
CHAPTER 2 THE NATURE OF HISTORY: HISTORY AS RECONSTRUCTION

"God alone knows the future, but only an historian can alter the past."

Ambrose Bierce

"The past does not influence me; I influence it."

Willem de Kooning

About a century ago a young man left his Michigan farm and moved to Detroit, there to pursue his dream of building a "horseless carriage." He wasn't the only mechanic to have such hopes, and he wasn't even the first person to build a workable automobile, but he succeeded far beyond the others, in time becoming the "Automobile King" of the early twentieth century. His name was Henry Ford, and, in the colloquial use of the term, he was an American "original." Ford was a man of rarely equaled mechanical genius, yet a man whose contradictions are particularly striking. He created one of the largest industrial empires of this century, yet believed his accounting department should consist of a man with two burlap bags, one for receipts, the other for expenses. He was the first American industrialist to pay his workers a living wage, yet he also proved to be the fiercest opponent of unionization in the entire industrial world. In the 1920s he hired thousands of African-American workers (handicapped workers and ex-convicts as well) when no one else would do so, yet he was quick to fire any employee immediately for even the slightest deviation from his own Puritan morality.

Ford had lots of offbeat notions: he assembled his own delegation and sailed to Europe on a chartered "Peace Ship" during World War I, motivated by the quaint notion that rulers of the warring nations would surely accept terms of settlement proposed by the world's leading industrialist; he was a folk medicine enthusiast who used common kerosene as hair oil, confident that it would do wondrous things for the scalp; he was a reincarnationist, an "old soul" he called himself, who, having accumulated mechanical knowledge in several earlier lives, was now prepared to fulfill his mechanical destiny. One thing more: Henry Ford was a deadly enemy of history as taught in the schools. "History is bunk," said he in his nonsense way.

Yet Henry Ford, his negative remark notwithstanding, displayed a deep love of the past that has rarely been equaled. By the mid-1920s the Ford Model T was everywhere in America, the destructive agent, ironically, of all Henry Ford most valued about the past: close family ties, warm neighborhood friendships, a relaxed pace of life—in general the comfortable rural world he had known as a boy. As the sole owner of the Ford Motor Company, Ford had colossal wealth and set about to literally "bring back" the past in the form of "Greenfield Village," near Detroit. He bought entire nineteenth-century buildings from elsewhere in America and had them rebuilt down to the last authentic inch in the Village—stagecoach taverns, gristmills, log cabins, county courthouses, one-room schoolhouses, and the like. He scouted antique shops throughout the countryside and would often take a dealer's entire stock at a premium price: four-poster beds, gas lamps, cast-iron

stoves, and creaky rocking chairs. To add to the nostalgia he even provided a ballroom, where visitors could see and experience “real” dances like the minuet, the waltz, the polka, and the schottische, rather than such disgraceful and obscene modern dances such as the bunny hug, the fox trot, and the Charleston. In sum, Henry Ford brought history to life. He reconstructed a segment of nineteenth-century life at Greenfield Village and invited the public into it. At this point you may well ask: How could someone so obsessed with the past declare that “History is bunk”?

What Is History?

It may be said that Ford hated history and yet loved “history,” which leads us to the main difficulty, that “history” has two distinct meanings. First, “history” is the sum total of everything that has actually happened in the past—every thought, every action, every event. In this sense, “history” is surely one of the broadest concepts conceived by the human intellect. “History,” broadly defined, encompasses the entire scope of the human experience on this planet. And this meaning of the word—things that happened in the past—is what most people have in mind when they use the term in daily conversation. And this is the “history”—the past of his memory—that Henry Ford so loved.

