

How to Cure the Misconception of History and Historiography (MHH)

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Assessing the Symptoms



- 1** Question the patient (student) of his/her understandings of MHH. This

disease is relentless in society, and the only way for a doctor (historian) to create a cure is to try and gain an understanding of a patient's symptoms. Sometimes, a patient won't even be aware that they have MHH until it is too late, and they are left feeling confused and as if everything that they have known previously is incorrect.

Symptoms can include:

- A faulty base knowledge of what history is
- Thinking that the “who, what, where, and when” is always more important than the “why” in history
- Confusing/not being able to differentiate between studying history and doing history
- Spreading false knowledge



2 **Ask for their definition of history.** Depending on who you ask, whether it be a student or a teacher or someone else, their definition of MHH could greatly vary. This is due to the misunderstandings and connotations that surround the term “history” and additionally, what it means to “study history”. For the most part of their school careers, students are simply taught how to study and memorize facts of history, instead of actively “doing” history and participating in it. They are taught that there are set facts and definite answers in history, w that is actually not the case due to varying historical perspectives (something that seems true from one point of view can be seen as false from another).



3 **Ask for their definition of historiography.** Education does not do the best job of acknowledging this study. Therefore, most people do not have a good understanding of what “historiography” actually means. People might guess that it has to do with the geography of certain places in history; however, that is not the denotation of the word.

Curing the Sickness



1 **Teach the meaning of history.** MHH has many symptoms, a large contributor

being the misunderstanding of the definition of history. The misinterpretation of not only history but the meaning as well, makes it imperative that the patient is made aware of its true denotation in order to begin the healing process.

What exactly is history? The answer is simple. History is the study of past events, however simply just knowing the definition will not cure the patient at all. One must

know how to apply this definition to eventually get out of just studying or knowing different material about history, but doing it as well.



2 Explain the process of “doing” history. The doctors (historians) not only “study” history, but they also “do” history to prevent the spread of MHH. Effortlessly,

these doctors create arguments based on their understandings of past events, and create questions pertaining to the past. The biggest questions start with “why”; therefore, this is the most important kind of question that should be asked when “doing” history. It is important to consider the following items when examining an event.

- What opportunity was given to allow this event to occur?
- What ability was given to do this event?
- What motivation was given to inspire this event?



3 **Teach the meaning of historiography.** The meaning of historiography is the study of historical arguments and how those arguments have changed over time. Historiography is the writing of primary sources therefore making it the secondary source.

Preventing MHH in the Future



1 **Suggest credible sources for the future.** The strongest way to exterminate this disease is to prepare for what is ahead. With great caution, search for evidence that is considered to be a primary source to gain more credible information. Other historians and professors would also make a great source for prevention against MHH. Making sure to cite evidence is also extremely important, so one can give credit to the cure of their sickness.



2 **Provide steps for analyzing historical texts.** When choosing a historical text to examine critically, it is of importance to consider its credibility and usage based on:

- The perspective of the author
- The reliability of the author
- Their relation to the event

- The subject of the book



3 Explain the essence of creating a thesis. In order to have a well-written

history paper, you need to create a quality thesis statement to base your writing around. The most important thing is to make a clear and concise argument. Without an argument, your paper isn't truly accomplishing anything and thus is useless.

Filtering through your sources is also a key step in narrowing down the idea of your thesis and saying what it actually is that you wish to say.