SPRING 2025

HISTORY

newsletter

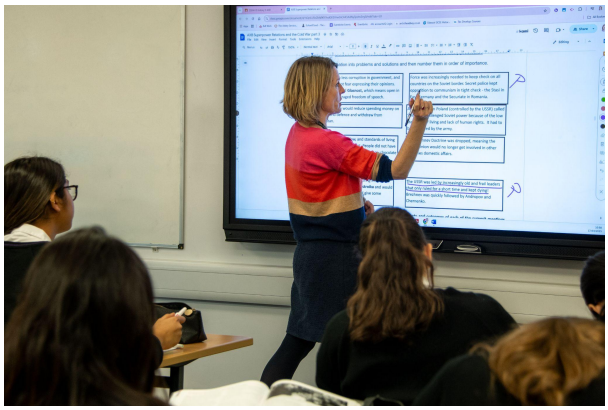
Edited by Manya, Lilia and Maria

Abbey History Department interviews

Interview with Ms Brunskill:

What has been your most memorable part of teaching at the Abbey?

"That's a great question, I think probably doing the battlefields tour that students do when they're in Upper IV because it really brings history they're doing to life and they can see the impact it has on people."



What's your favourite topic to teach?

"I really love teaching Medicine Through Time (GCSE), it's really enjoyable not only because it's really gory and gross and that's funny, but because it has it offers so much in terms of history skills and building the skills you need to be a good historian"

What inspired you to pursue a career in teaching in History?

"I did history at University and I loved it, then I did a master's degree in history (American history) and I really enjoyed that. I wanted to stay in history somehow and I thought well I've trained as a teacher lets see how that works out, maybe later I'll do a PhD and be a doctor of history but actually it turned out I really enjoyed teaching"

What advice would you give to someone considering a career in history?

"Do it! The thing with history is that there are so many pathways; some of the people I went to university with work at the Foreign Office as diplomats, one works in Tesco business managers development scheme, one works in the city. These are things you wouldn't think is natural to do when you study history but because it's so analytical and requires you to be so logical, actually people seek that kind of skill. If you want to do something really specifically history oriented, that's a bit harder.Then again people nowadays are on TV doing history documentaries and podcasts!"

Do you think the fact you have lived in various different countries influenced your passion for history/teaching?

"Absolutely, I was lucky to live in two places where modern history is really current. I lived in Cuba and I was there when Fidel Castro died and the country went into mourning. Castro was a giant of 20th century history and so much of what I taught and studied felt really real. The same in Jerusalem which of course has a history that stretches back for millennia, there was this real sense of history being present and alive and because it wasn't my country's history, it was so exciting to be around that."

Interview with Mr Hawkins:

When did you first start loving history?
"It probably would have been secondary school, specifically Year 7. I had a brilliant history teacher who inspired me and enthused me."

What is your favourite topics to teach?
"I think the Cold War at GCSE, and we are just about to start China in the Lower VI for A levels. Those are definitely my two favourite topics to teach."

Is there anyone in the field who you particularly admire?
"Dominic Sandbrook always writes really well, he's quite a populist historian but he is very good. Then Robert Dallek who has written a very hefty biography of John F. Kennedy (JFK) and also Lyndon Johnson. As well as Doris Kearns Goodwin, who wrote a great book on Lincoln (Team of Rivals)."

What inspired you to pursue a career in history?
"Oh my secondary school teacher, Norman Damerell, I'll give him the credit. He is the reason I am here today."

What advice would you give someone considering a career in history?
"Approach it with an open mind, make sure you have your specific areas of interest you want to pursue but don't close off other avenues because you might be surprised by what interests you."

In class, we read one of the articles you have written. Have you done anything else outside of teaching which is history related?
"No I haven't, other than those articles - I wrote around a dozen of them. The Hindsight publication comes out three times a year and I did it for about 4 years. I really enjoyed it and I do miss writing but it's about finding the time to do it."