There is a second meaning of the term “history,” one more central to this book. If “history” is the past, it is also an *account* of the past—i. e., books, articles, and lectures. It should be clear with just a moment’s thought that the past (all of those thoughts and events that actually happened) is lost forever. Our only contact with the past is through the relatively scant records left by those who lived before us and through the accounts written by historians on the basis of those records. It is this “history”—created accounts of the past—that we read, think about, and study in school, and is, incidentally, what Henry Ford was referring to as “bunk.” And it is this meaning of “history”—history as a creation of human intelligence—that we are considering now. As historians James Davidson and Mark Lytle put it, “History is not ‘what happened in the past’; rather, it is the act of selecting, analyzing, and writing about the past. It is something that is done, that is constructed, rather than an inert body of data that lies scattered through the archives.”¹

The Nature of History

“History,” then, is both the past and the study of the past. In order to appreciate better the vast intellectual gulf that separates the past-as-it-actually-happened (history in the first sense) from historians’ accounts of that past (history in the second sense) we ask you to take a brief journey of the imagination. Try to visualize yourself walking at night amidst a rugged landscape punctuated by dramatic peaks and valleys. As you walk a companion turns on a powerful searchlight that illuminates some of the recesses and promontories that were formerly veiled in darkness. As the light moves, the previously lighted objects disappear from view and new features of the landscape appear. You want to see the entire landscape spread before your eyes, but the beam of light, narrow and imperfect, lets you see only a tiny fraction of the reality before you at any given time. When the light is turned off, you can see nothing at all. The peaks and valleys and forests are still there, and

¹James Davidson and Mark Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (New York: Knopf, 1982), xvii.

remain there, awaiting other beams, projected from other angles, to reveal their features.

In this allegory the peaks and valleys of the landscape represent the “past-as-it-actually-happened”—history in the first sense. The person with the searchlight is the historian who, by using the beam, reveals some of the outlines of the landscape. Essentially, the historian “lights up” some segment of the past that we cannot perceive directly, just as the person carrying the searchlight illuminated a landscape hidden in darkness. The glimpse of the landscape provided by the beam, as transient and incomplete as it is, is analogous to an account of the past written by a historian.

This analogy is imperfect in that the historian cannot even shine a weak beam of light on the real past as if it were a mountain or a valley. The past, unlike any existing geological feature, is gone forever. To the extent we can know anything about the past-as-it-actually-happened, that knowledge must be based on surviving records. Still, the analogy is useful. Just as a landscape can be real, so, too, is the past that historians study. The actual events of the past are gone forever, but they were just as “real” as all the human activities you see around you every day. Further, as inadequate as the beam of light was in illuminating the totality of the landscape, it did provide useful and accurate glimpses of reality. Similarly, historians’ accounts can and do provide “useful and accurate” glimpses of the contours of the past, but those accounts constitute only a pale reflection of reality.

To reiterate the central point: Even though a relationship exists between the past-as-it-happened and the historian’s account of a segment of the past, the historical account can no more show past events as they actually took place than the narrow beam of light can illuminate an entire landscape. The historian can reveal a tiny piece of the past, can present us with an individual version of a segment of the past, but no one can present the past as it actually was.

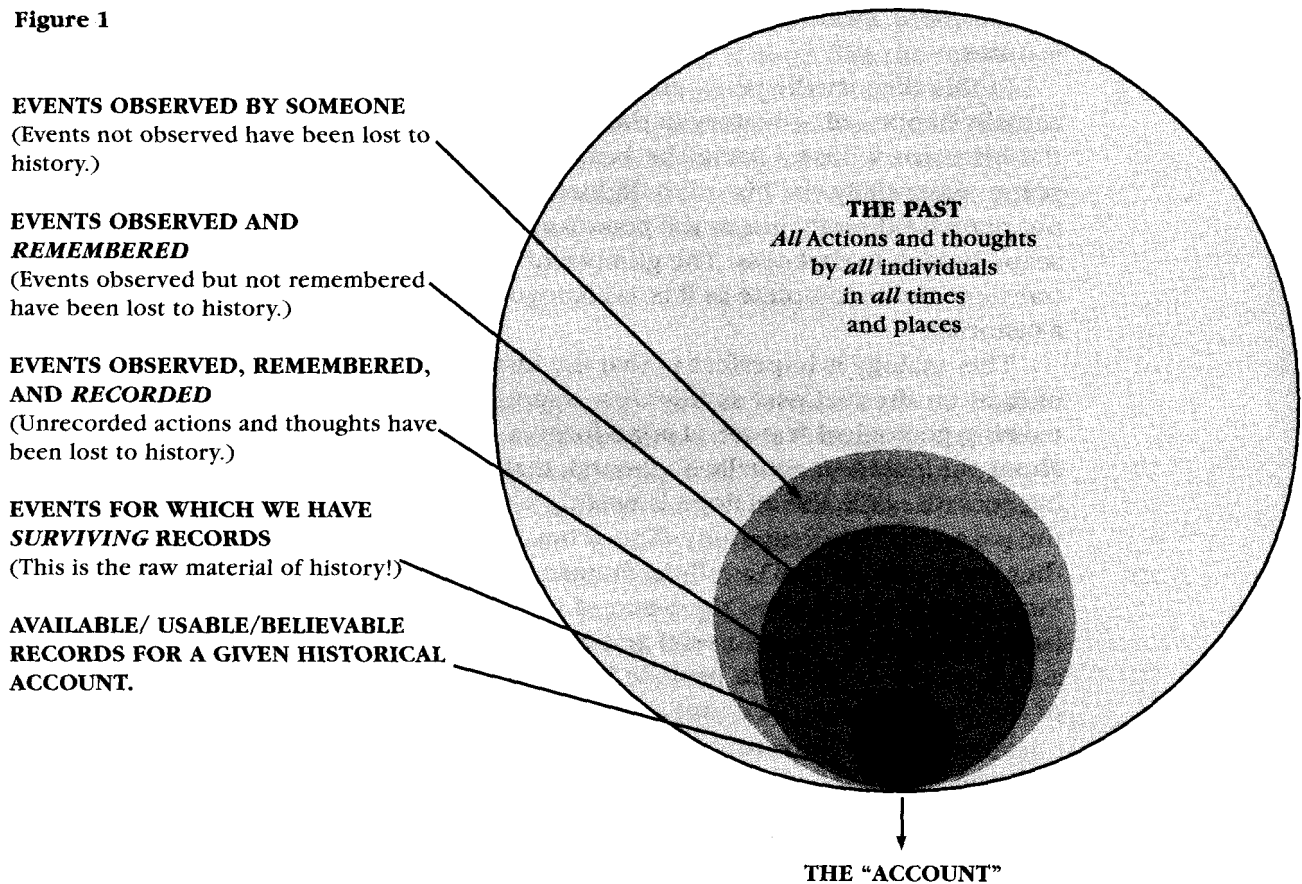
This leads us to another crucial point. All historical accounts are reconstructions that contain some degree of subjectivity. Whether written or spoken, every piece of history is an individualized view of a segment of past reality—a particular vision, a personalized version. Writing history is an act of creation, or more accurately, an act of re-creation in which the mind of the historian is the catalyst. Any piece of history that we read or hear ought to be treated as an individual creation, respectable insofar as it calls forth in the reader or hearer a clear image or understanding of some past. In fact, one might even say that any history we read is as much a product of the historian who wrote it as of the people who actually lived the events it attempts to describe!

The Process of History

The subjective, recreative, nature of written history becomes clearer if we look more closely at the process whereby the historian bridges the chasm between the past being studied and the account that is the product of that study. Actually, the historian’s intellectual task is as challenging as any on earth. Unlike the scientist who can experiment directly with tangible objects, the historian is many times removed from the events under investigation. The historian, as noted before, cannot study the past directly, but must rely on surviving records.

It should be obvious that surviving records, compared to the real past they reflect, are like a few drops of water in a large bucket. For instance, most past events left no records at all! Think of the number of events in your own life for

Figure 1



which there is no record but your own memory. Multiply those unrecorded events in your own life by the billions of human beings who inhabit the earth and you get some idea of the number of events each day that go unrecorded. That is only the beginning of the problem. In the words of historian Louis Gottschalk:

Only a part of what was observed in the past was remembered by those who observed it; only a part of what was remembered was recorded; only a part of what was recorded has survived; only a part of what has survived has come to the historians' attention; only a part of what has come to their attention is credible; only a part of what is credible has been grasped; and only a part of what has been grasped can be expounded or narrated by the historian. . . . Before the past is set forth by the historian, it is likely to have gone through eight separate steps at each of which some of it has been lost; and there is no guarantee that what remains is the most important, the largest, the most valuable, the most representative, or the most enduring part. In other words the "object" that the historian studies is not only incomplete, it is markedly variable as records are lost or recovered.²

Clearly, then, the historian can never get or present the full truth about a given past (see Fig. 1). The best the historian can provide, even under ideal conditions,

²Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History* (New York: Knopf, 1950), 45-46.

is a partial sketch of a vanished past. “Even the best history,” said historian Bruce Catton, “is not much better than a mist through which we see shapes dimly moving.” Or, in the words of W. S. Holt, “History is a damn dim candle over a damn dark abyss.”

If all this were not enough, the historian is also a factor in the equation. Not only is the historian fallible and capable of error, but personal biases, political beliefs, economic status, religious persuasion, and idiosyncrasies can subtly and unconsciously influence the way in which existing sources are interpreted. We all have a unique “frame of reference”—a set of interlocking values, loyalties, assumptions, interests, and principles of action—that we use to interpret daily experience. Suppose there appears in the newspaper a picture of the president of the United States playing golf at a country club on a Sunday morning, under the caption “President Relaxes.” A variety of reactions would be likely, each of them reflecting a different frame of reference:

- A political opponent: “I wonder if he’s as bad on the course as he is in the Oval Office.”
- A party loyalist: “Good for him. He deserves a break from the political wars he’s been fighting.”
- A physical fitness guru: “Why doesn’t he spend his free time in a more physically demanding activity?”
- A golf course neighbor: “Oh great. This means they’ll have my street blocked off again what with all those Secret Service types swarming around.”
- An avid golfer: “With a swing like that he ought to take up croquet.”
- A clergyman: “As a role model for all of us, he shouldn’t be playing golf on a Sunday morning.”

Same newspaper, same caption, same picture, and six different responses. A frame of reference is like a lens through which we view the world around us. It leads us to make certain conjectures, to classify individual items in a certain way, to ask certain kinds of questions, and to develop certain interpretations. Conservative Republicans often read and interpret the political history of the United States in a very different way than do liberal Democrats. Protestants and Catholics frequently disagree when writing about the religious upheavals known as the Reformation. And Northerners and Southerners are notorious in their differences concerning the history of the American Civil War. For example, Hodding Carter III, assistant secretary of state under President Jimmy Carter, was aware at a young age that the American history he was taught in the South differed from that taught in the North. “It was easy for me as a youngster growing up in Mississippi to know that my eighth-grade state history textbook taught me a lot which didn’t jibe with what my cousins in Maine were being taught. We spoke of the War Between the States. They spoke of the Civil War. . . . But our texts might as well have been written for study on different planets when it came to the status and feelings of the black men and women of the state or nation.”³

Small wonder that there is an element of subjectivity in historical accounts, inasmuch as we have historians with widely differing ideals, loyalties, interests, motivations, yes, even biases, each of which are shaped by different ethnic experience, religious allegiance, political leanings, and class interests.

That said, we must express a certain caution. Historians are justified in viewing an event from any perspective they wish, and from that perspective explain

³Viewpoint, *The Wall Street Journal* (Sept. 23, 1982).

how and why that event happened as it did. However, there is a danger involved in allowing a historical inquiry to be totally shaped by one's singular frame of reference. Excessive focus on one's own viewpoint closes the mind to the truth residing in alternative perspectives and, equally troublesome, to evidence that contradicts one's own view. Some call this tendency "Procrustean," the term referring to an ancient Greek brigand who strapped his victims to a bed—if their legs were too long, he cut them off till they fit; if too short, he stretched them to the proper length. So it is another way of describing a tendency to make the evidence fit the theory. The whole question of truth in history is a complicated one, a matter to which we will now turn.

The Question of Truth

At this point you might be asking, "Why study history at all if historical accounts are so far removed from the past they attempt to understand?" What happens to the search for "truth" if we acknowledge that historical accounts are by nature subjective and incomplete? How can we justify the pursuit of knowledge that appears so shallow and fleeting?

This entire book addresses this question, but for now it is sufficient to note that an element of subjectivity by no means invalidates the importance or substance of historical studies. First, it is worth reminding ourselves that the past *did happen*. Even though the records of past events are inadequate and difficult to interpret, they do constitute a tangible link between past and present. And even though historians can never completely escape their personal frames of reference, that does not preclude their writing credible and convincing accounts firmly grounded in the existing evidence. As Stephen Jay Gould, the Harvard paleontologist and historian of science, puts it: "We understand that biases, preferences, social values, and psychological attitudes all play a strong role in the process of discovery. However, we should not be driven to the opposite extreme of complete cynicism—the view that objective evidence plays no role, that perceptions of truth are entirely relative, and that scientific [or historical] conclusions are just another form of aesthetic preference."⁴

This is an important point: history is not fiction. Different historians will interpret the past differently for many different reasons. But in all cases their accounts must be based on all the available relevant evidence. A version of the past that cannot be supported by evidence is worthless and will quickly be rejected by other historians. Thus one opinion (no matter how strongly held) *is not* as good as another, and the student of history, whether beginner or seasoned professional, must learn to discriminate closely between reasoned claims supported by the available evidence and those that fail this basic test. (Don't panic right now if you don't know how to make this kind of determination; it is something that this book intends to teach you.)

Finally, history is not unique in its subjectivity, nor is it the only discipline in which conclusions are tentative and constantly open to revision. No field of study is ever static, since all research is, to some degree, conditioned by the "climate of the times" and the values and attitudes of the researchers themselves, not to mention the discovery of new evidence. Even theories in the so-called "hard sciences" are subject to the vagaries of time, place and circumstance.

⁴Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 244.

Conclusion

The realization that history involves the study of individual interpretations or versions of the past can be unsettling. Many of us yearn for the security afforded by unchallenged, definitive “answers” to a limited and manageable set of “questions.” To find out that historians are always asking new questions, and continually offering new answers to old questions, eliminates the possibility of discovering the absolute and singular truth about the human past. At the same time, this is also what makes history so intellectually exciting. History is not the lifeless study of a dead past; it is not about the memorization of dates, names, and places. History is a living and evolving dialogue about the most important subject of all—the human experience. And all of us are capable in taking part in that dialogue.

The remaining question is, how do you do this? Simply by learning how historians think and by sharpening the analytical and communication skills essential for success in college and professional life. This is what we mean by the methods of history.

The methods of history are not especially complicated or confusing. Most of them are based on common sense and can be learned without a great deal of specialized or technical training. Still, “doing” history is not altogether easy. (One historian compared writing intellectual history to trying to nail jelly to the wall.) But with some time, effort, and enthusiasm even beginning students can become historically literate.

