

# Historical words

[History](#)



Identification and Historical Significance of Important Events Michel Montaigne

Identification: He was an influential in France in the 1500s. He had the ability to blend serious national matters with normal every-day analogies that made him present issues of national importance to ordinary citizens and through that, could question events related to the oppression of the French ruling class over the commoners.

Significance: His writings questioned the absolute powers of the French monarchy and ruling elite. He presented his matters skeptically in a way that made sense. His quotes and concepts were important tools that were used in the French Revolution two hundred years after his death.

Defenestration of Prague

Identification: Defenestration refers to the throwing of officials through the windows of their offices in protest to their decisions. In 1618, a similar incident happened in Prague again when the Catholic Church backed the installment of one of their members as Duke of Styria. On 23rd May, 1619, protestors, led by a Protestant group that opposed the Dukes installation entered the Prague Castle and threw four regents and the secretary out through the windows of the castle.

Significance: This led to the 30 Years War that was fought throughout Europe by various Protestants and Catholic factions.

L'état, c'est moi

Identification: This refers to a statement attributed to King Louis XIV (1638 – 1715). It means “ I am the State”

Significance: It explains the absolutism and the unquestionable powers the the French monarchy had in those times. This laid the foundation for a dynasty that was not accountable to anyone and this resulted in a rule that

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caused hardships for the masses until they rebelled and started the French Revolution which led to the killing and abolition of the French monarchy at the end of the 18th Century.

### Ignatius of Loyola

Identification: A Basque noble and military knight who lived between 1491 and 1556. He converted to serious Catholicism after he was wounded in a battle and took an oath to defend the Catholic faith through all means possible.

Significance: Ignatius formed the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) which sought to evangelize and promote Roman Catholicism throughout the world. This was to counter the Protestant Reformation and it succeeded in becoming a major apostolic wing of the Catholic church that helped spread the Faith to other parts of the world in later years.

### Margaret Cavendish

Identification: She was the Duchess of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne and lived between 1623 and 1673. She was a writer and scientist which was very uncommon for women at the time she lived.

Significance: Margaret Cavendish wrote about various subjects relating to politics, gender balance and scientific methods. Her writings helped to promote objective thinking and this supported the renaissance and enlightenment throughout Europe.

### “ The Peasant Wedding”

Identification: This is an artwork painted in 1567 by Pieter Brueghel. It describes the woes of the peasant life in his own time.

Significance: The painting tells the story of the hardships that poor peasants

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had to go through in his part of Europe. It shows the need for massive enlightenment amongst the poor in Europe and sparked the Flemish renaissance which was a part of the renaissance in the broader European setting.

#### Treaty of Westphalia

Identification: The Treaty of Westphalia was a series of peace treaties signed between May and October 1648 by the Protestants and Catholics at Osnabruch and Munster in present day Germany.

Significance: The treaty ended the 30 Years War between the Protestants and Catholics that was sparked by the Defenestrations of Prague. It also caused the Catholics to recognize the sovereignty of some city states that were predominantly Protestants a trend that did not exist prior to that period.

#### “ Essay concerning Human Understanding”

Identification: This is a series of essays written by John Locke and became public in 1690. It examines the foundations of human understanding and knowledge and questions subjective and metaphysical forms of knowledge in favor of proven methods.

Significance: At the time of the release, most people in Europe were living according to the dictates of metaphysical laws and the explanation of events were shrouded in mysticism and the doctrine put forward by the Church.

John Lockes essays promote the need for empirical or scientific analysis of issues and this became an important aspect of the Renaissance across Europe.

#### Encomienda system

Identification: This was a system used by the Spanish monarchy and other  
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Southern European states to rule the Native Americans and colonize the Americas and it started in 1503. It involved the Spanish king granting rights to Spanish soldiers and officials to protect and Westernize of a number of friendly natives in return for tributes from these subjects.

Significance: It marked a trend of teaching Native Americans Spanish and converting them to Catholicism. Eventually, this system of forming alliances with natives in the Americas, Africa and Asia, protecting them from enemy tribes, converting them to Christianity and colonizing them became the practice of all other European nations.

Prince Henry the Navigator

Identification: He was a Portuguese royal who lived between 1394 and 1460 who developed the first major European sea exploration system and maritime trade practices. He was given grants by the Portuguese state to fund research and voyages across Europe to other parts of the world.

Significance: Although Prince Henry and his crew could only sail to nearby territories in northwestern Africa, his principles of sailing and astronomy formed the basics for future European exploration work. This opened up Europe to the rest of the world and enabled Europeans to dominate the world with their superior systems developed during the renaissance.

Bastille

Identification: A medieval French fortress that held prisoners in France.

Bastille was broken into on 14th July 1789 during the uprising against the monarchy in France and the prisoners were freed.

