



History Q2

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

Recommended Readings

Historical and Philosophical Resources

1. Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities" (1983)

Foundational work on nationalism as a social construct

Explores how national identity is created and maintained through shared narratives

Discusses how history becomes selectively incorporated into national consciousness

2. Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" (1882)

Classic essay arguing that nationhood requires both shared memories and strategic forgetting

Famous for the concept that nationhood involves "having done great things together" and "wanting to do more"

Explores the selective nature of national memory

3. Hannah Arendt, "The Origins of Totalitarianism" (1951)

Analyzes nationalism's relationship to totalitarianism

Discusses the moral complexities of collective responsibility

Explores the dangers of uncritical nationalist narratives

4. Alasdair MacIntyre, "After Virtue" (1981)

Discusses the importance of narrative traditions for moral identity

Argues that individuals are embedded in historical communities and traditions

Relevant for understanding the connection between personal and collective identity

5. Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" (1994)



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown

History Category - Recommended Readings



Argues for a cosmopolitan ethic against uncritical patriotism

Provides framework for thinking about the limits of national pride

6. David Miller, "On Nationality" (1995)

Defends a moderate form of national identity

Argues for the ethical importance of national belonging

Discusses how nations can acknowledge historical wrongs while maintaining identity

Historical Case Studies and Applications

1. Michael Kammen, "Mystic Chords of Memory" (1991)

Comprehensive study of how American collective memory has been shaped

Examines the tension between heritage and history in American identity

Explores how societies reshape their understanding of past events

2. Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Between the World and Me" (2015)

Reflects on American history through the lens of racial injustice

Examines personal relationship to problematic national history

Questions conventional patriotic narratives

3. Tony Judt, "Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945" (2005)

Details how European nations grappled with Nazi and colonial pasts

Explores different models of historical reckoning (German confrontation vs. French ambivalence)

Examines how collective memory shapes contemporary politics

4. Tzvetan Todorov, "Hope and Memory" (2003)

Analyzes different approaches to historical memory across nations

Discusses the ethics of remembrance and forgetting



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown

History Category - Recommended Readings



Explores how societies can learn from historical wrongdoing

5. Susan Neiman, "Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil" (2019)

Compares German confrontation with Nazi past to American handling of slavery/racism

Examines concept of "working through" difficult histories

Provides framework for productive historical reckoning

6. Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity" (2018)

Explores complexity of national identity and its relationship to history

Questions essentialist views of nationhood

Provides nuanced approach to pride and responsibility

Contemporary Theoretical Approaches

1. Jürgen Habermas, "The Postnational Constellation" (2001)

Proposes "constitutional patriotism" as alternative to ethnic nationalism

Discusses how liberal democracies should relate to their histories

Explores possibility of critical attachment to national traditions

2. Will Kymlicka, "Politics in the Vernacular" (2001)

Analyzes relationship between liberalism and national identity

Discusses how multicultural societies should approach national narratives

Explores positive aspects of cultural belonging

3. Bernard Williams, "Shame and Necessity" (1993)

Philosophical exploration of shame as moral emotion

While primarily about ancient ethics, provides framework for thinking about shame in relation to collective actions



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown

History Category - Recommended Readings



4. Danielle Allen, "Our Declaration" (2014)

Rereading of founding American documents

Explores how flawed historical documents might still inspire pride

Examines relationship between critique and affirmation

5. Jeremy Waldron, "Dignity, Rank, and Rights" (2012)

Philosophical exploration of dignity and its relationship to community

Relevant for understanding how historical wrongdoing affects collective dignity

Jonathan Lear, "Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation" (2006)

Examines how cultures can maintain identity through historical trauma

Provides framework for thinking about pride in resilience

Empirical and Psychological Studies

1. Michael Billig, "Banal Nationalism" (1995)

Study of how national identity is reproduced in everyday practices

Examines unconscious aspects of national attachment

2. Thomas Erikson, "Ethnicity and Nationalism" (2010)

Anthropological approach to national identity

Examines how ethnic identities relate to national narratives

Nyla Branscombe et al., "The Context and Content of Social Identity Threat" (1999)

Psychological research on collective guilt and shame

Examines conditions under which people accept or reject responsibility for group actions

3. Lynn Hunt, "Inventing Human Rights" (2007)

Historical study of how moral sensibilities evolve



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown

History Category - Recommended Readings



Relevant for understanding changing attitudes toward historical actions