Chilean Arpilleras

Cloth Voices Empowering the Oppressed

By Isabella, Upper V

Left: Allende after the 1970 election. Right: Pinochet and military officials after the 1973 coup d' état

Violeta Morales, 1991: "for us an arpillera is an open book…a blank page on which we can write to the world…and tell of everything that is happening in this country…"

Arpillera translates to mean 'burlap', an apt name, as Arpilleras were embroidered designs appliquéd on burlap. Arpilleras had their own distinctive style, with bits and scraps of cloth, even the women's own hair and other 'found' materials embroidered and appliquéd. The Vicaría and Arpilleristas used Arpilleras to leave a history and testimony of the oppressive reality of Pinochet's regime, most importantly, Arpilleras allowed women to anonymously express 'what they could not bring their voices to say'.

What caused the women to need to "tell of everything that is happening in this country"?

In September 1970, Salvador Allende, a Marxist candidate, representing Unidad Popular, a coalition between two left wing parties, became President of Chile. Allende was the first elected Marxist president in a liberal Latin American democracy. He was elected despite US involvement, which included the CIA providing over $400,000 for anti-Allende media.

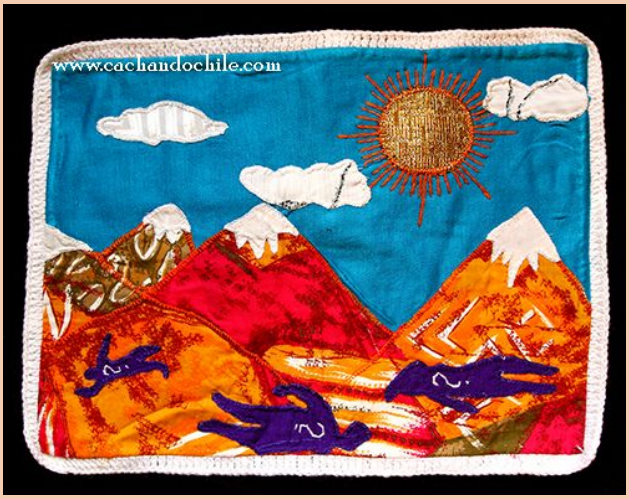
Unrest under Allende rose in 1972, and was heightened in September, when bread shortages began. As a result, on the 11th September, the Chilean military launched a coup, supported by the US, headed by army chief, General Augusto Pinochet. Allende and his aides refused to surrender and were killed or committed suicide. The military declared themselves the government, an emergency state, and began their campaign to destroy resistance. This campaign would ultimately lead to the death, torture and disappearance of over 40,000, as recognised by the modern Chilean government.

In the wake of the coup d'état, all Chilean contact with the 'outside world' was stopped; the Congress was closed; all mayors and locally elected representatives were removed and replaced by military officers; the largest labour union was outlawed, and the constitution was abolished. Pinochet held over 10,000 Chileans and foreigners in the National Stadium, whilst there were public burnings of books, posters and newspapers, in order to erase all traces of popular culture under Allende. The heads of all universities were replaced with military appointees. The use of compañero – the traditional greeting of Allende's supporters – was banned.

Pinochet wanted to install fear in Chileans from the beginning of his regime. He used the Caravan of Death, institutionalised torture, executions, exiles and 'disappearing', to remove and suppress all dissent.

Through the course of the regime, 40,000 were killed, tortured and disappeared, over 200,000 suffered exile, and 3,000 were executed.

It was often men, who were tortured, executed, exiled or 'disappeared', leaving dependent women and children behind, with economic insecurity, and without support or wages. To provide support, the Catholic Church created the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, which aided these women financially, emotionally and legally. The Vicaría de la Solidaridad ran workshops to allow women to create products to sell, whilst caring for their children, to earn money to support their family. The products produced were called Arpilleras.



Left: "With time, bodies of the missing began turning up, and the families looked to the ever-present mountains and wondered what awful secrets they guarded within." - Violeta Morales. Right: ¿Dónde Están? Where are they? Families placed black & white photos of missing loved ones on placards to attest their lives to the government who denied their existence.

Isabel Allende, 2008: "the arpilleras are storytellers, for it is through them that these women have recorded and preserved the memory of a period of Chilean history that many others have chosen to forget."

The Arpilleristas worked late at night, to avoid arrest for subversive activities, and their work always remained anonymous. The women began to sell their Arpilleras to foreigners to smuggle out of Chile and share globally, to raise international awareness of the systematic human rights abuses under Pinochet's regime.

The Arpilleras represent the unrelenting bravery and determination of the women to resist the dictatorship, all the while serving to 'express their grief and anger' whilst 'immortalising their deceased, exiled or disappeared loved ones.' They serve to give an international voice to those whose words could never be spoken or written.

For me, Arpilleras are testament to the courage and strength of the Chilean women, to take a stand against a regime that had taken their loved ones and their 'normal' lives from them. This stresses, to me, the need for us, now, to take a stand and to criticise behaviour that appalls our moral judgement and destroys the virtues will hold dearest. Across the world there are numerous human rights abuses, in a country of security, free from persecution, what are we doing to take a stand?

Mireya Rivera Veliz, 1996: "...the arpilleras were a special way to interpret my pain and at the same time communicate it to others...a denouncement...my protest through the arpilleras has been silent, strong, desperate, full of unending tears. I can't count the long nights I spent making arpilleras and soaked the cloth because I was crying so much."

What's on at The Abbey?

History Club

"Every Tuesday at 12:25 in F2, the History Prefects invite you to the Lower School History Club! Our weekly feasts rival those of Henry VIII and our Horrible Histories screenings are a perfect way to relax in your lunchtime - there is something for everyone. But History Club is more than just fun and food- it's a vibrant space for anyone with a passion for the past to share ideas, dive into debates, and work together on creative projects. We pride ourselves on being enthusiastic, and take real joy in collaborative tasks. Since September, it's been incredible to see our community thrive and grow. Whether you're seeking homework help, engaging discussions, or just a good time, there's a place for you. Let's make history!"

- Lilia and Maria - your History Prefects

Chalke - Valley History festival

"The Chalke-Valley History festival has been one of the highlights of my Sixth Form experience, attending talks ranging from the French Revolution and religion to 'Wizzo's Rip Roaring History' (a historical circus show) and even a falcon show! It was a fabulous day that pushed my historical curiosity and opened so many new avenues of research I had not previously considered. I attended a talk called 'Tudor Women and Misogyny' and was so interested by the topics discussed that I spoke to the professor afterwards and was even given the opportunity to email her and discuss her ideas further. It is the perfect day full of food, fun and history and very much is 'Glastonbury for History lovers!' "

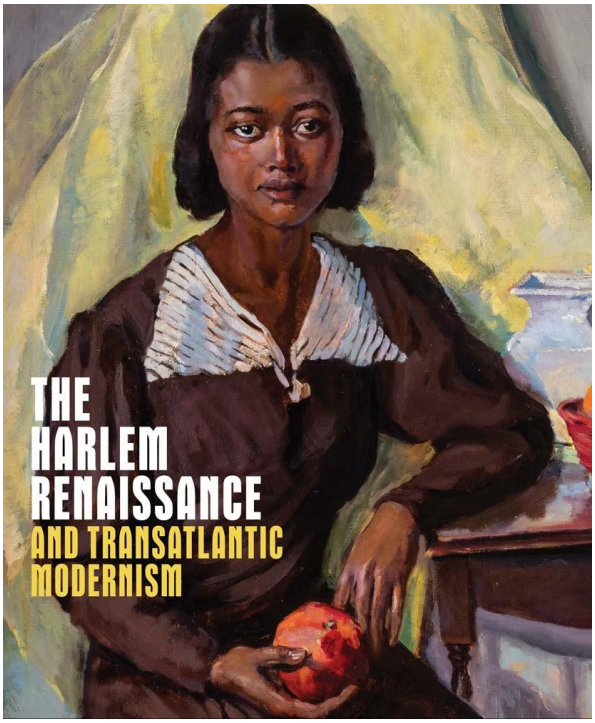
- Grace, Upper VI

Upper IV History trip to Belgium 2024

Harlem Renaissance

A movement challenging black American stereotypes

By Sophie, Upper VI



Empowerment: defined as becoming stronger and more confident, particularly in claiming one's rights. This ensures for a more equal society where citizens are respected within their communities.

