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# Quotes about History and Historians

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More than any time in history mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness, the other to total extinction. Let us pray that we have the wisdom to choose correctly.

- Allen, Woody

It is the true office of history to represent the events themselves, together with the counsels, and to leave the observations and conclusions thereupon to the liberty and faculty of every man's judgment.

- Bacon, Francis

Histories make men wise; poets, witty; the mathematics, subtle; natural philosophy, deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend.

- Bacon, Francis

To give an accurate and exhaustive account of that period would need a far less brilliant pen than mine.

- Beerbohm, Sir Max

An account, mostly false, of events, mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers, mostly knaves, and soldiers, mostly fools.

- Bierce, Ambrose

Historian. A broad -- gauge gossip.

- Bierce, Ambrose

The main thing is to make history, not to write it.

- Bismarck, Otto Von

From the heights of these pyramids, forty centuries look down on us.

- Bonaparte, Napoleon

People will not look forward to posterity who will not look backward to their ancestors.

- Burke, Edmund

The Thames is liquid history.

- Burns, John

God cannot alter the past, but historians can.

- Butler, Samuel

History is the devil's scripture.

- Byron, Lord

And having wisdom with each studious year, in meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,  
and shaped his weapon with an edge severe, sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer.

- Byron, Lord

In our wildest aberrations we dream of an equilibrium we have left behind and which we  
naively expect to find at the end of our errors. Childish presumption which justifies the fact  
that child-nations, inheriting our follies, are now directing our history.

- Camus, Albert

History is the distillation of rumor.

- Carlyle, Thomas

Stern accuracy in inquiring, bold imagination in describing, these are the cogs on which  
history soars or flutters and wobbles.

- Carlyle, Thomas

The whole past is the procession of the present.

- Carlyle, Thomas

The history of the world is but the biography of great men.

- Carlyle, Thomas

For historians ought to be precise, truthful, and quite unprejudiced, and neither interest nor fear, hatred nor affection, should cause them to swerve from the path of truth, whose mother is history, the rival of time, the depository of great actions, the witness of what is past, the example and instruction of the present, the monitor of the future.

- Cervantes, Miguel De

History is but a confused heap of facts.

- Chesterfield, Lord

Fable is more historical than fact, because fact tells us about one man and fable tells us about a million men.

- Chesterton, Gilbert K.

For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history myself.

- Churchill, Winston

The causes of events are ever more interesting than the events themselves.

- Cicero, Marcus T.

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.

- Cicero, Marcus T.

The historian's job is to aggrandize, promoting accident to inevitability and innocuous circumstance to portent.

- Conrad, Peter

What is all our histories, but God showing himself, shaking and trampling on everything that he has not planted.

- Cromwell, Oliver

While we read history we make history.

- Curtis, George William

History repeats itself. That's one of the things wrong with history.

- Darrow, Clarence

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

- Dimnet, Ernest

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

- Durant, William J.

Our best history is still poetry.

- Emerson, Ralph Waldo

Might does not make right, it only makes history.

- Fiebig, Jim

I can see only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen.

- Fisher, Herbert Albert Laurens

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

- Flaubert, Gustave

History is more or less bunk.

- Ford, Henry

The historian must have some conception of how men who are not historians behave. Otherwise he will move in a world of the dead. He can only gain that conception through personal experience, and he can only use his personal experiences when he is a genius.

- Forster, Edward M.

History books that contain no lies are extremely dull.

- France, Anatole

The first duty of an historian is to be on guard against his own sympathies.

- Froude, James A.

The pyramids, attacked with age, have forgotten the names of their founders.

- Fuller, R. Buckminster

To believe what has not occurred in history will not occur at all, is to argue disbelief in the dignity of man.

- Gandhi, Mahatma

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

- Gibbon, Edward

He is the purest figure in history. 'About George Washington';

- Gladstone, William E.

The history of mankind is his character.

- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang Von

History repeats itself. Historians repeat each other.

- Guedalla, Philip

The only thing we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history.

- Hegel, Friedrich

A generation which ignores history has no past and no future.

- Heinlein, Robert

You treat world history as a mathematician does mathematics, in which nothing but laws and formulas exist, no reality, no good and evil, no time, no yesterday, no tomorrow, nothing but an eternal, shallow, mathematical present.

- Hesse, Hermann

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

- Hoffer, Eric

A page of history is worth a pound of logic.

- Holmes, Oliver Wendell

Every library should try to be complete on something, if it were only the history of pinheads.

