

A Sample Letter to Parents

The Historical Association organises the Campaign for History in England. England is one of the few countries in Europe where History is not compulsory up to 15-16 years of age. Instead students have to choose at 14.

The HA promotes its campaign through its magazines such as Teaching History. It provides posters on the theme You're History. It also provides an information pack which includes a Briefing Sheet for Secondary Heads of History and a sample letter for parents.

The Briefing Sheet has 3 main sections. "The first, ARGUMENTS, lays out the four main planks of the case for history in school. All are important and should ideally be considered together with the key points which follow. The second section, GOALS, presents a range of targets which a school department might seek to achieve. Different schools have different structures and the goals represent a list for you to think about and select from appropriately, perhaps considering short, medium and long-term goals. The third section, STRATEGIES, offers a range of sample strategies, again as a list of possibilities from which you make choices appropriate to your particular circumstances."

The sample letter - Choosing History at 14 - outlines a series of points in favour of continuing to study history. The full letter is reproduced below.

Dear Parent,

At the age of 14 most young people will be making choices about the subjects they will be studying in the last few years of their education at school. This sheet is about

Choosing History at 14.

Please take a moment to read it and to think about the importance of your child continuing to study history.

HISTORY AND JOBS

If you think of the kinds of jobs people with qualifications in history do, there are the obvious ones like museum work, archaeology, conservation and history teaching. But there are many other jobs which you might not have expected to see: architect, banker, barrister, civil servant, economist, journalist, market researcher, personnel officer, police officer, publisher, social worker, solicitor.

Why so many? Why such a varied list?

Over many years, employers have found that people who have studied history are well-prepared for jobs like those on the list above. This is because history is:

***About People** – real people, well-known and unknown, good and bad, who face real situations, some of which are very like those we face today, some of which are very different. In history, you study their words and actions and try to work out their motives and beliefs.*

Clearly this is useful in any job which involves understanding what makes people tick and how they are motivated.

***About Investigating** - when we study history, we investigate the lives of people in the past by using the evidence that survives. But we can never know everything about the past. If we try to get anywhere near the truth, we have to analyse this evidence, deal with the contradictions and ask awkward questions.*

Clearly this is a useful skill in any job which involves weighing up arguments, sifting a mass of material and reaching a conclusion.

***About Communicating** - when people who study history have investigated a past situation and evaluated the available evidence, they have to communicate their conclusion to others. This means putting together a clear explanation in an organised way and using the evidence to support the points made. This is often, but not always, in writing.*

Clearly this is useful in any job which involves explaining something to others, preparing and presenting a report or justifying decisions.

In short, employers in this rapidly changing world want people who are:

**INDEPENDENT THINKERS,
OPEN-MINDED,
DISCIPLINES,
GOOD AT PROBLEM SOLVING.**

They often choose people who have studied some history.

HISTORY AND EDUCATION

Preparation for work is important, but education from 14 onwards should be about more than this.

At this important stage in education young people become more aware of the adult world and the place they are soon to take in it. Only history can explain it to them:

What the world is like now and how it got that way;

The heritage of Britain's many communities;

Why the place where you live looks the way it does and how it has changed.

History plays a major part in informing young people about democratic institutions and in developing democratic values. In particular, it shows them that:

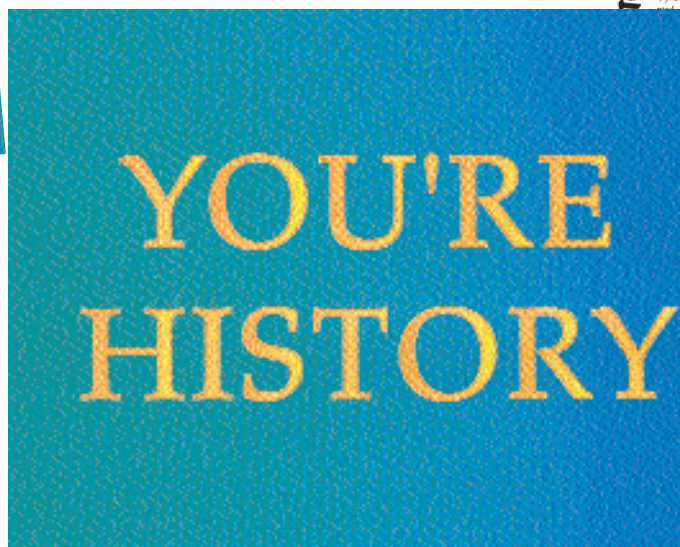
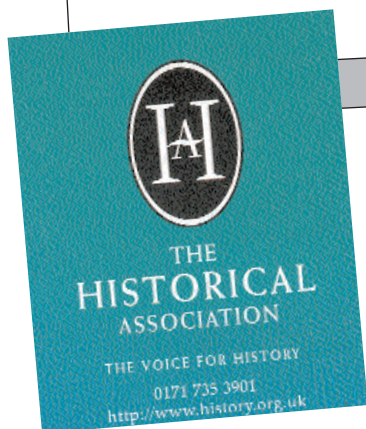
Human beings have sometimes caused terrible human suffering;

Some people in the past have had to fight hard and make sacrifices to win rights and freedoms;

Difficult moral choices sometimes have to be made.

The importance of history in the education of young people over the age of 14 is widely accepted. Britain is the only country in Europe, apart from Albania, where history is not compulsory at this age. The Assembly of the Council of Europe has stated that:

"historical awareness should be an essential part of the education of all young people".



HISTORY CHOOSING HISTORY

Dear Parent,

At the age of 14 most young people will be making choices about the subjects they will be studying in the last five years of their education at school. This sheet is about

CHOOSING HISTORY AT 14.

Please take a moment to read it and to think about the importance of your child continuing to study history.

HISTORY AND JOBS

If you look on the heads of job people with qualifications in history do, there are the obvious ones like museum curator, conservation and history teaching. But there are many other jobs which you might not have thought of: architect, banker, barrister, civil servant, economist, journalist, market researcher, personnel officer, publisher, social worker, solicitor.

...? Why such a need for?

