Examination

History Extension

Date

3/11/2011

Section Part Question Number

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Instructions

- Write your Centre Number and Student Number at the top of this page.
- In the boxes provided write the name and date of this examination, and the number(s) of the question(s) attempted in this booklet.
- If you have not attempted the question, you must still hand in the Writing Booklet, with the words ‘NOT ATTEMPTED’ written clearly on the front cover.
- Write using black or blue pen. (Black pen is recommended.)
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- You may NOT take any Writing Booklets, used or unused, from the examination room.
The writing of history has emerged as one of the greatest "cultural wonders of western civilisation". Over the years, controversial questions have been aired in relation to the "owners" of history and the extent to which historians "own" history. The perspectives, aims and purposes of individual historians will continue to remain the main influences on the writing of history and in turn, ultimately decide who really owns history, as evident through Eric Foner's book, "Who Owns History".

The source, "Who Owns History" presented by Eric Foner in 2002, outlines how individuals who read history will ultimately possess a differing stance to each individual who engages in the same literature as individuals along with historians are influenced by our own perspectives & biases. "The basic difference between historian understanding of their task and what much broader public thinks the writing of history entails: such brings to light the idea that the
Historians view historiography as being pivotal to their role as historians. However, the general public contradict this view by believing the story of history largely depends on the construction of history, which has evolved over time, or Foner pinpoints with the emergence of new information, new methodologies, political, social perspectives, he is allowing us to grasp the essence of historiographical study, where over time approaches to history have altered through his post-modernist views. Foner believed historical truth does not exist... but as a reasonable approximation of the past. A new way of approaching historiography has emerged, travelling away from the old traditional methods, where Foner has accepted "there often exists more than one legitimate way of recounting past events." Foner further believes that history should not be left to "the journalist and the politician" meaning it should only comprise the task of the historian to attempt to reconstruct the past of ordinary individuals.

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Social history and the importance of historical accuracy

allows the whole of society to be captured in history
through examination of personal biases.

Everyone is able to own "own history" with each other.

Foner is attempting to delineate that space.

Historians avoid these biases and prejudices which come into play
when reconstructing the past, but these ideas were of the past.

An emerging trend towards
social history has risen.

Nonetheless, Foner ultimately arrives to the conclusion where he believes
history is owned by everyone, yet
by no-one, which is a complex
scenario: considering the past is constantly
changing and infinite ("never-ending").

A historian may within their own
perspective believe they own history,
yet it must include everyone,
hence no one is ever in control.

Hence leading to Foner’s interpretation
that no-one owns history yet with the
inclusion of everyone as part of this social history,

everyone can ultimately own history.

Herodotus was a Greek historian of the
5th century B.C., who recorded the
history of politics and war of his
country. His main aim and purpose
comprised of recording human
achievements for the posterity of

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future generations so they would have some knowledge of their ancestors and what happened in ancient Greece at the time, "for their deeds may not be lost without glory". Furthermore, Herodotus recorded mainly accounts of Greco-Persian wars which in his perspective were important at the time. And although Herodotus has been noted by modern historians for having exaggerated some facts in his historical accounts, leading to "intellectual distortions" as portrayed by the source, Ender believes it would have been a serious mistake if Herodotus were not to write about the history which he did as he "engaged forthrightly in public discourse", writing about people of the time and allowing future generations to gain knowledge of the politicians and wars he wrote about.
However in the 19th century a German historian, Leopold von Ranke, emerged with a strict discipline for history, replacing it as the study of science and philosophy, to a single, separate, strict discipline, where his aim was to produce a "definitive and truthful history of the world". Through employing only the most critical and analytical scientific methods, and only through the use of "primary sources, eye witness accounts and the purest most immediate document, avoiding reliance on secondary sources was one able to come to a truthful account of history. This approach delivered by empiricist Ranke, one in direct contradiction to that of Foner as presented in the source. However, Eric believes there is a truth which exists in history, however this is only a "relative" truth, not an "absolute" truth which Ranke believes exist in history. Foner didn't believe in the "scientific sense" which Ranke's methods were centred upon.

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hence conflicting interpretations of historians owning history come into play. In Ranke’s view, after eradicating forgeries and falsifications from the historical records and employing only the most reliable and accurate of primary sources, a historian would be able to "own" history as their perspectives to be able to obtain an absolute truth would result in a definite and never changing history.

Keith Jenkins is a British post-modern historian of the 20th century and his perspectives on historiographical discourse, distinctly parallel those of Eric Foner. Post-modern thinking emerged as a discipline which disregarded the old traditional ways of methods of approaching history and formed a new way of thinking. Post-modernists such as Keith Jenkins and Foner believed that truth cannot be obtained through reconstructing the past as historians think when like labourers...

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and history was their occupation. Furthermore, Jenkins believed "history was a literary construct... a verbal artefact... where history was as much invented as found". In essence Jenkins came to the conclusion that history is influenced by a historian's biases and their stance/context, which ultimately leads to what they write. Foner accepts such a view and confirms "there often exists more than one legitimate way of recounting the past" hence differing interpretations are bound to emerge in history's reconstruction. And in the case of post modern thinkers like Jenkins and Foner, the extent to which historians' "own" history is highly limited as they are not in control of history as a whole, instead due to the varying interpretation of evidence which emerges, history continues to be constantly evolving & never ending.
Eric Hobsbaum was a Marxist historian of the 1900s and was much influenced by his communist ideologies. His historiographical stance was one which highly regarded social history and the inclusion of all classes of society into the construct of history. He believed history was an "intellectual project... which recorded the progress of society and the world", hence paralleling the views of Foner and Charles Adams, (speaking in the source), historians should "step outside the ivory tower and engage forthrightly in public discourse". Society as a whole, which in the view of Marxists to be classed, and include everyone from the both the upper and lower class continued to be as relevant today as when the social movement first began as affirmed by Foner. In this context, historians are unable to own...
History is it becomes something owned by everyone. As the way of society is included in the discourse of social, Marxist history, it ultimately becomes owned by everyone who takes a part in it.

History is constantly changing and ever-evolving discourse which will continue to raise as many questions as it seems to answer because varying perspectives and the context of differing historians will constantly come into play whereby they conflict in some circumstances or coincide in others. Ultimately, the owner of history is based on one’s perceptions and individualistic stance in relation to historiography, as some historians may be led to believe they can own history, whilst others come to terms that they never can or never will own history.

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