EXERCISES

Set A, Exercise 1

The following statements use “history” in one or the other of its two meanings: (1) the *past* itself or (2) an *account* of the past. (See page 12.) Your task is to decide which meaning of history the author of each statement intended. Use “P” (for “Past”) to indicate passages that use the word “history” to mean the past-as-reality, and “A” (for “Account”) to indicate passages that use the word “history” to mean an account or accounts (a reconstruction) of the past. If you think both meanings of the word “history” apply, write “B” (for “Both”). Be prepared to defend your conclusions orally.⁵

- _____ 1. “Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history.” (*Abraham Lincoln*)
- _____ 2. “History, as the study of the past, makes the coherence of what happened comprehensible by reducing events to a dramatic pattern and seeing them in a simple form.” (*Johan Huizinga*)
- _____ 3. “History is baroque. It smiles at all attempts to force its flow into theoretical patterns or logical grooves; it plays havoc with our generalizations, breaks all our rules.” (*Will Durant*)
- _____ 4. “A page of history is worth a volume of logic.” (*Oliver Wendell Holmes*)

⁵Nearly all of the quotations in this exercise, and in the similar exercise in Set B, were drawn from an extensive list compiled by Ferenc M. Szasz and printed in the following issues of *The History Teacher*, a quarterly published by the Society for Historical Education, California State University, Long Beach, California: Vol. VII, No. 4 (August 1974), 552–63; Vol. VIII, No. 1 (November 1974), 54–63; Vol. VIII, No. 2 (February 1975), 208–16; Vol. IX, No. 2 (February 1976), 217–27.

- _____ 5. "History is not the accumulation of facts, but the relation of them."
(*Lytton Strachey*)
- _____ 6. "Inertia is the first law of history, as it is of physics." (*Morris R. Cohen*)

Set A, Exercise 2

A major theme of this chapter is the re-creative nature of historical study. The past is real, but accounts of the past reflect the historian's interests, priorities, values, and abilities. A work of history is never *the* history of a subject, but *a* history of a subject—just one of many possible versions. Another way of saying this is that any history has subjective elements. As a student of history you should try to become alert to the many ways the story you read is shaped by the hand of the historian. Below are a number of statements drawn from history books, magazines, and newspapers (remember journalists are historians). Some of the statements are predominately factual, that is they purport simply to describe a person or event. Other statements reflect the writer's judgment or opinion. The opinion might be very much justified in light of the evidence, but it is an opinion nevertheless.

This exercise is designed to sharpen your awareness of how much historical writing depends on the interpretations and judgments of the historian. Below label each passage either "F" for Fact or "O" for Opinion. If a passage contains both facts and judgments (Opinions), write "FO" and underline the segment that you think is the opinion or judgment. To give you a start, we have completed the first two items.

- F 1. "Bulls Beat Jazz, 87-86, for 6th Title" (Sports Headline)

Comment: *In a sense every statement can be categorized as an "opinion," since the choice of each word reflects some individual's judgment. Note how even the short headline above would read if the writer had used the word "trounce" or "shellac" instead of "beat."* For the purposes of this exercise, let's ignore this technicality. We labeled this statement "Fact" because it is a straightforward description of the outcome of an event—the final game of the National Basketball Association 1998 championship series.

- O 2. "I'll say it. I'm sick of the Chicago Bulls. Sick, sicker, sickest. . . . I'm especially sick of Michael Jordan. . . . I'm extra sick of this idea that Jordan is the greatest player in NBA history. Larry Bird had a better jumper than he did, rebounded better, passed better and did it all before the NBA became the Toronto Expansions, starring three college freshmen and a high school kid."

Comment: *The above remarks are taken from a comment column by Rick Reilly, one of the foremost writers on the staff of Sports Illustrated. Jordan is the centerpiece of Reilly's tirade, but he also takes on Chicago player Dennis Rodman, Coach Phil Jackson, even the Chicago fans for being too loud, too fat, and too drunk. Clearly this is a statement of opinion (O).*

- _____ 3. "The young Peter [the Great of Russia] was almost seven feet tall, and extremely lively."
- _____ 4. "On January 30, 1937, [German leader Adolf] Hitler addressed the

Reichstag, proclaiming ‘the withdrawal of the German signature’ from the Versailles Treaty—an empty but typical gesture, since the treaty was by now dead as a doornail—and reviewing with pride the record of his four years in office.”

