

I volunteer At Newcastle Castle: I feel close to the past when I see graffiti dating back centuries alongside 21st century examples: this demonstrates that the desire to 'make our mark' is nothing new, and that our ancestors are more like us than we imagine. Are these displays done on a whim or a desire to carve a place in history? Do humans have a sense of satisfaction from creating their own visible memorials? The nature of human motivation, and the extent of continuity through time are themes which university level History will give me the opportunity and independence to explore.

At the castle my colleagues are all students of history, creating a lively atmosphere of debate that forces me to think quickly and engage with new concepts. Whether carrying leeches for a workshop on medieval medicine or putting people in the stocks, I am learning constantly about the way our ancestors lived.

"Leisure in the Industrial Revolution" by Hugh Cunningham made me consider the impact of industrialisation on my local area. I am attending a lecture on the decline of our local shipbuilding industry, not only because it directly impacted my family but also because I want to understand the wider implications for the area then and now. In the debate over leisure in the industrial period I oppose the pessimists' idea that there was a "vacuum" in leisure (a view held by R.W. Malcolmson). There is evidence of development in leisure – local examples include the emergence of "The Hoppings" (a fair), and debating societies in mining communities. A discussion on women's liberation inspired me to research the Women's Social and Political Union and their contribution to female suffrage. Pankhurst and Davison are famous names, but how accurate is their narrative? Through analysing primary sources such as newspaper articles and letters, I have discovered other people whose contribution to the campaign is undocumented, inspiring me to challenge the traditional story.

History to me is about gaining an insight into people's daily lives – their interactions and emotions - it helps us explore change and continuity in attitudes and behaviours. Monumental historical events are interesting enough, but their impact on individuals is what truly allows us to understand their significance. On a visit to Berlin and Krakow. I met with holocaust survivor Lydia Maksymowicz who showed me how effective one voice can be. This first-hand testimony of this devastating episode made me appreciate the long-lasting effects of this on the individual. This meeting raised the question of whether we have a duty to remember - a topic that led me to participate in a summer school based around 'History and Memory.' The programme theme, around the concept of physical reminders of history is topical, given current debate over whether we should remove statues commemorating controversial historical figures. Do we have a duty to remember or are some things best forgotten? This introduces the idea of historical relativism – were actions that we now consider amoral perfectly acceptable at the time? My Spanish studies have developed my critical thinking skills, evaluating controversial issues such as Basque Nationalism and gaining a greater appreciation for the historical and cultural perspectives of the Spanish regions. Playing in two orchestras, I enjoy an eclectic range of music, from pop to baroque. This exposes me to music from a variety of eras, another way to explore the past –for example, the audible differences between a minuet and a country jig are symbolic of the restrictions of societal sectors. Studying history will improve my understanding of the world around me, so that I can use examples from our past to make informed choices with an idea of the consequences. University is where I will deepen my understanding, and interaction with independent thinkers will inspire me to delve deeper into my areas of interest.