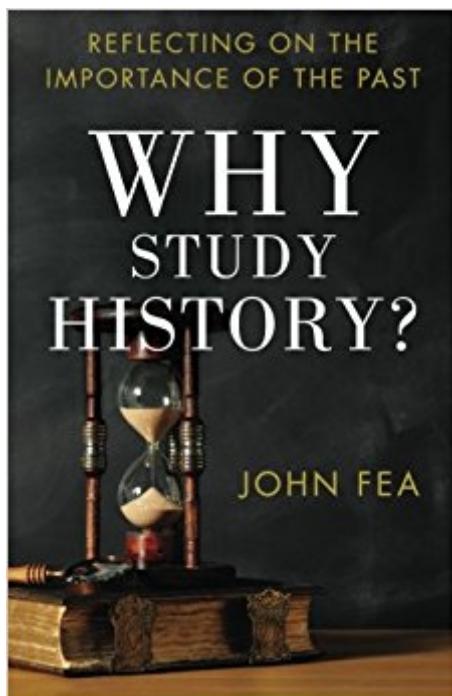


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# Why Study History?: Reflecting On The Importance Of The Past



## **Synopsis**

Shows why Christians should study history, how faith impacts our understanding of the past, and how studying the past can transform our lives.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

What is the purpose of studying history? John Fea shows how reflecting on contemporary life from a historical perspective helps us better understand ourselves, the world around us, and the God we worship and serve."John Fea is quickly becoming one of the most important voices in the up-and-coming generation of Christian historians. His reflections on the study of history brim with scholarly insight, age-old Christian wisdom, and practical advice. This book will be a great conversation starter in a wide array of Christian college classrooms."--Douglas A. Sweeney, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School"John Fea's Why Study History? performs a tremendous service for all students, teachers, and readers of history. His provocative, entertaining approach raises all the right questions about the historical vocation."--Thomas S. Kidd, Baylor University"John Fea's love of his craft is infectious and his knowledge of it inspiring. Serious readers of Why Study History? will find their own love and knowledge of history deepened in satisfying and fruitful ways. We are fortunate to have such a gifted public scholar in our midst."--Eric Miller, Geneva College; author of Hope in a Scattering Time: A Life of Christopher Lasch"John Fea has written a splendid, engaging book at once erudite and accessible. Anyone interested in the craft of the historian or the relationship between historical inquiry and the life of faith stands to benefit from having this volume

within reach."--Thomas Albert Howard, director, Center for Faith and Inquiry, Gordon College"Professor Fea's scholarly integrity and theological insight ensure that *Why Study History?* will generate many hours of lively discussion on the relationship between Christian faith and the study of history. Fea challenges both the careless discourse that passes for historical inquiry among many Christian groups and the conventional norms of the discipline he clearly adores. Those seeking greater clarity regarding the intrinsic value of historical study and its proper appropriation would be hard pressed to find a more valuable resource than *Why Study History?*"--Arlin C. Migliazzo, Whitworth University; editor of *Teaching as an Act of Faith*

John Fea (PhD, State University of New York at Stony Brook) is associate professor of American history and chair of the history department at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* an

Why it is important to study history may be the most difficult question a history teacher faces every semester. To the teacher it is obvious, yet trying to prove why is not so easy, especially when you have to convince a roomful of students that history has a purpose beyond taking up their time. John Fea, history department chair at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania answers the question with this well thought out exploration of the reasons why history is so important and worthy of study by all people. John is no stranger to discussing this subject. He has operated his blog, *The Way of Improvement Leads Home* at [philipvickersfithian.com](http://philipvickersfithian.com) for several years and has been talking about the importance of history every day for his audience. In fact, his blog seems to have helped him articulate about the subject so much that he was able to take what he had learned from it and put it in a book. The result is a very compact, extremely thoughtful, and amazingly deep look at why history is important to everyone. No one reading this should be surprised to understand we live in the middle of a large culture war where the events of the past are used in many ways, mostly incorrectly, in order for people or groups to present their opinions and beliefs to the public. John does not shy away from this fact. He uses it to its utmost effect in demonstrating just why the public should know their history. He gives several examples of people who try to pass themselves off as historians who then deliberately distort history in presenting their own beliefs. Fea doesn't shy from naming the worst offenders either which makes the statements he delivers ring home. David Barton and Glenn Beck are presented exactly as they are, individuals who are mangling history to give legitimacy to their ideologies and beliefs. Fea is a devout Christian teaching at a Christian college. He does not shy away from making that announcement either. The

fact that Fea is calling out other Christians for their lies establishes Fea as a man who believes the means have to justify the end. As a historian, Fea recognizes the importance of truth in any message, truth which is extremely important in any religion if anyone expects faith to be anything but shallow. He explores this in the book and explains why historical accuracy is critical for evangelical faiths. Fea isn't calling on a liberal interpretation of history either. He constantly points out the importance of truth and accuracy for all historians as well as anyone who seeks to use history in explaining their beliefs and opinions. This book is written for students taking their first history courses, but it has a great deal of meaning for anyone and any historian. It is usable at all levels of academia as well which should be refreshing for graduate students who are in historiography courses grappling with the question of why history is important. Each chapter explores a facet of historical study and does so in a clear and rational manner. Chapter Six, History for a Civil Society, is a very moving chapter. John lays out the importance history has for everyone in American society. He follows that with Chapter Seven, The Power to Transform. These chapters form a one-two punch that literally crushes those that would distort the past to their own ends. In the process, John answers why history is so important. He uses examples of actual students who struggled with the questions history presented to them and how they let the facts speak for themselves. The truth revealed by the facts allowed the students to make decisions based upon the facts which in turn deepened their appreciation of the past and allowed them to see things through a different lens. Instead of manipulating the past to reach a desired outcome that fit in with their beliefs, these students learned that the people of the past did things for their reasons, expectations, and beliefs which are in many ways incompatible with ours today. The results made the students look at themselves as well. The realization that they were as flawed as the people of the past were was a maturing process. All in all, as an instructor who teaches the beginning American History survey courses, I found this book to be an outstanding resource. Fea's sources are cited throughout the book. He cites historians and educators and their works which have had an impact on him. This is a valuable resource for instructors seeking to explain why the study of history is so important to their students. Considering the fact that we live in a culture war where history is used to mislead people for many reasons, accurate historical knowledge helps arm people against those that would mislead the public for their own gain. I would be quite happy to make this required reading in my courses.

John Fea has put together a sound rationale for Christian history teachers to adopt the current understanding of what the writing of history entails. While a good number of Christian

teachers--especially in Christian schools--are heavy into TRUTH, mostly, they are about justifying their truth. Fea urges us to understand our biases, to use the methods of historians, and not be afraid of the truths that might emerge. He sets this up as fitting well within Christian values. I'm convinced and I bought copies to give to Christians I know who teach history. I only wish I had had this wisdom when I was a new teacher.

I'm an American historian, and I have been searching for a book like this. History is much more than memorizing dates and events, which is the experience of most citizens who have been through the school system. John Fea lays out not only why History rocks but also what skills and experiences studying the discipline bring. Fea writes convincingly for the average reader. I recommend this book highly to historians and non-historians alike.

Wonderful !!!!!

Good

Book was spot on and so was shipping

Has been a great book. I am reading it to my History Classes.

No issues

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