

# The essay question

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



“ The comedy in *The History Boys* centres around the opposition created between the two teachers, Hector and Irwin. ” What is the significance of Bennett’s use of opposition? The book ‘ *The History Boys*’ provides opposition between the two teachers Hector and Irwin. These two characters are presented by Bennett to show the audience the difference in the teaching of both characters. Hector is described on page four as ‘ a man of studied eccentricity. He wears a bow tie.’ By this, we get a first impression that Hector makes effort for how he dresses as we could say he dresses to impress. On the other hand, we have someone like Irwin. Irwin in the book is presented as ‘ Irwin is a young man, about twenty-five or so’. By this, as readers of the book, we sense that Hector’s traditional teaching style contrasts to Irwin’s methods of turning questions on its head. Firstly, now that we know a bit of information about Hector, we then know that the way that Hector teaches the boys is more practical, this meaning that he does not teach from things such as books, instead he does things such as role plays in French. Hector believes that the boys should “ You believe in God. Believe also in me: forget Oxford and Cambridge. ” Bennett uses things like these to show the significance in teaching but also the significance of belief. The belief being you can be happy wherever you go. Hector also shows that he has a special bond with the students by showing that when he hits them, they know he is more comfortable with them. In contrast to Irwin; Irwin is the type of teacher who will say what’s on his mind, for example on page nineteen, Irwin suggests things such as “ Has anybody been to Rome? No? Well, you will be competing with boys and girls who have. ” However, he then says “ But I wouldn’t waste the money. Judging by these, there is no

point. Go to Newcastle and be happy. " This emphasises that competition is fierce and that it will be harder to go where themselves or their parents want them to go, however, I can see that there is a comparison between Hector and Irwin because they both want to send the students somewhere they can be happy. On the other hand, in the book, we know that Hector teaches French to the pupils whereas Irwin wants to teach the boys work. I believe that Alan Bennett was smart when writing ' The History Boys' as he used the significance of opposition to do things such as let the audience sympathise over Hector and to feel sorry for him, whereas he created for the audience to admire Irwin more as he motivates the students more than Hector does. Bennett does things such as old vs. new, experienced vs. inexperienced. Serious vs. silly, traditional vs. unconventional. Bennett uses this to compares Hector as an old, experienced, silly/childish and is unconventional. Bennett is doing so to show the audience that he is probably giving up because of his old age; he may have passed students in the past that wanted to go Cambridge/Oxford but didn't get in. Bennett is trying to show people that if you dislike the old, for example Hector, you will more and more want the new in this case Irwin. The start of this could be by Irwin's mission to let the eight students go to the most elite universities in London, whereas Hector questions the use of why they want to go to these top universities. The significance of Bennett's use of opposition is to show the audience that the new people may be more motivated and that the old may not be.