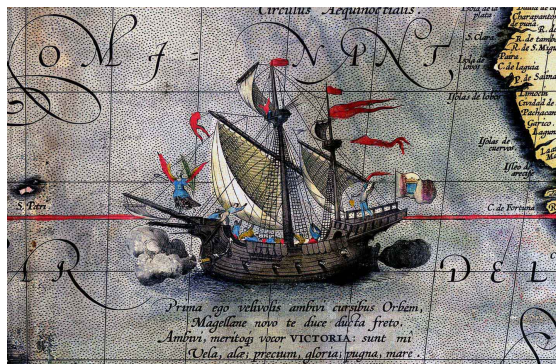


NAME: _____

RISING 9TH GRADE GLOBAL I HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY SUMMER ASSIGNMENT



DEAR RISING 9TH GRADER,

Hello! Welcome to the International Leadership Charter High School! I am looking forward to meeting you in the fall! I am so excited to go on this adventure with you. We will travel to different parts of the world in different time periods. In order to prepare for our journey, please complete the following assignment:

“WHY STUDY HISTORY?” READ AND RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT

Directions:¹

Read and annotate “Why Study History?” by Peter N. Stearns.

- As you read, mark up the text. Highlight sentences which stands out to you.
- Define words you do not know and write the definition in the margins.
- Complete the reading questions that follow the article.
 - All responses must be **numbered, handwritten** and contain **4-5 complete** sentences per answer.
 - Your responses must be in your own words!**

¹ Directions, activity and overall introduction credited to the Social Studies Department of Matignon High School.

“Why Study History?”²

By Peter N. Stearns

People live in the present. They plan for and worry about the future. History, however, is the study of the past. Given all the demands...from living in the present and anticipating (expecting) what is yet to come, why bother with what has been (already happened)? Given all the desirable and available branches (types) of knowledge, why insist—as most American educational programs do—on a good bit of history? And why urge many students to study even more history than they are required to?

Any subject of study needs justification (an explanation): its advocates (supporters) must explain why it is worth attention. Most widely accepted subjects—and history is certainly one of them—attract some people who simply like the information and modes (ways) of thought involved. But audiences less spontaneously drawn to the subject and more doubtful about why to bother need to know what the purpose is.

Historians do not perform heart transplants, improve highway design, or arrest criminals. In a society that...expects education to serve useful purposes, the functions (uses) of history can seem more difficult to define than those of engineering or medicine. History is in fact very useful, actually indispensable, (essential) but the products of historical study are less tangible, sometimes less immediate, than those that stem from some other disciplines.

History Helps Us Understand People and Societies

In the first place, history offers a storehouse (plenty) of information about how people and societies behave. Understanding the operations of people and societies

² Stearns, Peter N. “Why Study History?” American Historical Association. American Historical Association, 1998. Accessed 13 June 2023. Adapted.

is difficult, though a number of disciplines (subjects) make the attempt...How can we evaluate (understand) war if the nation is at peace—unless we use historical materials? How can we understand genius, the influence of technological innovation, or the role that beliefs play in shaping family life, if we don't use what we know about experiences in the past? Some social scientists attempt to formulate (come up with) laws or theories about human behavior. But even these recourses depend on historical information, except for in limited, often artificial cases in which experiments can be devised (thought) to determine how people act. Major aspects of a society's operation (how a society works), like mass elections, missionary activities, or military alliances, cannot be set up as precise experiments. Consequently, history must serve, however imperfectly, as our laboratory, and data from the past must serve as our most vital evidence in the unavoidable quest to figure out why our complex species behaves as it does in societal settings. This, fundamentally, is why we cannot stay away from history: it offers the only extensive evidential base for the contemplation (viewing) and analysis of how societies (civilizations) function, and people need to have some sense of how societies function simply to run their own lives.

History Helps Us Understand Change and How the Society We Live in Came to Be

The past causes the present, and so the future. Any time we try to know why something happened... we have to look for factors (reasons) that took shape (happened) earlier. Sometimes fairly recent history will suffice (be enough) to explain a major development, but often we need to look further back to identify the causes of change. Only through studying history can we grasp how things change; only through history can we begin to comprehend (understand) the factors that cause change; and only through history can we understand what elements of an institution or a society persist despite change.

The Importance of History in Our Own Lives

These two fundamental (basic, important) reasons for studying history underlie (emphasize) more specific and quite diverse uses of history in our own lives. History well told is beautiful. Many of the historians who... appeal to the general reading public know the importance of dramatic and skillful writing—as well as of accuracy. Biography (writing about people) and military history appeal in part because of the tales they contain. History as art and entertainment serves a real purpose, on aesthetic (beautiful) grounds but also on the level of human understanding. ... Well done... stories... reveal how people and societies have actually functioned, and they prompt (introduce) thoughts about the human experience in other times and places. The same aesthetic and humanistic (studying what it means to be human) goals inspire people to immerse themselves in efforts to reconstruct quite remote pasts, far removed from immediate, present-day utility (ways of living). Exploring what historians sometimes call the "pastness of the past"—the ways people in distant ages constructed their lives—involves a sense of beauty and excitement, and ultimately another perspective on human life and society.

