

History as an Area of Knowledge:

Some opening questions to consider:

1. What is memory?
2. What role does memory serve?
3. What role do objects play in our interpretation of past events?
4. What do we mean by narrative history?

Our sense of who we are and where we are headed is connected to our past; thus memory and perception both play significant roles in our exploration of history.

We could, for example, consider our own stories **micro-histories**.

Consider, therefore, the role selection; bias; subjectivity and editing play in constructing our own narratives.

If you keep a journal, what is included and what is omitted. Have you considered these actions as purposeful? What end do they serve?

Which do you prefer (and perhaps find more credible):
Biographies or autobiographies

To open this consideration, let us first define what history is:

In simple terms, it is the study of the past.

BUT is it?

Let us consider these factors:

1. Evidence
2. Significance

1. We can only know the past by the **evidence** from it.

Evidence has to be deemed meritable (but how and who decides).

What evidence do we use (what is available)

Thus we have to be able or have to attempt to sift the meaningful from the meaningless. So, just as we turn to critics to help us assess we turn to historians to help us trace back from our present state to the past.

Thus, our present sensibilities influence how we interpret and imbue meaning

We could apply too much meaning to the traces we find (particularly concerning the ancient past) and jump to conclusions that are not accurate (forming less than justifiable knowledge claims)

OR

We could become mired in sifting through all the evidence (as it applies to modern history) and be unable to discern the most credible, valid pieces of evidence.

Such distinguishing leads us to **significance**.

What determines what is important...history, therefore, is not just a study of the past, but a study of the significant events of the past.

Like art having particular criteria to help us determine what is authentic and what is just pleasing to the eye, history has particular characteristics:

1. The impact on many people, for example
2. The role of explaining the past
3. The role of understanding the past

While history can be considered a record of **WHAT** happened; it is (perhaps more significantly) a consideration of **WHY** WHAT happened.

The role of history can be considered:

1. Provision of a sense of identity
2. Defence against propaganda
3. Enriched understanding of human nature

IDENTITY: