



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown
History Category - Key Issues and Questions to Address



History Q2

Should anyone be ashamed of their nation's history? Should anyone be proud of it?

Key Issues and Questions to Address

1. The Nature of Collective Identity:

What is the relationship between individual and collective identity?

How are individuals connected to actions that occurred before their birth?

Is national identity voluntary or involuntary?

2. Moral Psychology of Pride and Shame:

Are vicarious pride and shame coherent moral emotions?

What psychological purpose do these emotions serve?

Do pride and shame have different moral standings as responses to history?

3. Selective Memory and History:

Who decides which historical events deserve pride or shame?



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown
History Category - Key Issues and Questions to Address



How do power dynamics shape national narratives?

Is selective emphasis inevitable in historical memory?

4. Responsibility Without Guilt:

Can one acknowledge historical wrongdoing without personal guilt?

What are the obligations of beneficiaries of historical injustice?

Is there a distinction between responsibility and culpability?

5. Pride and Critical Engagement:

Are pride and critical thinking compatible?

Can one be proud of a flawed tradition?

How does pride relate to the concept of "patriotism"?

6. Practical Implications:



How should history be taught in schools?

What role should public commemoration play?

How can societies acknowledge multiple historical narratives?

7. Cross-Cultural Considerations:

Do different cultures have different approaches to historical memory?

Are Western concepts of individual vs. collective identity universally applicable?

How do postcolonial perspectives change this discussion?

8. Future-Oriented Aspects:

How does relationship to history shape future action?

Can historical reckoning strengthen rather than weaken national cohesion?

What is the relationship between historical memory and justice?

Approach for Your Essay



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown

History Category - Key Issues and Questions to Address



For a successful essay on this topic, you might:

Begin by establishing the philosophical question of whether pride and shame make sense as responses to actions we didn't personally perform

Explore case studies of how different nations have approached their historical wrongs and achievements

Consider multiple perspectives, including:

Nationalist views that emphasize continuity and collective achievement

Critical perspectives that emphasize responsibility for historical injustice

Moderate positions that allow for both critical engagement and attachment

Develop a nuanced position that recognizes both:

The moral importance of acknowledging historical wrongdoing

The psychological and social need for positive collective narratives

Consider the practical implications for education, public commemoration, and political discourse



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown

History Category - Key Issues and Questions to Address



Reflect on how your position applies to specific historical examples across different national contexts

The strongest essays will likely avoid simplistic answers in either direction, recognizing that both uncritical pride and undifferentiated shame can distort our relationship to history. A sophisticated approach might develop a framework for appropriate pride and shame that acknowledges both moral agency and historical embeddedness.