

Introduction

The desire to understand the world and the desire to reform it are the two great engines of progress without which human society would stand still or retrogress.

—Bertrand Russell

The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order.

—Anonymous

The ancient classical and medieval roots of humanity have been explored in *World History, Book 1*. Upon these foundations develop both greater refinement and various deviations. Societal sophistication allows for the furthering of intellectual, artistic, economic, religious, and political changes which sometimes partially mimic, but more often play as counterpoints to, the traditionally accepted norms and procedures. It is in this process of growth and change that conflict finds an encouraging medium.

Book 2 of this World History series is thus concerned with renaissances, reformations—both religious and political—and revolutions. These are the fruits of change, generated from the clash between new ideas and the old. These are the historical necessities in the unremitting path of progress toward achieving a better life. Globally, they produce periods of greatness and of decay, times of expansion and of contraction, moments of heaven and of hell. To borrow a phrase, “They were the best of times, they were the worst of times.”

Conflicts in thoughts and in systems lead people to choices, which eventually propel even the most lethargic toward a new conceptualization of humankind and its place in the universe. From this time period marked by renaissances, reformations, and revolutions comes the initiative to progress and take giant strides toward the establishment of the modern era.

Basic Assumptions

1. History is an evolutionary process. To appreciate that process, we need to examine how and why changes occur.
2. History is composed of recurring themes. To understand the place these themes have in the present, we must analyze them and draw conclusions about them.
3. History is people living life with all its problems and successes, and preserving in written form for posterity the results of this living. We want to explore these results to make our heritage a vital part of us.
4. History is a discipline requiring certain skills of reading, writing, mapping, and thinking, including analysis and synthesis. We provide practice leading toward mastery in each of the skill areas.

General Objectives

1. To give students a conceptual knowledge of history
2. To enable students to read and to digest factual information independently in order to allow class time for higher-level thinking skills
3. To guide students in studying history and in drawing conclusions about it
4. To foster an understanding of personal values and their relationship to history
5. To enable students to communicate their ideas clearly to others
6. To provide a global experience in examining historical development and problem solving