalgia is one of the great enemies of clear thinking about the family. The disruptions of families in the nineteenth century through death, separation, and other convulsions of an industrializing economy was much more catastrophic than we imagine.

--Joseph Featherstone

Not all family functions that seem to have been transferred outside the family—or that romantics sometimes yearn to bring back—were there in the first place. It is often claimed that ‘extended families’ (with three generations at home, aunts and uncles included) were the rule, and that they have now been replaced by ‘nuclear’ families. But actually most Americans have always lived in families consisting only of parents and children, and in colonial days, just as today, most children moved away from their parents’ homes to set up households of their own. Nor is the mobility that scatters kinfolk to widely separated regions a new thing; historical studies indicate that frequent moves to new places have always been the rule in American life.

--Kenneth Keniston



Christopher Columbus' discovery of America was partly due to Ptolemy—and errors in his cartography. Columbus carried a map influenced by the ancient Roman's work. But Ptolemy thought the world was 30 percent smaller than it actually is; worse, the mapmaker was using Arabian miles, which were longer than Italian ones. Together these mistakes led Columbus to believe the voyage to Asia would be much shorter.

—Clive Thompson

What road led Hannibal to Rome? The vexed question is one of those problems on the border line of history and geography that are fascinating and perhaps insoluble. Much ink has been spilled in pinpointing the route of Hannibal's improbable five-month, thousand-mile trek from Catalonia across the Pyrenees, through the Languedoc to the banks of the Rhone, and then over the Alps to the plains of Italy. Many boots have been worn out in determining the Alpine pass through which tens of thousands of foot soldiers and cavalymen, thousands of horses and mules, and, famously, 37 African battle elephants tramped.

—Franz Lidz

Few historical problems have produced more unprofitable discussion than that of Hannibal's pass over the Alps.

—F. W. Walbank

The researches of many commentators have already thrown much darkness on this subject [Hannibal's route through the Alps], and it is probable that, if they continue, we shall soon know nothing at all about it.

—Mark Twain

Hannibal wasn't just a brilliant strategist and military tactician, he understood the complexity of human behavior, that command involves more than giving orders and intimidating men to follow him—it involved compromise and shrewd leadership. He impressed the enemy with his courage and daring swordplay, fighting on the front lines, wading into the thick of battle. He wasn't some Roman consul sitting behind the troops. During the Italian campaign Hannibal rode an elephant through a swamp off the Arno and lost the sight in his right eye from what was probably ophthalmia. He became a one-eyed general, like Moshe Dayan.

—Franz Lidz

On September 19, 1738, a man named Benjamin Lay strode into a Quaker meeting House in Burlington, New Jersey, for the biggest event of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. He wore a great coat, which hid a military uniform and a sword. Beneath his coat Lay carried a hollowed out-book with a secret compartment, into which he had tucked a tied-off animal bladder filled with bright red pokeberry juice. Because

Quakers had no formal minister or church ceremony, people spoke as the spirit moved them. Lay, a Quaker himself, waited his turn.

He finally rose to address this gathering of 'weighty Quakers.' Many Friends in Pennsylvania and New Jersey had grown rich on Atlantic commerce, and many bought human property. To them Lay announced in a booming voice that God Almighty respects all peoples equally, rich and poor, men and women, white and black alike. He said that slave keeping was the greatest sin in the world and asked, how can a people who profess the golden rule keep slaves? He then threw off his great coat, revealing the military garb, the book in the blade.

A murmur filled the hall as the prophet thundered his judgment: 'Thus shall God shed the blood of those persons who enslaved their fellow creatures.' He pulled out the sword, raised the book above his head, and plunged the sword through it. People gasped as the red liquid gushed down his arm; women swooned. To the shock of all, he spattered 'blood' on the slave keepers. He prophesied a dark, violent future: Quakers who failed to heed the prophet's call must expect physical, moral and spiritual death.

The room exploded into chaos, but Lay stood quiet and still, 'like a statue,' a witness remarked. Several Quakers quickly surrounded the armed soldier of God and carried him from the building. He did not resist. He had made his point.

—Marcus Rediker

George Washington is one of the beacons placed at intervals along the highroad of history.

--Orestes Ferrara

Washington is, to my mind, the purest figure in history.

--William Ewart  
Gladstone

The origins of April Fools' Day are obscure.

The predominant theory holds that it dates from about 1582, the year France adopted the Gregorian Calendar, which switched the beginning of the year from what is now the end of March (around the time of the vernal equinox) to the first of January.

According to popular lore, some folks, out of ignorance, stubbornness, or both, continued to ring in the New Year on April first and were made the butt of jokes and pranks (*poissons d'avail*, or 'April Fish') on account of their 'foolishness.' This became an annual celebration which ultimately spread throughout Europe and other parts of the world.

However, the earliest known historical reference to April Fools' Day occurs in a Dutch poem published in 1561, which predates the adoption of the Gregorian

calendar by some 21 years.

Another problem with the calendar-change theory is that it doesn't account for a historical record replete with traditions linking jollity and tomfoolery to springtime dating all the way back to antiquity — and not just in the West.

The ancient Romans, for example, celebrated a festival on March 25 called Hilaria, marking the occasion with masquerades and 'general good cheer.'

Holi, the Hindu 'festival of colors' observed in early March with 'general merrymaking' and the 'loosening of social norms,' is at least as old as Hilaria.

The Jewish festival of Purim has a long, colorful history as well. Coinciding with the advent of spring, it's celebrated annually with costume-wearing, carnivals, and pranks.

It's not unreasonable to suppose that the calendrical changes of the 16th and 17th centuries served more as an excuse to codify a general spirit of mirth already associated with springtime, the season of rebirth and renewal, than as the sole inspiration for a pranksters' holiday.

—David Emery

Memorial Day has been an official holiday since the passage of the National Holiday Act in 1971, but its origins reach back decades. Following the Civil War, many Americans began honoring dead soldiers by decorating their graves with flowers. By 1868, the tradition had become so popular that an organization of Union veterans declared May 30 Decoration Day, and the future president James Garfield recognized the day with a speech at Arlington National Cemetery. The holiday originally honored Civil War soldiers, but after World War I, it was expanded to include the fallen in every American war. Eventually, the holiday came to be known as Memorial Day. Decades later, it's still celebrated today.

