Final | Opinion | "Why some American students find history boring"

Most of my friends back in high school always sighed when they opened up the history text books, followed by a series of complaints and comments. Is that my sleeping time calling? Why do we need to learn about the past? Do we actually need to know everything that's ever happened everywhere on earth? Why do we need to know what caused Korean War? Most of the history books started with origins of civilization, and wraps up with Napoleon famous waterloo defeat to British. That's about 5000 years of history. While the courses seem busy, they barely reach 1960. Most history lesson contained facts, dates and names, but not much stories. How do we remember all these dates, names and facts? And what do we need to remember those days for? I am sure that there are diverse list of reasons, why either American or any students of nationality dislike to learn history or social studies? However, all of us come up with, one common adjective, "boring". The truth is that at a young age, we barely saw the world in a whole picture and consider history "the most irrelevant" to the world we are living in, thus we wouldn't buy a thing. We would rather be learning and developing mathematical skill, hoping to pursue Computer Science degree and dreaming of working at Google or Facebook. Doesn't it seem more practical and realistic? Or, how is learning of ancient civilization going to help me in life? This is not at student faults that why most students find history boring. The reasons are that history textbooks are so bad, and killing off the students' attention. Moreover, teaching methods require adjustments or upgrade with current flow of social perspective. However, there is some insights in hope to make the history class better, if we are to make or upgrade some changes to the way to teach history classes and textbooks.

First of all, I was a different student. I did like history and I still do. More than half of my book collections are history-related, one-way or another. I liked reading history-related novels, manga, or watching historical fiction movies. Particularly, I fell in love with many time-travel, past life or parallel universe. I found the history so fascinating that sometimes I imagined traveling through time and be part of the past events to change the whole history, especially the part that I disliked. Sound pretty much crazy, but this was me. But perhaps, most students or people don't really feel the same way I feel about history because they think knowing history will not take them anywhere. For the career perspective, there's not much job available for those who have a history degree, except, of course, if you are interested to become politicians or teachers. Archeology is another field that related to history study, but I guess, there are not much left to dig for ancient artifacts or relics, since British, French and Nazis took most of everything in late 1920s. One other reason, why students less engage with history study is "Textbook".

Textbooks in American history are pretty messed up. Too much "nationalism"and to much information, but less stories. There are a lot of "main ideas", and dates, which no students can remember 400 something main ideas and countless other "factoids". No wonder so many high school graduates cannot remember or care, who was actually President Abraham Lincoln was and what his legacy was or which years the Civil War was fought and why we fought for? While textbooks authors also write too many twigs and fail to share readers even a taste of what they might find useful and memorable. In fact, most history textbooks are clones of each other. Thus, students exit history textbooks without having developed the ability think coherently about

social life. In contract to this extent, most history lessons have so much facts, dates and name, but not stories or context. Hypothetically, this makes less interesting in the subject. For instant, watching "The Battles of Normandy" documentary and Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan, which one makes the students collect more details about story. Most students these days remember the names of the Kings and Queens in Games of Thrones, but hardly to remember the name of "Monarchs" or "Kingdoms" in some respective countries. That explain that without giving the students the context of narratives, apparently they seems failing to relate between the story and them. That's a basic people behavior, in which no one care to the things that they cannot relate with, considering those facts, dates and names, so forth become unimportant and uninteresting.

In a way, most history teachers fail to send very important message to the students, and while students also fail to catch is that what are the benefits of learning history and its impact in life? Even though it may seem quite a contrary for 7th graders to learn and force to think psychologically, it is a big benefit for them, knowing how to live and take care of their lives at very young age. In truth, what we learned in history classes were so important and intriguing, which is the foundation layer for everyone upon their chosen path later in life. For instance, there was a history lesson about Benjamin Franklin's 13 virtues of life that we learned at 10th grade. The material was filled with interesting details about the enigmatic Franklin and how he lived his life. One of the most astonishing realizations was just how much importance he placed on the ideas of self-development. And the funny thing is that not many of us aware of the importance of this lesson we learned at 10th-12th grade, but later in life, we would try reading a series of self-improvement books after books, trying to improve our lives and personality. In reality, learning history or social studies will strengthen your thinking ability and make reasoned decisions that consider the many variables of an event. It helps us understanding a decision consequences, for a long term as well as the short, because mostly we learn about people in history and their achievement as well as failure. Understanding how others will be affected by the decision, and how to act accordingly. History lessons tend to prepare students to be participating citizens. And life is full of psychological process.

How do we improve history classes? To find the solution, first we need to answer, why do we teach history to students? Because we want our students to make reasoned decisions, which means they will need to understand the complex mix of people, places and things that lead to the outcome. Instead of giving them so much information, why not let the students discover the answer on their own? But we need to change the structure of the textbook and the way to teach the students. Allow students to practise inquire skills and develop conclusion.

The way I wrote this essay may offend some teachers in teaching. Therefore, I'd like to add apprecitise to make my intentions clear. To all dear history teachers all over the world, this essay is just a heartfelt concern of a former high school history student, who loves history, but I hurt seeing the adjective "boring" used by many students. It is really a heartbroken. My writing is based on my observation and combined experience of studying at history classes back in my high school days and interviewed many fellow students in my rank, past and current. I have neither formal degree in history nor experience in teaching any history class. So I may not fully understand how it feels to be in your position to teach unstrain kids, whose world has been

disturbed by social media and materialistic. I am humbly providing some useful insight, hoping one day, history will become the most interesting class a student could ever wish for or at least consider as an important part of his or her life long journey.