

Quotations about History

8.1.4
b

Not to know what happened before one was born is always to remain a child.

~ Cicero

History is for human self-knowledge...the only clue to what man can do is what man has done. The value of history, then, is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is.

~ R. G. Collingwood



The only use of a knowledge of the past is to equip us for the present. The present contains all that there is. It is holy ground; for it is the past, and it is the future.

~ Alfred North Whitehead

History is a search for light on the nature and destiny of man.

~ Arnold Toynbee

Enthusiastic partisans of the idea of progress are in danger of failing to recognize... the immense riches accumulated by the human race. By underrating the achievements of the past, they devalue all those which still remain to be accomplished.

~ Claude Lévi-Strauss

There is properly no history; only biography.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

History is the science of what never happens twice.

~ Paul Valéry



We learn from history that we learn nothing from history.

~ George Bernard Shaw

We can learn from history how past generations thought and acted, how they responded to the demands of their time and how they solved their problems. We can learn by analogy, not by example, for our circumstances will always be different than theirs were. The main thing history can teach us is that human actions have consequences and that certain choices, once made, cannot be undone. They foreclose the possibility of making other choices and thus they determine future events.

~ Gerda Lerner

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A country without a memory is a country of madmen.
~ George Santayana

History may be divided into three movements: what moves rapidly, what moves slowly and what appears not to move at all.
~ Fernand Braudel

History, noun: An account mostly false, of events mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers mostly knaves, and soldiers mostly fools.
~ Ambrose Bierce, Devil's Dictionary

History is a guide to navigation in perilous times. History is who we are and why we are the way we are.
~ David C. McCullough

The history of the world is the world's court of justice.
~ Friedrich von Schiller

Sooner or later we learn to throw the past away
History will teach us nothing
History will teach us nothing
Our written history is a catalogue of crime
The sordid and the powerful, the architects of time
The mother of invention, the oppression of the mild
The constant fear of scarcity, aggression as its child...
~ Sting, "History Will Teach Us Nothing" (recorded on Nothing Like the Sun, 1987)