—Claire Warner

Have you ever read the *Declaration of Independence*...? If you have, you will know that it is not a Fourth of July oration. The Declaration of Independence was a document preliminary to war. It was a vital piece of practical business, not a piece of rhetoric; and if you will pass beyond those preliminary passages which we are accustomed to quote about the rights of men and read into the heart of the document you will see that it is very express and detailed, that it consists of a series of definite specifications concerning actual public business of the day. Not the business of our day, for the matter with which it deals is past, but the business of that first revolution by which the Nation was set up, the business of 1776. Its general statements, its general declarations can not mean anything to us unless we append to it a similar specific body of particulars as to what we consider the

essential business of our own day.

Liberty does not consist, my fellow citizens, in mere general declarations of the rights of man. It consists in the translation of those declarations into definite action. Therefore... reading its business-like sentences, we ought to ask ourselves what there is in it for us. There is nothing in it for us unless we can translate it into the terms of our own conditions and of our own lives....

The task to which we have constantly to readdress ourselves is the task of proving that we are worthy of the men who drew this great declaration and know what they would have done in our circumstances. Patriotism consists in some very practical things—practical in that they belong to the life of every day, that they wear no extraordinary distinction about them, that they are connected with commonplace duty.

—Woodrow Wilson

The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival.... with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore. You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure that it will cost us to maintain this Declaration and support and defend these States. Yet, through all the gloom, I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory.

—John Adams

As soon as I arrived in the Indies, in the first island which I found, I took some of the natives by force, in order that they might learn and might give me information of whatever there is in these parts. And so it was that they soon understood us, and we them, either by speech or by signs, and they have been very serviceable.

—Christopher Columbus

The red man of the forest was formerly a very respectful person. At the time Chris. arrove on these shores, the savages was virtuous and happy. They were innocent of secession, rum, draw-poker, and sinfulness generally. They had no Congress, faro banks, delirium tremens, or Associated Press. Their habits was consequently good. Late suppers, dyspepsy, gas companies, thieves, ward politicians, pretty waiter-girls, and other metropolitan refinements, were unknown among them. No savage in good standing would take postage-stamps. The female aborigine never died of consumption, because she didn't tie her waist up in whalebone things; but in loose and flowing garments she bounded, with naked feet, over hills and plains like the wild and frisky antelope. It was an unlucky moment for us when Chris. set his foot onto these here shores. It would have been better for us of the present day if the Indians had given him a warm meal and sent him home. For the savages owned the

country, and Columbus was a fillibuster. Cortez, Pizarro, and Walker were one-horse fillibusters—Columbus was a four-horse team fillibuster, and a large yellow dog under the wagon. I say, in view of the mess we are making of things, it would have been better for us if Columbus had stayed to home.

—Artemus Ward (1862)

If Christopher Columbus is the man whom, according to the common historical view, shut the door upon the Middle Ages and inaugurated a new world and a new age, the moment when those three paltry vessels left that Spanish harbour is one of the most epoch-making in the history of humanity.

--Jacob Wassermann

We tend to think of Christmas-season traditions as ancient, but most of them are rather recent, born in the 19th century. 'A Visit From St. Nicholas' was published in 1823, and 'A Christmas Carol' in 1843. Thomas Nast's drawings of jolly Santa Claus debuted in 1862. Meanwhile, in 1841, Queen Victoria's husband, Albert, had introduced Britain to the Teutonic tannenbaum—the Christmas tree—and the idea spread. In the States, President Franklin Pierce put one up at the White House in 1856, and by the 1870s fresh-cut trees were being sold at Washington Square Park, and pretty ornaments at Macy's.

—Jamie Malanowski

St. Nicholas, according to tradition, was Bishop Nicholas of Myra (a city on what is now the south Turkish coast) in the fourth century A.D. There is no firm knowledge of anything concerning his life, no contemporary references or any accounts in sober histories. There are only late legendary accounts of good deeds and miracles, some of which involve his rescue of children from tragedy, or his kind donation of money to those in need. Consequently, he became associated with gifts, especially to children.

—Isaac Asimov

The nature of the Christmas celebration is, in part, an outgrowth of the roman Saturnalia which celebrated the Winter Solstice with a season of joy, feasting, and gift-giving. Since the Christians could not wipe out so happy a holiday, they adopted it and set the birth of Jesus at the solstice season even though there is absolutely no biblical justification for this. As Saint Nicholas was associated with gift-giving, he eventually became associated with the gift-giving aspect of Santurnalia/Christmas, all the more so since his feast day came on December 6, when the approaching Christmas season was in all minds.

—Isaac Asimov

The association of Saint Nicholas with Christmas gift-giving was strengthened in Germany at the time of the protestant Reformation since the St. Nicholas aspect was one way of getting away from the complex religious ritual associated with Catholicism. The habit spread to the Netherlands, and the Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam brought the association to the New World, using their own name for Saint Nicholas, which was 'Sinter Claas' (Claas being the diminutive for 'Nicolaas'). The Dutch legends persisted even after the English took over and converted New Amsterdam to New York in 1664. The Dutch name of the saint became Santa Claus.

—Isaac Asimov

Because Christmas is in the winter season and is associated with snow in the Protestant lands of northern Europe in which the modern legend of Santa Claus took shape, the legend arose that Santa Claus dwelt at the North Pole. ...it was the polar cold that influenced the legend, and Santa Claus travels as one would expect an inhabitant of the polar regions to travel—by sleigh. That the sleigh is drawn by reindeer is not at all surprising. At the time the Santa Claus legend was taking over its modern form in Germany, the best-known people of the polar regions were the Lapps in northern Scandinavia. They had learned to make use of the reindeer (or caribou), using it for meat, milk, and even as a draft animal. Why shouldn't Santa Claus travel Lapp-fashion?

—Isaac Asimov

[Astrid] Lindgren is intent on bearing sharp-eyed witness to the real world. The incongruities are jarring. Chaos spreads in Europe, while neutral Sweden remains a surreal oasis of comparative calm and comfort. In back-to-back [diary] entries in 1942, she takes note of 'completely lunatic amounts of blood' in Stalingrad and of her cozy family Christmas in Stockholm.

—Ann Hulbert

History will smile to think that this is the species for which Socrates and Jesus Christ died.

