What is History?

The following is a series of quotes about history. They are short and compressed in meaning. For each quotation paraphrase its meaning and indicate whether and why you agree or disagree with the authors view. Be concise.

History can come in handy. If you were born yesterday, with no knowledge of the past, you might easily accept whatever the government tells you. But knowing a bit of history--while it would not absolutely prove the government was lying in a given instance--might make you skeptical, lead you to ask questions, make it more likely that you would find out the truth. **HOWARD ZINN, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train***

***My interpretation:***

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**“History is the fiction we invent to persuade ourselves that events are knowable and that life has order and direction. That's why events are always reinterpreted when values change. We need new versions of history to allow for our current prejudices.”** [Bill Watterson](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/13778.Bill_Watterson) (Author of Calvin and Hobbes), [*Homicidal Psycho Jungle Cat*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/2369970)

***My interpretation:***

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| “[The whole history of the world is summed up in the fact that, when nations are strong, they are not always just, and when they wish to be just, they are no longer strong.](http://thinkexist.com/quotation/the_whole_history_of_the_world_is_summed_up_in/15844.html)” **http://thinkexist.com/i/sq/as5.gif**[**Winston Churchill**](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/winston_churchill/) **(**[**British**](http://thinkexist.com/nationality/british_authors/)[**Orator**](http://thinkexist.com/occupation/famous_orators/)**,** [**Author**](http://thinkexist.com/occupation/famous_authors/) **and** [**Prime Minister**](http://thinkexist.com/occupation/famous_prime_ministers/) **during World War II.** [**1874**](http://thinkexist.com/birthday/november_30/)**-**[**1965**](http://thinkexist.com/birthday/january_24/)**)** |
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***My interpretation:***

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| “[Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph.](http://thinkexist.com/quotation/throughout_history-it_has_been_the_inaction_of/208039.html)” |
| **http://thinkexist.com/i/sq/as4.gif**[**Haile Selassie**](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/haile_selassie/)  **(**[**Ethiopian**](http://thinkexist.com/nationality/ethiopian_authors/)[**Statesman**](http://thinkexist.com/occupation/famous_statesmen/) **and** [**Emperor**](http://thinkexist.com/occupation/famous_emperors/) **of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974,** [**1892**](http://thinkexist.com/birthday/july_23/)**-**[**1975**](http://thinkexist.com/birthday/august_26/)**)** |

***My interpretation:***

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[The very ink with which history is written is merely fluid prejudice.](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/marktwain105745.html) ~ [**Mark Twain**](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/m/mark_twain.html)

***My interpretation:***

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History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon.

~ [**Napoleon Bonaparte**](http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Napoleon_Bonaparte/)*French general & Emperor (1769 - 1821)*

***My interpretation:***

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“The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.” ~ [George Orwell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/3706.George_Orwell)

***My interpretation:***

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“Nescire autem quid antequam natus sis acciderit, id est semper esse puerum. (To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child.)”   
~ [Marcus Tullius Cicero](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/13755.Marcus_Tullius_Cicero)

***My interpretation:***

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“The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see.”   
~ [Winston Churchill](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/14033.Winston_Churchill)

***My interpretation:***

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[*A Short History of Nearly Everything*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/2305997)

By: [Bill Bryson](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/7.Bill_Bryson)

If you imagine the 4 – 5 billion odd years of Earth's history compressed into a normal earthly day, then life begins very early, about 4 A.M., with the rise of the first simple, single-celled organisms, but then advances no further for the next sixteen hours. Not until almost 8:30 in the evening, with the day five-sixths over, has Earth anything to show the universe but a restless skin of microbes. Then, finally, the first sea plants appear, followed twenty minutes later by the first jellyfish and the enigmatic Ediacaran fauna first seen by Reginald Sprigg in Australia. At 9:04 P.M. trilobites swim onto the scene, followed more or less immediately by the shapely creatures of the Burgess Shale. Just before 10 P.M. plants begin to pop up on the land. Soon after, with less than two hours left in the day, the first land creatures follow.   
  
Thanks to ten minutes or so of balmy weather, by 10:24 the Earth is covered in the great carboniferous forests whose residues give us all our coal, and the first winged insects are evident. Dinosaurs plod onto the scene just before 11 P.M. and hold sway for about three-quarters of an hour. At twenty-one minutes to midnight they vanish and the age of mammals begins. Humans emerge one minute and seventeen seconds before midnight. The whole of our recorded history, on this scale, would be no more than a few seconds, a single human lifetime barely an instant. Throughout this greatly speeded-up day continents slide about and bang together at a clip that seems positively reckless. Mountains rise and melt away, ocean basins come and go, ice sheets advance and withdraw. And throughout the whole, about three times every minute, somewhere on the planet there is a flash-bulb pop of light marking the impact of a Manson-sized meteor or one even larger. It's a wonder that anything at all can survive in such a pummeled and unsettled environment. In fact, not many things do for long.