

Quotes on Teaching History

1. "If you think history is simply a lot of names, dates, and battles, you are in for a surprise... History is alive, and it's probably not what you would expect. In today's world where war, revolution, famine, and social upheaval occur with frightening regularity, history is the key to understanding these crises. History is not a recitation of facts and names, but involves analysis and understanding. History is the sum total of the human experience, and that experience serves as a mirror reflecting today's events."

—The Ohio State University Undergraduate History Handbook

2. If history helps us think about how we are to picture possible futures, we cannot afford a history curriculum mired in trivia and limited to a chronological recounting of events. Instead, we need a vibrant history curriculum that engages children in investigating significant themes and questions, with people, their values, and the choices they make as the central focus.

— Linda S. Levstik and Keith C. Barton, *Doing History*

3. In the past, we have assumed that students needed "basic skills" before they could engage with big issues. The trouble with this is that time lines, names, and memorized "facts" are not history, and they certainly are not compelling. The enduring themes and questions that humans have struggled with over time are, however, more compelling history.

— Linda S. Levstik and Keith C. Barton, *Doing History*

4. History teaching as pictured here does not require students to memorize lists of facts—the rivers of central Africa, the kings and queens of England, for example. Rather, a disciplinary-based conception of history teaching sets as its major goal the communication of knowledge about both the most significant substance of the discipline and the nature of the methods employed by historians.

—Suzanne M. Wilson and Gary Sykes, *Historical Literacy*

5. "True historical understanding requires students to engage in historical thinking: to raise questions and to marshal solid evidence in support of their answers; to go beyond the facts presented in their textbooks and examine the historical record for themselves; to consult documents, journals, diaries, artifacts, historic sites, works of art, quantitative data, and other evidence from the past, and to do so imaginatively – taking into account the historical context in which these records were created and comparing the multiple points of view of those on the scene at the time."

—National Center for History in Schools

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6. "Developing academic literacy in history involves growth along two dimensions: the content and the rhetoric of history. Growth on the content dimension includes a more detailed knowledge of the historic period being studied and growth on the rhetoric dimension includes interpretation, evaluation and acts of analysis."

- Young and Leinhardt

7. What is history? History is often viewed as an endless parade of names and dates. In truth, it is an intriguing story filled with discernible patterns and trends.

-Wineburg

8. History is a series of reflections: local history reflecting state history; state history reflecting national history; and national history reflecting world history. The images of history are composites of all of these factors; none of them take place in isolation. Consequently, history education is the search for understanding and the promoting of teaching that goes beyond factual memorization, recall and recitation.

-Seixas and Sunal

9. "The most important principle that the novice student history must learn is that the business of an historian is to make judgments and to establish causal relationships between facts; he must place them in some significant pattern and order and not simply be a reporter."

-Cantor and Schneider, *How to Study History*

10. "The Historian seeks to demonstrate... not merely the *what* of the past but also the answer to the two fundamental questions *how* and *why*. This historian sets out to tell us the how and why of an individual life, or of an institution, a community, a state, a culture, an economy, and society."

- Cantor and Schneider, *How to Study History*

11. "...The facts are not adequate...You must develop intelligent and well-informed assumptions about human behavior and culture, [and] you must apply these assumptions in a creative and imaginative ways so as to elucidate the how and why of historical change. This is the historian's craft..."

- Cantor and Schneider, *How to Study History*