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What is a legacy?

Something to last.
Maya Lin’s confluence with the Columbia

Fact Is, Students Have Never Known History

June 19, 2011 - 6:54 PM PT

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All Things Considered.


The test called upon the students to identify the political, economic, or social developments of famous Americans like Lincoln, Jefferson. An article in The New York Times reports, "Only 1 had mastered enough history in their high school so that they could identify the work of Lincoln to this country.

That article was published April 4, 1943. But it's not.

In fact, it was, "US Students Remain Poor History Test," the headline on June 14. This news, a recent report finds, has had little effect on fourth graders who were proficient in history. They could identify Abraham Lincoln, for example, but less than half could identify why he was important.

But it's true what they say, history revisits itself.

2062: "Students, Especially 12th Graders, Do Poorly on History Tests."

But 12th Graders Know Little American History, Survey Says.

It's time to temper our alarm: education historian Diane Ravitch tells Weekend All Things Considered host Laura Sullivan, "And realize we're not a very historically minded country."

You can say that again. Newspapers do — every 15 years or so.

In 1935: "The Decline And Fall Of Teaching History."

In 1978: "Times Test of College Freshman Shows Knowledge of American History Limited."

In 1965: "Students Reveal Ignorance of U.S."

Ravitch herself wrote the 1985 account, in which she argued, as she still does today, that there was never a golden age of historical literacy.
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