- _____ 5. “*Gunga Din* (1937). This Hollywood film, from the Rudyard Kipling poem of the same name, is not just a sentimental story about the nineteenth-century British Raj. . . . So patronizingly racist that it has to be seen to be believed, this film demonstrates that, on the issues of imperialism and racism, the 1930s mentality is much closer to that of the Victorians than it is to ours.”
- _____ 6. “[The invasion of Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944, marked] the beginning of a new era. The largest military invasion in history laid the foundation for the Marshall plan, the recovery of Europe and the birth of the Atlantic alliance. It confirmed America’s rise from wary isolationism to a new role as the world’s strongest power.” (Magazine story on 40th anniversary of D-Day invasion.)
- _____ 7. “Edward III [of England] was fifteen years old when he ascended the throne in 1327, 25 when he embarked on war with France, and 34 at the time of the second attempt in 1346.”
- _____ 8. “The Arab-Muslim Empire [in the seventh century, A.D.] spread landward around the Mediterranean. The Iberian peninsula, where the land of Europe came down to meet the land of Africa, was the part of the west European mainland that came under the Muslim sway.”
- _____ 9. “In August 1936 [Adolf Hitler] had appointed Ribbentrop as German ambassador in London in an effort to explore the possibility of a settlement with England—on his own terms. Incompetent and lazy, vain as a peacock, arrogant and without humor, Ribbentrop was the worst possible choice for such a post. . . .”
- _____ 10. “In Islam, from its very beginning, pilgrimage was a holy duty. Every good Muslim was, and is obliged, if he can afford it and can support his family in his absence, to visit Mecca at least once.”

Sources

1. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 15, 1998, 1C.
2. *Sports Illustrated*, June 15, 1998, 124.
3. Crane Brinton, et al., *A History of Civilization*, Vol. II, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 222–224.
4. William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Crest, 1962), 411.
5. Norman F. Cantor, *The American Century*, (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998), 513.
6. *Newsweek*, June 11, 1984, 18.
7. Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 72.
8. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers* (New York: Random House, 1983), 181.
9. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 410.
10. Boorstin, *The Discoverers*, 120.

Set A, Exercise 3

This exercise gives a slightly different twist to Exercise 2, which required you to distinguish between fact and opinion. When you did that exercise it should have occurred to you how difficult it is to find any passage longer than a sentence or two that is completely and unambiguously factual. The historian’s judgments, perspectives, values, and priorities are, in fact, an almost inseparable part of any piece of historical writing.

This exercise asks you to go a step further. In order for an opinion to be acceptable it should be supported by points that validate it. Each of the following excerpts presents an opinion. Some of them are validated by specific supporting points; others are not (as presented here). Mark the opinions that are supported with an "S" (for "Supported"), the others with an "NS" for ("Not Supported"). Hint: First focus on the lead sentence, then see how effectively it is developed. We have completed the first item for you. (For purposes of this exercise some of these excerpts have been edited.)

- S 1. "[Jimmy] Carter [in a 1976 campaign speech] did all he could on this special day to identify himself with the former president [Franklin Roosevelt]. He was introduced to the throng, including patients in wheelchairs from the spa that was FDR's favorite retreat, by Jimmy Roosevelt, with Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., seated conspicuously on the portico of the Little White House [in Warm Springs, Ga.]. He spoke from a lectern displaying the Yalta portrait of Roosevelt. . . ."