The creative arts encompassing; literature, music and visual art, have been instrumental in empowering voices and shaping social change. They have provided and will continue to provide a channel of expressing opinions, protests and calls for justice despite linguistic and cultural barriers. They have the power to inspire action collectively and communicate to all thanks to their subjectivity.

One example of this is the Harlem Renaissance spanning from the 1920s to 1930s, a movement that challenged Black American stereotypes. The movement began in Harlem, Manhattan, New York City and at the time was better known as the "New Negro Movement" named after the anthology New Negro edited in 1925 by Alain Locke. Black writers, musicians and artists portrayed their experiences through literature, music and art, meaning that the message was universally clear to society. This promoted social and racial integration and the movement was globalised by people of African heritage in other countries, particularly those in France. Many of these are considered classics today, one example being Zora Neale Hurston's 'Their Eyes Were Watching God'.

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Previously most African Americans had been enslaved and resided in the South until the end of the Civil War. Emancipated African Americans started pursuing political equality, economic and cultural self-determination, and civic engagement during the Reconstruction Era. African-American politicians began speaking about the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 shortly after the Civil War ended. With their increased civil empowerment, sixteen African Americans were elected, served in Congress, and made numerous speeches by 1875.

Moving forward the prejudices held against African-Americans may have remained but the discriminations occurring because of them were far fewer. It made many social elements, such as; education and healthcare, more accessible to people of all racial backgrounds. This helps us establish a clear connection between the empowering voice the arts give you and social liberation.

The impact of this movement redefined how America, and the world, viewed African-Americans, leading to more representation on an international stage. In a modern society, this was influential in African-Americans' cultural identity and empowerment through the arts. They continue to shape history through contemporary movements such as Afrofuturism, further inspiring action and change.

The Suffragists

Empowering women to take control of their rights and voices

By Jemimah, Lower VI

In 1918 women won the vote in England.

This came after a period of marches, protests and violence which led the government to introduce **The Representation of the People Act** that allowed women over 30 years to vote. Over the next few years the age would be lowered allowing more women to have the freedom to choose who represented their views in parliament.

When looking back on this historic time many people's minds immediately go to the Suffragettes known for their hunger strikes and leader Emmeline Pankhurst. Not many would be equally aware of another group called the Suffragists who also campaigned for women's rights at the time.

Established prior to the Suffragettes in the 1860s, they originated from local groups, becoming the official National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in 1897. Their aim was to achieve the vote through peaceful means. The president of NUWSS, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, believed that the best way to make change was to prove that women were respectable enough to take part in politics. She was a great leader for the group because of her own political connections e.g her husband was an MP, as well as the fact she was able to watch debates in the House of Commons. This allowed her to be a competent leader for the Suffragists, who understood the best way forward to reach their goal.

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The main methods of campaigning by the Suffragists was through speeches, petitions and persuading MPs. They even held dinner parties at which they discussed their ideas. The group adopted the colours of Green, White and Red which were symbolic as they stood for **Give Women Rights**. When the Suffragettes split from the Suffragists in 1903 they selected Green, White and Violet instead, meaning **Give Women Votes**. A key difference between the two groups was the Suffragists were mainly made up of middle class women whereas the Suffragettes were focused on women in the working class. However, the acts of arson and violence committed by the Suffragettes around 1912 were actually organised by the middle and upper class women within the group. This shows a turning point when the movement moved away from its initial focus on the lower classes.

The Suffragists had always wanted a peaceful movement and tension grew between them and the Suffragettes. In the eye of the public there was no distinction between the two groups, so to remedy this, 50,000 members of the Suffragists met in 1913 for a march. This showed that they were not Suffragettes and they did not agree with the way they were behaving. Unfortunately, during the war both movements stopped as women began working in factories to make up for the fact men were away fighting the war.

In the end both groups were significant in winning the vote. Although it could be argued that the Suffragettes were more vital as their actions were more notable (from the hunger strikes, to women throwing themselves in front of the Prime Minister's car and bombing government buildings). The initial forming of the group is considered to be inspired by the Suffragists.