—Julien Benda

You are a black boy, and you must be responsible for your body in a way that other boys cannot know. Indeed, you must be responsible for the worst actions of other black bodies, which, somehow, will always be assigned to you. And you must be responsible for the bodies of the powerful—the policeman who cracks you with a nightstick will quickly find his excuse in your furtive movements. You have to make your peace with the chaos, but you cannot lie. You cannot forget how much they took from us and how they transfigured our very bodies into sugar, tobacco, cotton, and gold.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

The NRA was founded in 1871 by Civil War veterans George Wood Wingate, a lawyer, and William Conant Church, a former New York Times reporter....Their primary concern was not gun rights or the Second Amendment. What was it? 'Their personal disgust for the average soldier's marksmanship skills during the war drove them to create an organization that promoted rifle shooting on a scientific basis,' according to a thesis written by a Naval Postgraduate School student. 'The NRA started their charter with the promotion of marksmanship and organized shooting matches for training the New York National Guard.'

—Michael S. Rosenwald

I never bought into the whole 'second amendment' argument as it relates to the 21st century. Originally, it was put into place for the simple reason that our forefathers were fighting or had just fought off a government that threatened them with weapons. If those in the revolution had no weapons, there would be no United States of America, but rather New England of the New World. So, I understood why they thought it was so important.

--Martin Manley

History provides no precise guidelines.

—Douglas Hurd

Every major question in history is a religious question. It has more effect in molding life than nationalism or a common language.

—Hilaire Belloc

The most persistent sound, which reverberates through men's history, is the beating of war drums.

—Arthur Koestler

Geology is intimately related to almost all the physical sciences, as is history to the moral. An historian should, if possible, be at once profoundly acquainted with ethics, politics, jurisprudence, the military art, theology; in a word, with all branches of knowledge, whereby any insight into human affairs, or into the moral and intellectual nature of man, can be obtained. It would be no less desirable that a geologist should be well versed in chemistry, natural philosophy, mineralogy, zoology, comparative anatomy, botany; in short, in every science relating to organic and inorganic nature. With these accomplishments the historian and geologist would rarely fail to draw correct and philosophical conclusions from the various monuments transmitted to them of former occurrences.

--Sir Charles Lyell

For 99.9% of our human history as a species, there was no aging. Humans were very likely to die by our 30s from predation, starvation, disease, childbirth or any number of violent events.

—Judy Campisi

History records the names of royal bastards, but it cannot tell us the origin of wheat.

--Jean Henri Fabre

My life on the farm during the Great Depression more nearly resembled farm life of fully 2,000 years ago than farm life today.

--Jimmy Carter

One of the first buildings a pioneer family constructed was a good, weathertight, substantial barn. Sometimes, barns went up even before a farmer's house because the barn was absolutely vital to the farming operations of that era. Barns housed hay crops necessary for animal feed and bedding during the winter months. They were also the places where livestock was housed, fed, and cared for. Barns were also where the economically vital small grain crops of oats, wheat, rye and barley were threshed. In fact, the earliest barns had special wooden threshing floors where grain was removed from the stalks by beating it with flails for having oxen or horses walk over it. The grain was later winnowed to remove chaff from the kernels while the straw was stored in the haymow for use as animal bedding and food.

—Roger Matile

When humans began cultivating the land, they thought that the extra work this required will pay off. 'Yes, we will have to work harder. But the harvest will be so bountiful! We won't have to worry any more about lean years. Our children will never go to sleep hungry.' It made sense.

If you worked harder, you would have a better life. That was the plan.

The first part of the plan went smoothly. People indeed worked harder. But people did not foresee that the number of children would increase, meaning that the extra wheat would have to be shared between more children.

Neither did the early farmers understand that feeding children with more porridge and less breast milk would weaken their immune system, and that permanent settlements would be hotbeds for infectious diseases.



They did not foresee that by increasing their dependence on a single source of food, they were actually exposing themselves even more to the depredations of drought. Nor did the farmers foresee that in good years their bulging granaries would tempt thieves and enemies, compelling them to start building walls and doing guard duty.

--Yuval Noah Harari

Farming was independently invented at least seven times—in China, the Middle East, New Guinea, the Andes, the Amazon basin, Mexico, and West Africa.

—Bill Bryson

Man's survival, from the time of Adam and Eve until the invention of agriculture, must have been precarious because of his inability to ensure his food supply.

—Norman Borlaug

The discovery of agriculture was the first big step toward a civilized life.

—Arthur Keith

The first farmer was the first man, and all historic nobility rests on possession and use of land.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

China's use of 'night soil,' as the Chinese rightly call a manure that is collected after dark, is probably the reason that its soils are still healthy after four millennia of intensive agriculture, while other great civilizations—the Maya, for one—floundered when their soils turned to dust.

—Rose George

Biological evidence indicates that man, evolving with his food plants, developed horticulture and agriculture in both hemispheres at a time which may well have reached far back into the Pleistocene.

--Russell Lord

The roots of farming began in the areas of present day Turkey and the Middle East about 10,000 years ago. Two of the earliest settlements are known as Catal Hüyük and Jericho. Catal Hüyük had, by 6000 B.C., more than 1000 houses. It is at this place that we have discovered evidence of people taking wild grasses and using the seeds for food and planting for the next years food. These seeds are now known as cereals and make up a large percentage of the worlds food supply.

Jericho, like many early cities, was located around a consistent water source, a spring which produced over 1000 gallons of water every minute. Jericho consisted of about eight to ten acres on which it is estimated that two to three thousand people

lived. These people were supported by farming of wheat, barley, peas, and lentils. Archeologists believe the earliest settlers in this area were a small group of hunter-gathers. Hunter-gathers would live off the land forging berry and edible plants, as well as hunting wild animals. These types of people lived in smaller groups because they had to be mobile to find more food. It was not until man began to plant and harvest crops that large permanent settlements could be established, like at Jericho.

—*historylink101.com*

The *Declaration of Independence* was an open letter to King George III in which the ragtag American colonists enunciated the basis of human rights—that all people are created equal and deserving of unalienable rights—and created a model for untold rebellions.

—David DeMarkey

The idea that popular education might best be achieved privately in nothing new....The Puritans, who saw education as necessary to Christian practice, experimented with the idea, and their experience is telling. In 1642, they passed a law—the first of its kind in North America—requiring that all children in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts receive an education. The legislators assumed, naïvely, that parents would teach children in their homes; however, many of them proved unable or unwilling to rise to the task. Five years later, the legislators issued a corrective in the form of the Old Deluder Satan Law: ‘It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures,’ the law intoned, ‘it is therefore ordered... that everie township [of 100 households or more] in this jurisdiction’ be required to provide a trained teacher and the grammar school, at taxpayer expense.