Significance: The events of Bastille on 14th July 1789 formed a symbol of defiance against the French monarchy and the ruling class. This made the revolution popular with the people of France and more people joined in the

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protests and violence that toppled the French Revolution and led to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.

“ Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen”

Identification: This was a major declaration of the Republicans during the French revolution on 26/27 August, 1789. It sought to define the rights of individuals and collective rights in society, something that was previously unheard of under the French monarchy.

Significance: This was the first step towards the establishment of a constitution in France. It recognized the rights of all people, both the rich and poor and set the foundation for the formation of a nation that valued justice and equality and this spread to other parts of Europe.

Peasants Rebellion

Identification: This was an uprising started by three men, John Ball, West Tyle and Jack Straw in England in 1381. It was aimed at beginning a revolution that would topple the ruling class in England and abolish serfdom.

Significance: Although the Rebellion was unsuccessful, it brought to light the evils of serfdom which was similar to slavery. It created an awareness amongst the upper class in England and they began to grant some more rights and equality to peasants which ultimately prevented any future revolutions and uprisings.

Heliocentrism

Identification: The belief that the earth is spherical and it rotates around the sun and it was proven by mathematician Nicolaus Copernicus in the 16th Century. This theory was in sharp contrast with geocentrism which taught people that the world was static and the sun and other planets revolved around it.

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**Significance:** The scientific proof of Copernicus led to a trend of relying on science and empiricism to prove mysteries about life. This triggered learning, research and the use of science in Europe that boosted the renaissance.

#### Deism

**Identification:** This is a belief that came with the renaissance in the 1600s that by observing natural trends, one can identify and understand the Creator of the universe. This principle sought to play down on the need for organized religion.

**Significance:** This was one of the break away views that led people to place more reliance on science rather than the Church or religion. It promoted reliance on empirical studies rather than the mysteries and metaphysics taught by religions.

#### Intendants,

**Identification:** They were civil servants, chosen by royals and members of the French ruling class to enforce the policies of the king in various units of France. They mainly handled finance, policies and legal matters for the king and this system was in place until the French Revolution.

**Significance:** They were hand-picked by royals and were not strictly supervised so they developed tendencies of corruption and sought their personal interest. They also did not communicate the realities of the suffering of the masses to the monarchical government so the efforts of the monarchical government failed on the ground and this angered the masses and triggered the French Revolution.

#### Treaty of Tordesillas

**Identification:** A treaty signed on 7th June, 1494 by Spain and Portugal which  
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divided the newly discovered lands through sea exploration amongst the two nations. The Spaniards were to take the Islands found in the West (present day Cuba and Hispaniola) whilst the Portuguese were to take the Islands found in the East (Cape Verde).

Significance: This laid the foundation for future possession of newly discovered lands. It became the impetus for colonization and exploration of new lands by European nations around the world.

#### Committee of Public Safety

Identification: A provisional government of France that was set up after the French Revolution in April 1793 to act as an executive arm of government. It presided over the Reign of Terror which was an era that saw the execution of numerous pro-royalists accused of corruption.

Significance: The Committee ultimately sought to destroy the French monarchy and its remnants. It instituted a new constitution and this led to the establishment of a republic and the influence of this, spread through other parts of Europe.

#### Predestination

Identification: This is a popular belief that was held in Europe before the Renaissance that events are preordained and what will happen to a person is already determined by a Supernatural Force. This view is in contrast with freewill, which argues that an individual has the right to choose what will happen to him by the kind of actions he puts up.

Significance: Predestination was a popular belief in Europe before the Renaissance since people believed that some people were destined to be poor and others were destined to be privileged. It acted as a barrier to social classes until people began to apply empirical thinking and adapt to the



concept of freewill.

Encyclopedie

Identification: It is a sequential book that defined words relating to arts, sciences and crafts. It was published in France between 1751 and 1772.

Significance: It opened up knowledge to various people in the society. Due to this, it added up to knowledge and supported the Renaissance and enlightenment in Europe.

Bartolome De Las Casas

Identification: He was a Spanish historian, social reformer and clergyman who lived between 1484 and 1566. He lobbied for the abolition of the Encomienda system which forced American Indians to live like slaves and sought for better rights for these Native Americans.

Significance: Although his efforts failed to fully abolish slavery and the colonization of Native Americans, he was able to improve the legal rights of these Natives and a more humane approach to Spanish and European colonial policies.

Humanism.

Identification: It refers to the use of logic, ethics and justice to seek a better life in the society. It opposes religious dogma and promotes the use of fairness and justice in society.

Significance: It became an important part of the Renaissance as it was the basis for the criticism of the Catholic Church by the Protestants who believed the Catholics were not so humane. Later on, it became the tool of social reformers like De Las Casas to seek more humane treatments of people in society.