As I am writing this the news of the US presidential election polls are being counted and Donald Trump has won. This is a huge step backwards for women's rights in America and I know that many people across the world are anxious as to what the repercussions of this could be. There could potentially be 168.6 million women who have lost their reproductive rights. Unfortunately this shows how we still need groups like the Suffragists and women like Millicent Garrett Fawcett who are able to stand for what they believe in, in whatever way they can in order for women to be equal to men in society. I hope that the results of the election are not a reason for women to shrink back from their truth but rather for them to be empowered to continue to fight for their rights just as the women in the early 20th century in Britain did to win the vote.

Winston Churchill

A legendary figure throughout the years

By Margaret, Upper III

Early Life:
On the 30th of November, 1874 a young boy was born, little did we know then that he would become the legendary man who led Britain to victory in the Second World War - Winston Churchill. He was born at his family's ancestral home Blenheim Palace, fit for the marvellous life he proceeded to live. From a young age, he was recognized for being good at writing and having leadership qualities, as well as gaining a passion for painting earlier on in his life.

Churchill's schooling was done at various institutions such as St George's in Ascot, followed by Brunswick School in Hove and lastly Harrow School, at age 13. He then went to the Royal Military School in Sandhurst.

Work Life:
With a history in politics as Home Secretary (1910-1911) and Chancellor of Exchequer (1924–1929) he took over from Chamberlain becoming Prime Minister in 1940. His perhaps most commendable act during his 5 year leadership (as mentioned previously) was saving Britain from defeat against the Germans, guiding the people towards victory. Unfortunately when he ran again for Prime Minister, he was defeated by Clement Attlee but went on to serve as the Leader of Opposition for six years afterwards.

During World War II, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin became known as 'the big three'. Each one of them had experience and knowledge, a strong base of mental power and strength to back them up, as well as an ongoing sense to show the world how freedom feels.

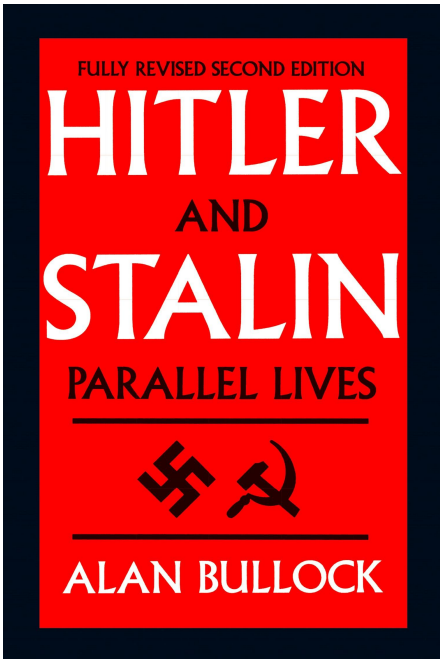
After providing services in the Mahdist War and the Second Boer War, he started to attract attention as a war correspondent. He ventured out to work with representatives of the media as well as writing multiple novels. Even though some of them weren't always successful, he taught people how to take risks and enjoy life to the fullest.

In 1950, he again ran for Prime Minister and once more got defeated, only to be invited back into the office one year later. During his reign, he won a Nobel Prize in literature in1953, as well as 37 other awards, including the Distinguished Service Medal - awarded to soldiers who have provided service exceptionally well for the government, and the Military Medal - awarded for outstanding achievements on the field. He began the Education Act in 1944, and raised the school leavers age to 14, as well as introducing the 11+.

Last moments:
Winston Churchill was not only a soldier and a part-time journalist, he was a role model and an inspirational statesman. His mindset throughout the war changed people's perspective and allowed them to think of new strategies. It is true that waking up and planning a new strategy for something is hard, deciding how to change a whole revolution of ideas is even harder, but preparing to make history in one day, well, that's impossible - or so we thought...

