



How to Teach History with Wes Callihan

Lesson 7: Important Books for the Study of History

Outline:

Travel as a teacher

- When you travel to another country where there is a different cultural background, this helps you to gain an understanding of the variety of human experience.
- The understanding that you gain from travel you can take into your reading of old books. It is easier to understand how they might really think differently from us.



Reading good stories, since history is a story.

- History is not just one thing after another.
- As Christians we think there is a grand meaning that is objective and outside of ourselves.
- Don't just read history books, read good fiction. Fiction will help you understand what narrative feels like.

Time is a teacher.

- You have a long way to go, and there is no rush in getting there.
- There is a great danger in rushing too much to judgement about things.
- Humility is a great virtue for a student of history. This is not radical skepticism.
- We don't know everything, but God does and He gives us revelation.
- We should be humble knowing that things can be changed. Be willing to say, "I don't know."

Historiography: The study of the writing of history

- **Barbara Tuchman** (*The Guns of August; A Distant Mirror; Practicing History Selected Essays*)
 - Barbara Tuchman was a Jew.
 - She was a fan of the G.A. Henty novels.
 - She understood narrative.
 - She never had an advanced degree in history.
 - She wrote as an amateur historian (this means not paid rather than inferior).



- **Russel Kirk**—father of American conservatism (*The Conservative Mind; The Roots of American Order*)
 - He was a student of Edmund Burke.
 - He looks at the books and the authors who have embodied the principles that the founding fathers have drawn on to make American what it was in its great days.
- **Gilbert Highet** (*The Classical Tradition; The Art of Teaching*)
 - He was a teacher of classics.
 - He loved his students.
 - He knew how to tell history as stories.
- **C.S. Lewis** (*Discarded Image; English Literature of the 16th Century*)
 - He is not a historian, but he has a view of history.
 - In everything he writes you can see how he is framed and shaped by his love for history.
 - The popular ideas that circulate very often do not reflect what the experts know better about.
- **Edward Gibbon** (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*)
 - He writes a six volume history of all of western culture.
 - He was a product of the Enlightenment.
 - He accessed primary sources.
- **Winston Churchill** (*The Second World War*)
 - He doesn't hide his personality or biases.
 - He is very eloquent in his style. He was shaped by reading (Gibbon).
- **Phillip Schaff** (*History of the Christian Church*)
 - He writes sympathetically about the Catholic Church.
 - No one has surpassed Phillip Schaff as a historian and storyteller.
 - Schaff credits Gibbon with blazing a trail.