—Erika Christakis

If the Sons of Liberty, in defiance of the Tea Act, hadn’t boarded those ships in Boston Harbor in 1773 and heaved overboard shipments from the East India Company, then the British Parliament wouldn’t have responded with the Intolerable Acts. The American Revolution might not have erupted into all-out war, and the Constitution might not have been written.

—Benjamin Percy

Some of the greatest crimes are not considered illegal. The African slave trade changed history by forcibly disrupting millions of lives in two worlds—it robbed Africa of its people and perverted the foundation of America with a national sin, while leaving more than 1 million bodies dead in the Atlantic.

—Reginald Hudlin

Gavrilo Princip assassinating Archduke Franz Ferdinand... triggered World War I, led to the October Revolution and the end of the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires, rewrote the world map, set the stage for World War II, and affects about every person alive today.

—Louis Nagel

When a historian withholds important facts likely to influence the judgement of his readers, he commits a fraud.

—Walter Bagehot

Students have to learn content, including geography, dates, and political contexts. But books can put a human face on historical events. That [ability] is the greatest power of integrating literature with social studies, science, math, and history.

—Joan Ruddiman

One reason to integrate literature into the content areas is because it provides access to different topics, ideas, and points of view in ways accessible to students. Textbooks tend to present issues widely and on the surface and without different viewpoints. The challenge for teachers using literature to teach content, especially with middle school students, is to move beyond ‘I like this book’ in class discussion. For example, when students read about Nelson Mandela in reading class as they study the colonization of Africa and its effect in social studies, they can talk about books as they relate to political and cultural content. This makes discussions less personally sensitive because it’s not about the kids directly. And such reading helps kids understand the global insights theme of the curriculum.

—Joan Ruddiman

For Japanese people before 1868, Europeans were little more than curious beasts, strange and incomprehensible. Then, after the Meiji Restoration, everything changed. Along with European science and technology, European art flooded into Japan, all forms of it representing themselves as the universal—and most advanced—model. The same was true of novels. The Japanese, with characteristic diligence, began to read masterpieces of European literature, first in the original and then in translation. And such is the power of literature that through the act of reading, little by little the Japanese came to live the lives of Europeans as if they were their own. They began to live the ambitions of Julien Sorel, the happiness of Jane Eyre, the sufferings of young Werther, and the despair of Anna Karenina as if they were their own. They thus began living a new temporality—that which flows in the West, dictated by the Gregorian calendar, marked by major historical events in the West. And by so doing, they eventually joined what the Europeans called ‘humanity.’

--Minae Mizumura

When we look back beyond one hundred years over the long trails of history, we see immediately why the age we live in differs from all other ages in human annals. ... It remained stationary in India and in China for thousands of years. But now it is moving very fast. ... A priest from Thebes would probably have felt more at home at the council of Trent, two thousand years after Thebes had vanished, than Sir Isaac Newton at a modern undergraduate physical society, or George Stephenson in the Institute of Electrical Engineers. The changes have have been so sudden and so gigantic, that no period in history can be compared with the last century. The past no longer enables us even dimly to measure the future.

—Winston Churchill

I found one day in school a boy of medium size ill-treating a smaller boy. I expostulated, but he replied: 'The bigs hit me, so I hit the babies; that's fair.' In these words he epitomized the history of the human race.

--Bertrand Russell

History is not what happened, but what remains when everything else is forgotten.

—Rich Cohen

History is the science of things which are not repeated.

—Paul Valery

When the last of the volcanic ash from Mount Vesuvius settled over Pompeii in A.D. 79, it preserved a detailed portrait of life in the grand Roman city, from bristling military outposts to ingenious aqueducts. Now researchers say the eruption nearly 2,000 years ago also captured clues to one of today's most pressing social problems. Analyzing dwellings in Pompeii and 62 other archaeological sites dating back 11,200 years, a team of experts has ranked the distribution of wealth in those communities. Bottom line: economic disparities increased over the centuries and technology played a role. The findings add to our knowledge of history's haves and have-nots, an urgent concern as the gulf between the 1 percent of ultra-rich and the rest of us continues to grow....How do past societies stack up? Hunter gatherers, as scholars long hypothesized, tended to be the most equitable. But around 10,200 B.C., societies began to farm the land. Economic disparity edged up: farming enabled families to collect wealth and pass it on. In Europe and Asia, domestication of draft animals beginning around 10,000 years ago let some landowners cultivate ever larger areas, further concentrating wealth. That didn't happen in the Americas until after Europeans exported that agricultural innovation in the 16th century.

—Matthew Shaer

When National Guardsmen shot four unarmed students at Kent State, virtually the entire system of higher education shuddered and stopped.

—Nancy Gibbs

Memory is often less about the truth than about what we want it to be.

—David Halberstam

Like in our own era, corruption and nepotism were ubiquitous in the 16th century. They stifled social and scientific progress. Were it not for Martin Luther's 95 Theses, reportedly hammered to the door of Wittenberg Castle Church, which instigated the Reformation, our modern democratic world might never have germinated.

—Harry Leslie Smith

In the 1930s, 80,000 Muslim men and women formed an 'army of peace' to protest England's oppressive occupation of what is now Pakistan. Led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, whose nonviolent leadership prefigured Martin Luther King Jr.'s and Nelson Mandela's, they endured severe maltreatment prior to and during the partition of India and Pakistan.

—Kit Miller

History used to be written by the winners. Now it is distorted and distributed by the winners' media.

--Ziad K. Abdelnour

The Most Influential Power Couple in History? Theodora and Justinian I, who ruled the Byzantine empire, built some of Constantinople's greatest landmarks and helped advance women's rights, instituting the death penalty for rape, forbidding the killing of women who had committed adultery, banning forced prostitution, and allowing women more control over their property.

—Stephen Azzi

Why were Lincoln, Jefferson, Washington and Theodore Roosevelt chosen for Mount Rushmore? That was the doing of Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor recruited in 1924 to create 'a heroic sculpture' spur South Dakota tourism. He wanted the Rushmore commission to 'communicate the founding, expansion, preservation and unification of the United States.' So: Washington (founding), Jefferson (expansion) and Lincoln (preservation and unification). Roosevelt...was chosen to represent the nation's development and to carry the monument's narrative into the 20th Century.