Comment: *In the first sentence, William Leuchtenburg, the author of the passage, tells the reader the significance of the facts that follow. Or, to put it the other way around, the sentences that follow the opinion sentence provide specific support for it.*

- _____ 2. "The contemporary feminist movement can fairly take credit for creating pervasive revisions in American attitudes and policies. The second wave of feminism, which began in the 1960s, had considerably more impact than had the first wave. . . ."
- _____ 3. "In the early modern period animals were further categorized according to whether or not men found them physically handsome. Thus Topsell held that 'the body of an ape is ridiculous, by reason of an indecent likeness and imitation of man.' The frog, said Bishop Babington, is, 'as we all know, a foul and filthy creature, abiding in foul places. . . . The cormorant, explained Thomas Pennant, 'has the rankest and most disagreeable smell of any bird.'"

Caution: *The opinions of the "early modern" contemporaries are not what you are seeking. The question is, does the writer of the passage venture any opinion of his own and provide specific elements that support his opinion.*

- _____ 4. "Hitler's mistrust now reached extremes and the miracle of his survival [of an assassination attempt] gave him greater faith than ever in his mission. He shut himself up in his bunker, engaged in no further private talks, and had every word of his conversation recorded. . . . Every free expression of opinion and every objection to his frequently incomprehensible views evoked an outburst of rage on his part. He lost his capacity to listen to a report to the end. . . ."
- _____ 5. *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942). "This film by Michael Curtiz portrays in concentrated form the thick national patriotism and self-congratulatory ethic that the war [World War II], coming on the heels of the similarly oriented New Deal, generated. This thick public ethic and patriotism were to shape powerfully postwar American policy and ultimately to inspire the Vietnam disaster."

- _____ 6. "Saudi Arabia is rich, influential and well armed, but when push comes to shove, the Saudis seem to back away from trouble. They waffle, they vacillate, they try to buy off their enemies. Thus it came as something of a shock—not least to the Saudis themselves—when the Royal Saudi Air Force shot down a pair of intruding Iranian fighters last week."
- _____ 7. "A series of disasters without parallel had interrupted all meaningful continuity between the ancient and the Medieval world, obliterating creative science in the process. A singularly lucky combination of circumstances rekindled scientific thought around the twelfth century, and thereby gave birth to a new and continuous phase that has by no means yet reached its peak. So fortunate, in fact, was that historical constellation that it sparked the most spectacular scientific evolution history has ever seen so far."
- _____ 8. "By 1865 the federal government had power to influence every American life and not just in matters of war. The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 put it in the business of higher education. . . . All the transcontinental lines except the Great Northern were built with federal sponsorship through land grants. The railroads crossed lands where men and women could acquire federal land free at 160 acres per applicant, under the Homestead Law that the Republicans passed in 1862."
- _____ 9. "So the onset of the Atlantic [slave] trade did not signal something altogether new for western black Africans. When European demand appeared along the Atlantic coast, Africans had social and economic institutions in place to provide slaves in exchange for commodities they preferred. Little was different about trading slaves coastward instead of inland—just the shippers and their destination. However what proved to be most novel about the Atlantic trade was its scale. No other exporting of slaves, at any time or place before or since, came close to the massive, involuntary movement of people out of western and west-central black Africa to the New World over the four centuries following 1450."
- _____ 10. "Early twentieth-century social reform flowed from three wellsprings of thought and motivation. One was the urge felt by certain middle- and upper-class men and women to help make urban life more just, tolerable, and decent. This stream originated in varying combinations of feminism, socialism, and Protestant evangelical fervor. . . . The second motivation was the drive of trained professionals to apply their knowledge and skills to social problems. The third motivation was the desire of many native-born Americans to use social institutions and the law to restrain and direct the unruly masses, many of whom were foreign-born or black."

Sources

1. William Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 177.
2. Glenda Riley, *Inventing the American Woman*, 2nd ed. (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1995), 360.
3. Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 57.
4. Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (London: Fontana, 1952), 437.
5. Norman F. Cantor, *The American Century* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998), 521.
6. *Newsweek*, June 18, 1984, 48.