- Holmes, Oliver Wendell

One cannot be a good historian of the outward, visible world without giving some thought to the hidden, private life of ordinary people; and on the other hand one cannot be a good historian of this inner life without taking into account outward events where these are relevant. They are two orders of fact which reflect each other, which are always linked and which sometimes provoke each other.

- Hugo, Victor

It does seem so pleasant to talk with an old acquaintance who knows what you know. I see so many new folks nowadays who seem to have neither past nor future. Conversation has got to have some root in the past, or else you have got to explain every remark you make, and it wears a person out.

- Jewett, Sarah Orne

Great abilities are not requisite for an Historian; for in historical composition, all the greatest powers of the human mind are quiescent. He has facts ready to his hand; so there is no exercise of invention. Imagination is not required in any degree; only about as much as is used in the lowest kinds of poetry. Some penetration, accuracy, and coloring, will fit a man for the task, if he can give the application which is necessary.

- Johnson, Samuel

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total; of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.

- Kennedy, Robert F.

History is a better guide than good intentions.

- Kirkpatrick, Jeane

Providence conceals itself in the details of human affairs, but becomes unveiled in the generalities of history.

- Lamartine, Alphonse De

History tells us more than we want to know about what is wrong with man, and we can hardly turn a page in the daily press without learning the specific time, place, and name of evil. But perhaps the most pervasive evil of all rarely appears in the news. This evil, the waste of human potential, is particularly painful to recognize for it strikes our parents and children, our friends and brothers, ourselves.

- Leonard, George

Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history.

- Lincoln, Abraham

History, is made up of the bad actions of extraordinary men and woman. All the most noted destroyers and deceivers of our species, all the founders of arbitrary governments and false religions have been extraordinary people; and nine tenths of the calamities that have befallen the human race had no other origin than the union of high intelligence with low desires.

- Macaulay, Thomas B.

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

- Marx, Karl

Historian -- an unsuccessful novelist.

- Mencken, H. L.

The men who make history have not time to write it.

- Metternich, Klemens Von

I love those historians that are either very simple or most excellent. Such as are between both (which is the most common fashion), it is they that spoil all; they will needs chew our meat for us and take upon them a law to judge, and by consequence to square and incline the story according to their fantasy.

- Montaigne, Michel Eyquem De

It is humiliating to remain with our hands folded while others write history. It matters little who wins. To make a people great it is necessary to send them to battle even if you have to kick them in the pants. That is what I shall do.

- Mussolini, Benito

To be ignorant of the lives of the most celebrated men of antiquity is to continue in a state of childhood all our days.

- Plutarch

Until the lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter.

- Proverb, African

However gradual the course of history, there must always be the day, even an hour and minute, when some significant action is performed for the first or last time.

- Quennell, Peter

Historians desiring to write the actions of men, ought to set down the simple truth, and not say anything for love or hatred; also to choose such an opportunity for writing as it may be lawful to think what they will, and write what they think, which is a rare happiness of the time.

- Raleigh, Sir Walter

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

- Ryan, Abram Joseph

History is always written wrong, and so always needs to be rewritten.

- Santayana, George

Historians are left forever chasing shadows, painfully aware of their inability ever to

reconstruct a dead world in its completeness however thorough or revealing their documentation. We are doomed to be forever hailing someone who has just gone around the corner and out of earshot.

- Schama, Simon

Historians are prophets with their face turned backward.

- Schiller, Johann Friedrich Von

There is a history in all men's lives.

- Shakespeare, William

Ignorance is the first requisite of the historian -- ignorance, which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits, with a placid perfection unattainable by the highest art.

- Strachey, Lytton

Study men, not historians.

- Truman, Harry S

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

- Twain, Mark

Never forget the importance of history. To know nothing of what happened before you

took your place on earth, is to remain a child for ever and ever.

- Unknown, Source

History is one of the most remarkable things in our lives. The mere fact it occurred makes it remarkable.

- Unknown, Source

Every time history repeats itself the price goes up.

- Unknown, Source

Caesar had perished from the world of men, had not his sword been rescued by his pen.

- Vaughan, Henry

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

- Voltaire

History is just the portrayal of crimes and misfortunes.

- Voltaire

We should not look back unless it is to derive useful lessons from past errors, and for the purpose of profiting by dearly bought experience.

- Washington, George

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

- Wells, H.G.

Human history in essence is the history of ideas.

- Wells, H.G.

History is a race between education and catastrophe.

- Wells, H.G.

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 parts and culture.

- Wilde, Oscar

Anybody can make history. Only a great man can write it.

- Wilde, Oscar





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