—Jacob Guiton

History is a relay of revolutions.

—Saul Alinsky

An emigrant named Bernard J. Reid, who had put down two hundred dollars to secure a place on an 1849 crossing [through the Sierra Nevada mountains to California], saw first ‘an emigrant wagon apparently abandoned by its owners’ and then ‘a rude head-board indicating a new grave,’ which turned out to be that of the Reverend Robert Gilmore and his wife Mary, who had died...of cholera. This account comes to us from Reid’s diary....On turning from the grave to the apparently abandoned wagon, Reid tells us, he was ‘surprised to see a neatly dressed girl of about 17, sitting on the wagon tongue, her feet resting on the grass, and her eyes apparently directed at vacancy.’

She seemed like one dazed or in a dream and did not seem to notice me till I spoke to her. I then learned from her in reply to my questions that she was Miss Gilmore, whose parents had died two days before; that her brother, younger than herself, was sick in the wagon, probably with cholera; that their oxen were lost or stolen by the Indians; and that the train they had been traveling with, after waiting for three days on account of the sickness and death of their parents, had gone on that morning, fearful, if they delayed longer, of being caught by winter in the Sierra Nevada mountains....The people of her train had told her that probably her oxen would yet be found, or at any rate some other train coming along with oxen to spare would take her and her brother and their wagon along.

‘Who could tell the deep sense of bereavement, distress and desolation that weighed on that poor girl’s heart, there in the wilderness with no telling what fate was in store for her and her sick brother?’ Reid asks his readers and surely also himself....When you jettison others so as not to be ‘caught by winter in the Sierra Nevada Mountains,’ do you deserve not to be caught? When you survive at the cost of Miss Gilmore and her brother, do you survive at all?

—Joan Didion

Keep in mind our *Constitution* predates the Industrial Revolution. Our founders did not know about electricity, the train, telephones, radio, television, automobiles, airplanes, rockets, nuclear weapons, satellites, or space exploration. There’s a lot they didn’t know about. It would be interesting to see what kind document they’d draft today. Just keeping it frozen in time won’t hack it.

--Ross Perot

Myth is much more important and true than history. History is just journalism and you know how reliable that is.

--Joseph Campbell

The primary purposes of the political pamphlets of the early 1700s were neither to enlighten nor educate the masses, but to incite partisan conversation and spread commensurate ideas . . . Facts were not permitted to fetter the views they espoused, and the restraints of objective journalistic credibility were discarded by pamphleteers bent on promoting subjective slant to an insatiable general public for whom political dissonance was an integral part of social interaction.

--Gavin John Adams

It was in Utah that the last spike was driven in America's first railroad to the Pacific—at Promontory on May 10, 1869—but history books have spared us some of the less glamorous details. In the first place, the Union Pacific Special from the East was held up by floods and arrived three days late. Chinese laborers on the Central Pacific and Irishmen who had laid the tracks for the U.P. amused themselves in the interim by taking pot shots at one another. There were some forty casualties, including one innocent bystander from San Francisco. In the second place, the ceremonies dragged on too long; the crowd shivered in an icy wind, and drifted away before the climax. In the third place, Governor Leland Stanford of California, chosen to drive in the last golden spike (it was removed immediately), lifted his head on the backswing, missed the spike entirely, and fell on his face in the mud. An alert telegrapher, however, simulated the blow with his key, and a waiting multitude on both coasts (including Wall Street) cheered the completion of the first transcontinental railroad span. Luckily for Governor Stanford, television was still eighty years away.

—Bennett Cerf

The technological advance that most altered the course of modern history was the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, which allowed the search for empirical knowledge to supplant liturgical doctrine, and the Age of Reason to gradually supersede the Age of Religion. Individual insight and scientific knowledge replaced faith as the principal criterion of human consciousness. Information was stored and systematized in expanding libraries. The Age of Reason originated the thoughts and actions that shaped the contemporary world order.

—Henry A. Kissinger

Historians and archaeologists will one day discover that the ads of our time are the richest and most faithful reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities.

—Marshall McLuhan

People have laughed at all great inventors and discoverers.

—John Sladek

The slaveholding elite were vastly more educated, healthier, and had much better table manners than the overwhelming majority of their fellow white people, never mind the people they enslaved. They dominated not only the government of the nation, but also its media, culture, and religion. Their votaries in the pulpits and the news networks were so successful in demonstrating the sanctity and beneficence of the slave system that millions of impoverished white people with no enslaved people to call their own conceived of it as an honor to lay down their life in the system's defense.

—Matthew Stewart

In total population, average life expectancy, material wealth, artistic expression, rates of violence, and almost every other measure that matters for the quality of human life, the modern world is a dramatically different place than anything that came before. Historians offer many complicated explanations for this happy turn in human events—the steam engine, microbes, the weather—but a simple answer precedes them all: equality. The history of the modern world is the unfolding of the idea at the vital center of the American Revolution.

—Matthew Stewart

They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one; they promised to take our land, and they took it.

—Red Cloud

Any number of powerful consorts, witches, reformers and suffragists populate the history of women in the United States, but it took a handful of ballplayers to give them real muscle. The *All-American Girls Professional Baseball League*—founded 75 years ago, on May 30, during the manpower shortage of World War II by Chicago Cubs owner Philip Wrigley—allowed women like [Betsy] Jochum a brief, 11-year window in which to radically extend the acceptable range of female behavior. The 5-foot-7 office girl with a quick bat, a long stride and a radiant smile, 'Sockum' Jochum became the star slugger for the *South Bend Blue Sox* and hit .296 to win the 1944 batting crown in the now legendary league. But then it all stopped. The league disbanded, the demure 1950s took hold, and Jochum was a forgotten Indiana schoolteacher until the story of the *Rockford Peaches*, *Racine Belles* and all the rest was memorialized by director Penny Marshall in the popular 1992 film *A League of Their Own*.

—Sally Jenkins

Well-behaved women rarely make history.

—Laurel Thatcher  
Ulrich



[Aaron] Burr was...a complicated and nakedly ambitious character, but he was not without substance: he was a strong proponent of women's and immigrants' rights; he proposed abolishing slavery in 1785; and he helped to expand the Democratic-Republican party in 1791. David Ward, former senior historian of the National Portrait Gallery, says Burr may well have performed one of the most significant acts of any vice president: his impartial overseeing of the 1805 impeachment trial of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase is said to have helped enshrine the principle of judicial independence.

