

HISTORY: WHY AND HOW

I. What is History?

- A. The conventional view of history is that it is the study of the past. No wonder most people don't care. *We don't live in the past!*
1. When people think that history is about *the past*, they only study it to learn *about the past*, and they lose sight of how the past is connected to the present. This leaves people feeling that history just does not matter when it comes to "real life," and when given the choice, the vast majority of people simply give up on studying the past and decide to "get busy living."
 2. Another problem with thinking of history as the study of the past that has contributed to most people ignoring history is that the past is a *plethora*—an unmanageably vast ocean of information. There's over five thousand years of recorded information out there, and there is simply no way to study all of it. In that sense, there is no way to study "the past." You have to choose to study some part of it. *But how do you choose?* Today, the answer is: you can choose whatever part you want from whatever perspective you want. No wonder people don't take history seriously! (Imagine if spelling teachers told you you could spell words however you want, and math teachers told you that any answer is as good as any other.)
 3. All the confusion surrounding history today revolves around a great error: *letting go of the present when studying the past.*
- B. The proper reason to study history is to better know and understand *the world we live in.*
1. In order to not lose sight of the present, when studying the past, we need to approach the past *as a way of understanding the present.*
 2. We have no choice about being where we are. We live in the present. And when we are done studying the past, we necessarily come back to live here and now.
 3. The approach used to study the past in the History At Our House program, which embraces these truths and the need to seek relevant and powerful knowledge from the past, is therefore called *present-centrismTM*. (**Present-centrism** is a method of studying history that begins and ends *in the present* in order to promote the pursuit of knowledge that is relevant to bettering human life *here and now.*)