

As children, our world consisted of our immediate surroundings. It was only through our history lessons that we began to discover the complexities of the world we never saw. From an early age, we were able to learn about different cultures to our own from the Ancient Egyptians to the Vikings. It was through an array of learning tools ranging from songs and videos to textbooks and lessons that made history an inspiring and complete learning experience.

Perhaps our love for studying history would not have been so fundamental to our thinking if it weren't for the brilliant teachers that we encountered through our educational life. History lessons for many students are boring, lifeless and simply tedious; an hour filled with monotonous repetitive lecturing of the history teacher. However, our experience of history in school differed completely; our teachers were able to bring life to the subject with passion, invoking these feelings within us. Constantly hearing our teachers' praise encouraged us to participate in class more often.

Our classroom environment was not only a place where we learnt new subject matter, but also somewhere we questioned, challenged and re-assessed our views. The open atmosphere created by our teachers and peers alike gave us the confidence to engage freely with the topics. What we looked forward to the most was interacting in class debates and asserting exactly what we believed. Far from being off-putting, the manner in which our teachers challenged our views during debates led us to search for evidence to support our points further. We were lucky enough to have peers in our history classes who felt the same passion as us. We enjoyed interacting with one another, and the experience of arguing with each other helped us become assertive. We remember vividly how engrossed we became in arguing over whatever the issue was that day rather than fidgeting with our pencil cases - the usual pastime in other lessons. This desire and ability to express ourselves effectively is something that has stayed with us. We now feel confident to articulate our social and political views, and build up an argument which is grounded in evidence.

Many may find it hard to link how one's world view can be influenced by studying a social science such as history. Studying a social science such as history has made us question



the agenda of any institution and the selective information they distribute as a result of that. For example, when studying WW2, we came to see how the British government issued propaganda campaigns while censoring other sources in order to keep up the morale of the public. We often see instances of propaganda or censorship within our context today too – everything that we see is designed to influence us in some way. Thus, as a consumer of the media today, it becomes more important for us to question the agenda of every source, rather than mindlessly believe it. For example, reading newspaper articles from both left-wing and right-wing newspapers during the General election meant that we were able to note how political agenda affected the way in the way that the election was reported. Bearing this in mind, we could make informed decisions about who we chose to support and why.

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While in earlier years the focus on our history education was Britain, in later years we studied extra-European history too such as the Vietnam war, the Indian independence movement and modern America. Through this we explored the politics of power and the different ways it could be expressed – whether through colonisation, segregation or violence. Learning about the complexities of these world events helped us better understand the political situation and conflicts that we see in the world today. One of the topics that particularly struck us was the salt march led by Gandhi in the 1930s. While Gandhi led this march, it was a

success because of those who supported it. It occurred to us that change does not happen because of one important person, but because of millions of people. From the forces behind the salt marches, to the millions who supported Martin Luther King's Washington March, we began to see history as not just about leaders but more about people and how they choose to act.

It became clear to us that history is not just a subject within the classroom but evident within our lives. The advantages of studying this in a city where resources are so readily available sparked life into the forgotten past. Our experience of history was enhanced by current affairs and exploring primary artefacts in public libraries and museums. We went on numerous trips throughout school. We still remember seeing the very writing desk Henry VIII used hundreds of years ago. We almost felt him in the exhibition, and could picture him writing at this desk while us visitors tried to piece

together the strands of history and create his story.

A mixture of all the various learning tools has made history so fascinating to us. In the classroom, the role of our teachers was paramount in fuelling our enthusiasm of the subject, stimulating us to delve deeper and learn more whilst the vast amounts of resources outside the classroom led us to develop how our perception of current events. However, we are still aware even now that our knowledge of history is still vastly insufficient to give us an informed view of the world around us. This knowledge itself is important, because it means that we are always searching for ways to learn more and have a more holistic picture of the world around us. Whether it is living through historical moments or contemplating future changes that are to take place, our experience with the subject has left a clear mark upon our philosophy. Upon reflection, studying this complex social science has, and continues to affect, both our thoughts and actions.

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