—Anna Diamond

When the Spanish Civil War began, in 1936, fascism was on the march across Europe, as a new breed of strongman leader emerged from the horror and economic ravages of the First World War and the Great Depression. The war in Spain played out like a dress rehearsal for the global cataclysm that was to come—the first pivotal battle in the struggle between ascendant right-wing authoritarianism and beleaguered liberal democracy. Each side was aided by ideological allies from across the continent and beyond. When, for example, the Republican stronghold of Guernica was bombed to ruin in 1937 (the subject of Picasso's famous antiwar painting), the assault was carried out at Franco's request by warplanes that Hitler and Mussolini had dispatched. Thousands of volunteers also went to Spain to fight on the side of democracy, including nearly 3,000 Americans.

—Alex W. Palmer

The Sioux fought because they were starving: they hadn't received the payments agreed to in treaties with the U.S. government, they had lost their hunting grounds, and local traders refused to extend them credit to buy food. One of the traders was supposed to have said, 'If they are hungry, let them eat grass.' After a raid by Sioux warriors, this trader's body was found with his mouth stuffed with grass.

—Jesse Lichtenstein

James Garfield was assassinated by a crazed job seeker just months after he became the 20th president. Some contemporaries and historians have said that with his intelligence, high moral purpose, and record as a Union general in the Civil War, Garfield might have become one of America's greatest presidents.

—Ernest F. Imhoff

All that we call sacred history attests that the birth of a poet is the principal event in chronology.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Whether taken from 200 B.C., Victorian England, or the Roaring 20s, quotations yield insight both into the nature of the age and also into the nature of the people who originated the quotes. Quotations embody habits of thought, customs, and moral values. By carefully selecting from the writing of one period, one can unfold, little by little, characteristics and values of that particular age. Similarly, by selecting passages from a particular author's writings, a teacher can illustrate the style, techniques, values, and the unique traits of that writer.

—Dan L. Miller

I have always known that history is a valuable subject that teaches us how to interpret information and think critically. It is not merely about memorizing facts and dates, but more about providing us—all of us—with a better understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live. Over the past several years, I have realized that I need to relay this message more explicitly to my students. They need to understand that history will equip them with knowledge and skills that will not only help them succeed today but will also prepare them for the future.

Skills such as analysis, communication and collaboration are taught in history, and will be useful in any profession, whether it falls under the label of liberal arts, STEM, health care or technical careers. They will learn in history how to evaluate information to determine its value and credibility. This skill is so important in a world where we have access to all kinds of information, at all times of day, from a seemingly unlimited number of places.

—Dr. Amy Powers

We tend to think of our 19th-century forefathers thriving on farm-fresh produce and pasture-raised livestock, happily unaffected by the deceptive food-manufacturing practices of today. In this we are wrong. Milk offers a stunning case in point. By mid-century, the standard, profit-maximizing recipe was a pint of lukewarm water for every quart of milk—after the cream and been skimmed off. To whiten the bluish liquid, dairymen added plaster of Paris and chalk, or a dollop of molasses for a creamy gold. To replace the skimmed-off layer of cream, they might add a final flourish of pureed calf brains.

Fakery and adulteration ran rampant in other products as well. 'Honey' in many cases proved to be thickened, colored corn syrup, and 'vanilla' extract a mixture of alcohol and brown food coloring. 'Coffee' might be largely sawdust, or wheat, beans, beets, peas, and dandelion seeds, scorched black and ground to resemble the genuine article. Containers of 'pepper,' 'cinnamon,' or 'nutmeg' were frequently laced with pulverized coconut shells, charred rope, or floor sweepings. 'Flour' routinely contained crushed stone or gypsum as a cheap extender. Ground insects could be mixed into brown sugar, often without detection; their use was linked to an unpleasant condition known as 'grocer's itch.'

—Deborah Blum

This who don't study history are doomed to repeat it. Yet those who do study history are doomed to stand by helplessly while everyone else repeats it.

—Gary Boyne

We are sometimes asked in the name of patriotism to forget the merits of [the Civil War], and to remember with equal admiration those who struck at the nation's life, and those who struck to save it—those who fought for slavery and those who fought for liberty...May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I forget the difference between the parties to that...bloody conflict.

—Frederick Douglass

In the Historys, War always starts 'for patriotism's sake,' but you read on then get down to the Peace Conference and you find that the historian has to write pretty fast and veil things over pretty cleverly, or the reader is apt to discover what changed hands at the finish besides a mere satisfying of honor. You look at all Wars and you will find that there is more new deeds for land signed at these Peace Conferences than there is good will. Did you ever look at a map and see the Colonies that Germany lost at Versailles? All these Nations that are crying Debt Cancellations, you never hear 'em mention a word about returning Colonies to Germany so she would have a chance to kinder use 'em to help dig up this Reparations. So, you see, in Wars the Slogan is Honor, but the object is Land. They are always fighting for Independence, but at the finish they always seem to be able to use quite a snatch of the defeated opponent's land to be independent on.

—Will Rogers

I doubt if there is a thing in the world as wrong or unreliable as History. History ain't what it is; it's what' some Writer wanted it to be, and I just happened to think I remember ours is as Cock-eyed as the rest. I bet we have started just as much devilment as was ever started against us—maybe more. So far as facts are concerned, the better educated you are the less you know.

—Will Rogers

The ancient Greeks and Romans had no universities. Their instruction in law, rhetoric, and philosophy was excellent, but it was not organized into the form of permanent institutions of learning. Many students sat at the feet of Socrates over the many years of his teaching career, but not one diploma did he issue. Not until the twelfth century did there emerge in the world those features of organized education with which we modern students are familiar. The machinery of instruction represented by faculties and colleges and courses of study, examinations and commencements and academic degrees beginning in the Middle Ages makes today's university student the heir not of Athens but of Paris and Bologna.

—Dan L. Miller

One who is not stirred by ideas, who is indifferent to literature and unmoved by painting and music, who has nothing to contribute but names and titles and memorized adjectives, would far better leave his pupils and himself at peace....There should be a collaboration of history with other special teachers or departments—English, fine arts, music, science, and others according to need.