Studying History Is Essential for Good Citizenship

A study of history is essential for good citizenship. This is the most common justification for the place of history in school curricula. Sometimes advocates (supporters) of citizenship history hope merely to promote national identity and loyalty through a history spiced (enhanced) by vivid stories and lessons in individual success and morality. But the importance of history for citizenship goes beyond this narrow goal and can even challenge it at some points.

History that lays the foundation (base) for genuine citizenship returns... to the essential uses of the study of the past. History provides data about the emergence of national institutions, problems, and values... It offers evidence also about how nations have interacted with other societies... essential for responsible citizenship. Further, studying history helps us understand how recent, current, and prospective (possible, future) changes that affect the lives of citizens are emerging... More important, studying history encourages habits of mind that are vital for responsible public behavior, whether as a national or community leader, an informed voter, a petitioner, or a simple observer.

What Skills Does a Student of History Develop?

What does a well-trained student of history, schooled to work on past materials and on case studies in social change, learn how to do?

The Ability to Assess Evidence. The study of history builds experience in dealing with and assessing various kinds of evidence—the sorts of evidence historians use in shaping the most accurate pictures of the past that they can. Learning how to interpret the statements of past political leaders—one kind of evidence—helps form the capacity to distinguish between the objective and the self-serving among statements made by present-day political leaders. Learning how to combine different kinds of evidence—public statements, private records, numerical data, visual materials—develops the ability to make coherent arguments based on a variety of data. This skill can also be applied to information encountered in everyday life.

The Ability to Assess Conflicting Interpretations. Learning history means gaining some skill in sorting through diverse, often conflicting interpretations.

Understanding how societies work—the central goal of historical study—is inherently imprecise, (not exact) and the same...[is] true for understanding what is going on in the present day. Learning how to identify and evaluate conflicting interpretations is an essential citizenship skill for which history, as an often-contested laboratory of human experience, provides training. This is one area in which the full benefits of historical study sometimes clash with the narrower (more limited) uses of the past to construct (understand) identity. Experience in examining past situations provides a... sense that can be applied to partisan (biased) claims about the glories of national or group identity. The study of history in no sense undermines (reduce the role of) loyalty or commitment, but it does teach the need for assessing (understanding) arguments, and it provides opportunities to engage in debate and achieve perspective.

Historical study, in summary... provides basic factual information about the background of our political institutions and about the values and problems that affect our social well-being. It also contributes to our capacity (ability) to use evidence, assess interpretations, and analyze change and continuities. No one can ever quite deal with the present as the historian deals with the past—we lack the perspective for this feat; but we can move in this direction by applying historical habits of mind, and we will function as better citizens in the process.

History Is Useful in the World of Work

History is useful for work. Its study helps create good... professionals, and political leaders. The number of...professional jobs for historians is considerable, (large) but most people who study history do not become professional historians.

Professional historians teach at various levels, work in museums and media centers, do historical research for businesses or public agencies, or participate in the growing number of historical consultancies... Students of history find their experience directly relevant to jobs in a variety of careers as well as to further study in fields like law and public administration. Employers often... seek students with the kinds of capacities historical study promotes. The reasons are not hard to identify: students of history acquire, by studying different phases (parts) of the past and different societies in the past, a broad perspective that gives them the range and flexibility (ability) required in many work situations. They develop research skills, the ability to find and evaluate sources of information... Work in history also improves basic writing and speaking skills... relevant... in the public and private sectors (different kinds of jobs), where the capacity (ability) to identify, assess, and explain trends is essential. Historical study is unquestionably an asset for a variety of work...

Why study history? The answer is because we virtually must, to gain access to the laboratory (understanding) of [the] human experience. [When we study history,] we emerge with relevant skills and an enhanced capacity for informed citizenship, critical thinking, and simple awareness.

Directions:

- Complete the reading questions below based on the article.
- All responses must be **numbered, handwritten** and contain **4-5 complete** sentences per answer on a separate sheet of paper.
- Your responses must be in your own words!**

1. How does history help us to understand people and societies?
2. How does history help us to understand cause and effect?
3. Explain the different skills that history students develop. Why are these skills attractive to modern employers?
4. Which argument for studying history do you find most convincing? Why?
5. In your own words, explain why YOU THINK it is important to study history.