

Major paper



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The Case for Early American History and Literature The purpose of this paper, is to share with you all of the benefits that I have reaped from taking classes on Early American history and literature. You may be wondering how a class which focuses on historical events such as the Salem witch trials and the Revolutionary War, can have any relevance today. To be honest, I felt the same way before the classes began. Once I realized that historical events such as the Salem Witch Trials, are crucial for us to understand and learn from, so that they never happen again. It is hard to believe that there was ever a time where it was acceptable to burn women alive based on random allegations that they were witches; but that is exactly what happened. It all began with a group of girls who were exhibiting strange behavior. When doctors were unable to explain their behavior, the people of Salem began to panic and quickly assumed their behavior to be indicative of the devil's presence. This small town's hysteria resulted in the deaths of dozens of individuals. Sadly, many formal accounts of history have not even kept thorough record of all those who died, having been sentenced by the courts of the times to mostly, cruel and unusual forms of execution.

This is but one recount of important, historical events which can teach us today; how not to repeat our mistakes. American literature which I have covered in my recent literature class, proved to be much more exciting and engrossing than I could have ever imagined! I recently read Edgar Allen Poe's The Cask of Amontillado which is a gothic, fictional classic! Incidentally, the short work by Poe is not lengthy at all, it was actually a quick read and therefore got straight to the point. Poe's works are classic examples of an author who depicts a strong sense of duality throughout his works. There is always the normal or the protagonist if you will, in Poe's work; foiled against

the dark side represented usually by either the same character or a very similar character. Poe is genius at illustrating the good and evil lingering in everyone.

Similarly, I found the reading of Rip Van Winkle by Washington Irving to be nothing short of brilliant! The fairytale styling of the work is entirely fictional but at the end, one can derive the ‘take home message’ that our past does come back to haunt us. This is exactly why Early American history was so educational for me, as I realized that even today, the facts of the past help to inform us as to what can occur when costly mistakes and misjudgments are made. There are so many issues to be covered such as women’s rights, race relations and really, human rights in general. Our history is not just the history of those who lived hundreds of years ago. It is the history of everyone who has ever lived and who lives now. We evolve as a species because we are able to learn from our mistakes and thus correct them so that the future can be bettered for it.

It may seem at a glance, that taking classes such as history and literature, are simply something that one must do to get by in school. But in reality, these classes have helped me immensely, to understand the depth of not only human suffering but the extent to which we can improve when we have information in which to improve upon. The details of the Revolutionary War, The Salem Witch Trials and fictional literature with meaning; serves to help us better ourselves not only as human beings but as a whole. I sincerely hope that you will take the argument that I have made in favor of these two classes, to heart such that you will strongly consider taking them in hopes of bettering yourself and contributing to mankind.