—J. Montgomery  
Gambrill

The ideal of cultural history is to trace the evolution of a people with reference to all the conditions and influences that helped to shape its aspirations and its way of life...to depict the human past at a given period in its totality, with the various forces and factors duly interrelated and appraised.

—A. M. Schlesinger

The historian should be fearless and incorruptible; a man of independence, loving frankness and truth; one who, as the poet says, calls a fig a fig and a spade a spade. He should yield to neither hatred nor affection, but should be unsparing and unpitying. He should be neither shy nor deprecating, but an impartial judge, giving each side all it deserves but no more. He should know in his writings no country and no city; he should bow to no authority and acknowledge no king. He should never consider what this or that man will think, but should state the facts as they really occurred.

--Lucian

[c. 7th century] Giving new meaning to ‘winter wonderland,’ one of the first known references to snow art appears in a Chinese monastic guide, the *Fengdoia Kejie*. It says that ‘religious images may be ‘shaped in piled-up snow.’...[1494] Snow sculpture gets its Michelangelo—literally. ‘One winter, when a great deal of snow fell in Florence,’ Giorgio Vasari wrote, Michelangelo created ‘a statue of snow, which was very beautiful,’ in Piero de’ Medici’s courtyard....[1690] The first known snowmen in the Colonies are built to stand guard at the gates of Schenectady while the human sentinels head to a tavern. That night, French and Indian forces plow through the meager defenses, devastating the town....[1853] One of oldest surviving photographs in the world, taken in Wales by a pioneering photographer named Mary Dillwyn, shows a woman building a snow figure....[1896] One of the first moving picture ever made—by an Edison rival, the *American Mutoscope Company*—was a silent three-minute clip of children in New Haven, Connecticut, building snow sculptures and throwing snowballs.

—Ann Hodgman

First, far from simply being markers of historic events and people, as proponents argue, these [Confederate] memorials were created and funded by Jim Crow governments to pay homage to a slave-owning society and to serve as blunt assertions of dominance over African-Americans.

Second, contrary to the claim that today's objections to the monuments are merely the product of contemporary political correctness, they were actively opposed at the time, often by African-Americans, as instruments of white power.

Finally, Confederate monuments aren't just heirlooms, the artifacts of a bygone era. Instead, American taxpayers are still heavily investing in these tributes today. We have found that, over the past ten years, taxpayers have directed at least \$40 million to Confederate monuments—statues, homes, parks, museums, libraries and cemeteries—and to Confederate heritage organizations.

—Brian Palmer and Seth  
Freed Wessler  
(2018)

The Confederacy's foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.

—Alexander Hamilton  
Stephens, [Vice  
President of the  
Confederacy, 1861]

To talk of kindness entering into a relation in which one party is robbed of wife, of children, of his hard earnings, of home, of friends, of society, of knowledge, and of all that makes this life desirable is most absurd, wicked, and preposterous.

—Frederick Douglass [*On  
Slavery*, 1850]

Beginning roughly in 1890, an African-American was lynched, burned alive, or mutilated every week for the next 50 years. The rearrangement of a nation founded on the idea of equality into a country with a permanent second class meant re-domesticating the slaveholding planter philosophy of how things should be. Blacks would be relegated to a segregated economy, but this time, a more folksy sense of supremacy was also promulgated, a kind of Southern lifestyle every region of America could enjoy. The popularization of the Confederate rectangular Navy Jack flag would serve to rebrand the South as this distinctive place, home of a new easygoing racism. Now, everyone could have an Aunt Jemima cook you pancakes in the morning, and

faithful retainer Uncle Ben serve the converted rice at dinner. They were right there on the boxes at the local grocery, available for purchase.

—Jack Hitt

No harm's done to history by making it something someone would want to read.

—David McCullough

History is gossip that's been legitimized, and that's really the case when you get into some of the Roman historians. Wow! They'd be right at home on reality TV.

—Esther Friesner

It's vital to remember that for most of human history, leaders and their male subjects forged a social contract: 'Men agreed to be ruled by other men in return for all men ruling over women.' This political hierarchy appeared natural—as natural as adults ruling children—because it mirrored the hierarchy of the home. Thus, for millennia, men, and many women, have associated male dominance with political legitimacy.

—Valerie M. Hudson

America has always been an angry nation. We are a country born of revolution. Combat—on battlefields, in newspapers, at the ballot box—has been with us from the start. American history is punctuated by episodes in which aggrieved parties have settled their differences not through conversation, but with guns. And yet our political system was cleverly designed to maximize the beneficial effects of anger. The Bill of Rights guarantees that we can argue with one another in the public square, through a free press, and in open court. The separation of powers forces our representatives in government to arrive at policy through disagreement, negotiation, and accommodation. Even the country's mythology is rooted in anger: the American dream is, in a sense, an optimistic reframing of the discontent felt by people unwilling to accept the circumstances life has handed them.

—Charles Duhigg

The historian records, but the novelist creates.

—E. M. Forster

*The Prince*, which has been a best seller for over 400 years, was written by Machiavelli for the express purpose of freeing his beloved Italy from foreign aggression; England was ready for a vast expansion of her commercial and industrial economy when Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations*; Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* triggered the American Revolution; Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did likewise for the Civil War; Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* described the capitalistic system as he found it in 19th Century England and his doctrines propounded therein

have long since had the official force of a religion in the Communist World; Henry David Thoreau's essay *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* ultimately was to provide the inspiration and impetus of the non-violent resistance movement of Ghandi in India and Martin Luther King in the United States; and last but by no means least, Adolph Hitler's *Mein Kampf* became the philosophy of millions of people in the late 1930's. Five million copies of Hitler's book were sold in Germany in 1939 and who knows how many copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* have been sold since its release! Obviously, these books carried messages of a highly emotional nature, appealing to untold millions of people—sometimes the influence was beneficent and sometimes evil. Clearly, books can be forces of both good and bad—they are, as well, dynamic and powerful instruments, tools, or weapons.

—Archie L. Lejeune

[I]f we revert to history, we shall find that the women who have distinguished themselves have neither been the most beautiful nor the most gentle of their sex.

—Mary Wollstonecraft

Twelve of the original 13 states (all but Rhode Island) sent delegates to the 1787 convention in Philadelphia to fix the *Articles of Confederation*, which was then deemed unfixable. The sequel [*The U.S. Constitution*], ratified in 1788, has stood the test of time.

