

**Dan Atchue**  
**Saint John's High School (Shrewsbury, Massachusetts)**

**Intrigue of History**

My interest in history stems from my fascination with past civilizations and cultures and how they influence our everyday life. From our government, infrastructure, art, and architecture, a large portion of our modern world has its roots in the societies of the past. Furthermore, as time will surely go on, we will one day become figures of the past to be studied by future students who will look back on us and notice how we have shaped the world. Learning about history helps to learn about one's self. It assists us in determining who we are and where we came from. It also helps us learn from the shortcomings of our ancestors so that we may never repeat those same mistakes. We can change the world if we use history as our guide.

In 1774, faced with the burden of living under Britain's tyrannical government, a number of men saw it fit to put down their farming tools and pick up muskets in the name of freedom. These men met the British at the colonial towns of Lexington and Concord where one unknown man fired a shot that would change the tide of history forever. As the skirmish that would become a revolution wore on, the best and brightest men in the new land signed their names to a document that declared independence from not only British authority, but any future government that would infringe on their God-given rights. This revolution saw the steady dissolution of monarchies and empires around the world. It inspired other oppressed colonies around the world to rise up and fight for their liberties. These brave men of our nation's history made it possible to live in a free society where one can speak out against an incompetent government, racial discrimination, and infringement upon one's right to express their religious convictions. In short,

studying the American Revolution and its aftermath helps to understand why our country is the way it is and how we can better it for posterity.

Some of the same people who signed our Declaration of Independence later drafted our Constitution, which would institute a government that had its roots in both Athenian democracy and Roman republicanism. They saw the inefficiency of the popular vote and the overbearing powers of the courts, the executive, and the British parliament. They incorporated some of the same ideas as Britain but made it possible to check each branch of government so it may better suit the needs of the American people. Such is an example of how those living in the present can shape the future by looking into the past for guidance. If Adolf Hitler had learned about the shortcomings of Napoleon, he would never have invaded Russia in the winter. If Napoleon had studied Alexander the Great and his soldiers, he would have known when to stop fighting. It is crucial for those of us who live today to study history for the sake of our future children and the generations to come.

The United States, unlike any other country, is home to peoples from all around the world. If we study history, we can determine when and why our ancestors came to this New World. An African-American boy will find out that his ancestors came to America on slave ships and worked in the fields of the southern plantations, helping grow the American economy. He would find out that he is no longer a slave because of a civil war that was fought. An Irish girl may find that her ancestors came to America because of the Potato Famine in Ireland, which forced a large portion of the Irish population to relocate in order to find food to feed their families or maybe to seek religious freedom so they could freely express their Catholic faith. Regardless of age, race, gender, or religion, we can all look back to see where we came from and

why we are here today. The answer may be in a surname. For others, it can be much more difficult.

Studying history gives us the ability to understand our identity. It helped our ancestors give us the freedoms we have today and it will surely help us to pass on that freedom to the next generation. Through History, we can recognize the mistakes of our predecessors so that we may not make those same mistakes. It can help us find common ground with people of different religions and cultures. We who study history have the ability and, perhaps, the responsibility to shape our future so that there may be a time and place where future generations can look back on our way of life and notice our shortcomings and our mistakes and live their lives as best they possibly can. This is what makes History worthwhile and, more importantly, interesting to study.