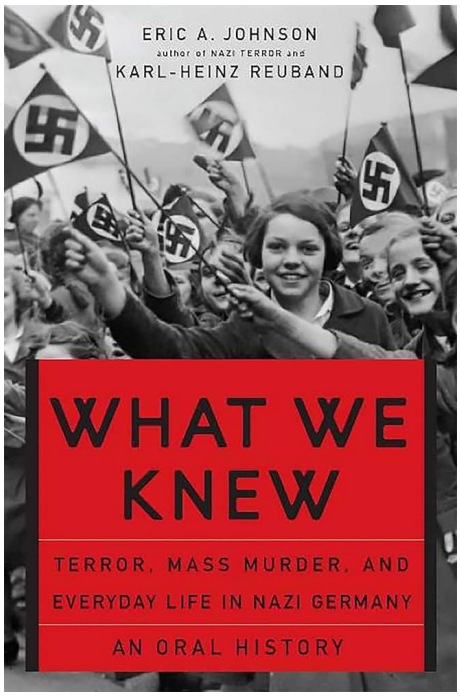
Churchill died on Sunday the 24th January 1965 at 28 Hyde Park Gate, following a stroke earlier that morning, with a history of a total of eight strokes, as well as pneumonia his health had become increasingly worse.

Book Recommendations



Title and Author: Hitler and Stalin - Parallel Lives by Alan Bullock
Summary: Bullock switches between chapters on Stalin and Hitler, as the title suggests. He shows how each dictator used cunning, deceit, and opportunism to seize power and establish totalitarian governments that aimed to eradicate the human spirit and a significant portion of people worldwide.
Opinion: Highly recommended for those interested in this area of history
Recommended Age: 13+

Title and Author: What We Knew by Eric Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband
Summary: 3,000 Germans and 500 German Jews describe their daily lives under the Nazis in this amazing personal chronicle of the Third Reich. They talk about their encounters with the Gestapo and their knowledge of the mass killings of Jews during the time. Even at this distance from the war, their words are often shocking, heartbreaking, and tragic.
Opinion: It deals of course with slightly darker topics, but goes into a great detail and is especially helpful for the GCSE curriculum.
Recommended age: 14/15+



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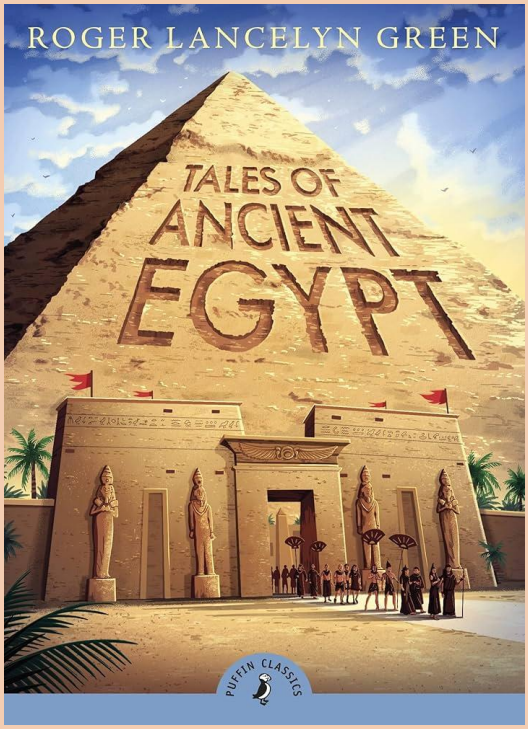

Title and Author: Tales of Ancient Egypt by Roger Lancelyn Green
Summary: Discover the great myths and legends of the Sun God, Amen-Ra; the romance between Osiris and Isis; the curse of the book of Thoth; and numerous other fascinating tales of magic, treasure, and adventure from one of the world's oldest and most fascinating civilisations by travelling back in time to Ancient Egypt.
Opinions: Little volume is excellent for gaining an introductory insight into Egyptian mythology. However it would be a good idea to have a map of Egypt to help visualise the content.
Recommended age: 11+

Title and Author: I Must Betray You by Ruta Sepetys
Summary: I Must Betray You is a gripping and engrossing young adult novel that centres on seventeen-year-old Cristian Florescu, who aspires to be a writer and is based closely on the actual events of the Romanian Revolution of 1989. In a nation ruled by fear and isolation under Nicolae Ceaușescu's ruthless tyranny, Cristian is forced to make unthinkable choices after being manipulated into becoming an informant by the secret police.
Opinion: This book is powerful and haunting, giving justice to a story which is often forgotten. It engrosses you from the first page, keeping you absorbed until the end through the details regarding the cruelty of Ceaușescu's dictatorship.
Recommended age: 13+