—Dennis P. Affholter

Cleopatra was born closer in time to the TV premiere of *Friends* than to the construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza. Cleopatra died a little more than 2,000 years ago in 30 BCE, while the Great Pyramid of Giza was completed around 2560 BCE. The pyramid was standing for nearly 2,500 years before she was born!

—Andy Golder

The old always think the world is getting worse; it is for the young, equipped with historical facts, to point out that, compared with 1509, or even 1939, life in 2009 is sweet as honey.

—Hilary Mantel

The history of the hobo is the history of modern America. Starts right after the Civil War and the building of America's great railroads. There had always been a small floating population of agrarian workers, but they were limited by geography and technology. They were regional. Local. Language historians and etymologists aren't sure, but the word 'hobo' may come from this original population of farmworkers: 'hoe boys.'

The railroads changed all that. After the war there's an expanding displaced population available to ride—and help build a transportation network running from

coast to coast. As this is happening, America is industrializing too, and the need for a mobile work force, willing, adaptable and relatively inexpensive to transport, becomes evident. The hobo.

By the late 19th century, the heart of Hobohemia was the main drag in Chicago, where train lines radiated out into every corner of America. It was easy to find work there in the slaughterhouses to make a buck before you caught out again; easy to go west and build a dam or go east and take a job in a new steel mill. So for decades it was America's hobo home. The Hobo Code was written there in 1894, an outline of ethical hobo practice and communal etiquette. Based in mutualism and self-respect, it remains every hobo's founding document, a simple and forthright set of instructions to live by.

—Jeff MacGregor

The mistake you cannot make is to judge the past through the eyes of the present. Judge the past on its own terms.

—João Zilhão

Good historians must be able to see and write about the bad in good people and the good in bad people.

—Nikki M. Taylor

Barber surgeons came to America as early as 1636. By the 18th century, dentistry was firmly established in the colonies as a trade akin to blacksmithing (Paul Revere was an early American craftsman of artisanal dentures). Itinerant dentists moved from town to town by carriage with carts of dreaded tools in tow, temporarily setting up shop in a tavern or town square. They yanked teeth or bore into them with hand drills, filling cavities with mercury, tin, gold, or molten lead. For anesthetic, they used arsenic, nutgalls, mustard seed, leeches. Mixed in with the honest tradesmen—who genuinely believed in the therapeutic power of bloodsucking worms—were swindlers who urged their customers to have numerous teeth removed in a single sitting or charged them extra to stuff their pitted molars with homemade gunk of dubious benefit.

—Ferris Jabr

After escaping slavery via the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman risked re-enslavement and death by returning to the South in at least 19 trips, to guide as many as 300 enslaved African Americans to freedom. She also guided African-American Union soldiers during the Combahee Ferry Raid, which freed more than 700 enslaved people.

—Maida Follini



I go into my library, and all history rolls before me. I breathe the morning air of the world while the scent of Eden's roses yet lingered in it, while it vibrated only to the world's first brood of nightingales, and to the laugh of Eve. I see the pyramids building; I hear the shoutings of the armies of Alexander; I feel the ground shake beneath the march of Cambyses. I sit as in a theatre—the stage is time, the play is the play of the world.

--Alexander Smith

The rise of human computers began in the early hunt for Halley's comet. The astronomer Edmond Halley had predicted that the celestial body would return and that the laws of gravity could predict precisely when. But those calculations would be too complex and brutal a task for any single astronomer.

So the French mathematician Alexis-Claude Clairaut decided to break the work up—by dividing the calculations among several people. In 1757, he sat down with two friends, the young astronomer Jérôme-Joseph Lalande and Nicole-Reine Lepaute, a clockmaker's wife with a penchant for numbers. At the time women had little opportunity in science, but Lalande 'loved women, especially brilliant women, and promoted them in both word and deed,' the historian Ken Alder has written. After arduous weeks of cranking away, the trio predicted...the comet's closest approach to the sun....The age of human computers began.

—Clive Thompson

**Bread:** Some stale bread crumbs have changed history: It now appears that semi-nomadic Natufians made flatbread circa 12,000 B.C.—4,000 years before farmers in what is now Turkey.

**Cheese:** In 2018, researchers discovered 3,200-year-old cheese in an Egyptian tomb, but new molecular analysis of a pot dug up in Turkey reveals evidence of cheesemaking circa 5,900 B.C.

**Wine:** The oldest known grape wine—and lots of it—was produced around 6,000 B.C., say scientists who studied residue in jars unearthed in Georgia. Previous chemical analysis dated wine to Iran circa 5,400 B.C.

**Beer:** Brewing came before agriculture, say researchers who learned that semi-nomadic Natufians quaffed wheat and barley beer circa 11,000 B.C., 7,000 years before farmers did in Central Asia.

—Mandy Tust,  
*Smithsonian.com*

The past will remain horrible for exactly as long as we refuse to assess it honestly.

—James Baldwin

[About growing up white in the 1950s segregated South] It's that obliviousness, the unexamined assumption, that so pains me now. How could I not have wondered, not have asked. [Going north to school] threw wide the door of my ignorant childhood, and the future, the heartbroken future filled with hitherto unasked questions, strolled easefully in. It wounded me, then and there, with the great sadness and tragedy of our American life, with the truth of all that I had not seen, had not known, and had not asked.

—Sally Mann

The land was rested first from Native Americans, by force. It was then cleared, watered, and made productive for intensive agriculture by the labor of enslaved Africans, who after Emancipation would come to own a portion of it. Later, through a variety of means—sometimes legal, often coercive, in many cases legal and coercive, occasionally violent—farmland owned by black people came into the hands of white people. It was aggregated into larger holdings, then aggregated again, eventually attracting the interest of Wall Street....A war waged by deed of title has dispossessed 98 percent of black agricultural landowners in America. They have lost 12 million acres over the past century. But even that statement falsely consigns the losses to long-ago history. In fact, the losses mostly occurred within living memory, from the 1950s onward. Today, except for a handful of farmers...who have been able to keep or get back some land, black people in...the Deep South own almost nothing of the bounty under their feet.

—Vann R. Newkirk II

The telling factor, looking at it from the long view, is that at the time of World War I there were 1 million black farmers, and in 1992 there were 18,000.

—Phil Fraas

In 1984 and 1985, at the height of the fam crisis, the USDA lent a total of \$1.3 billion to nearly 16,000 farmers to help them maintain their land. Only 209 of those farmers were black.

—*The Nation* (2005)