

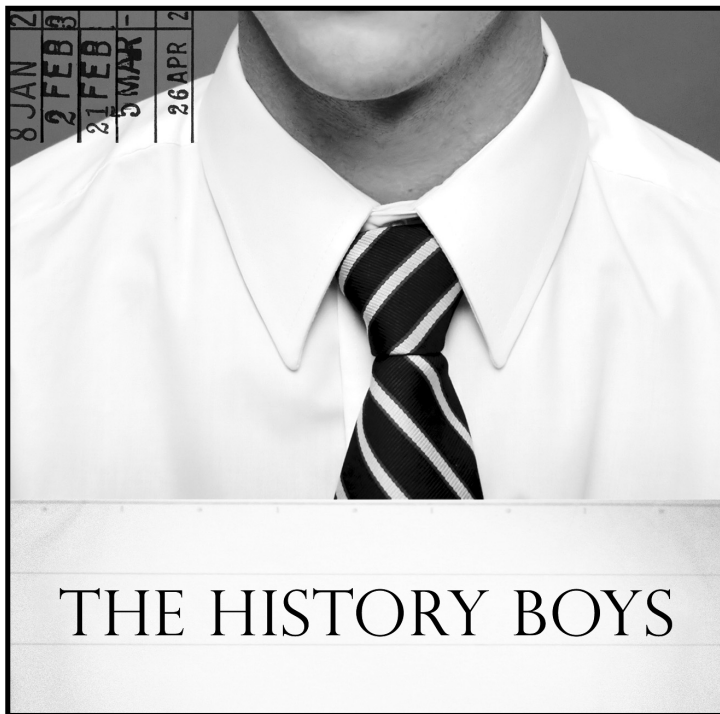
2007—2008 SEASON

# WU?@therep

## THE HISTORY BOYS by Alan Bennett

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# the 11

At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some

things are worth slowing down for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together **WU? @ THE REP**—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**FYI**), biographical information on the playwright (**F2F**), historical context (**B4U**), and other bits and pieces (**HTH**). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

## CU@therep!



### The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials more accessible to students and easier for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, [www.repstl.org](http://www.repstl.org), for additional information including educational games, activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information.

Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom. As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

**NEATO!**

Show Me Standards: CA 2, 3, 5, 6, 7; FA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; SS 2, 6 and Illinois Learning Standards: 1, 2, 5, 16, 18, 25, 27.

## MIHYAP: TOP TEN WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED AT THE REP

**10. TBA** Ushers will seat your school or class as a group, so even if you are dying to mingle with the group from the all girls school that just walked in the door, stick with your friends until you have been shown your section in the theatre.

**9. SITD** The house lights will dim immediately before the performance begins and then go dark. Fight off that oh-so-immature urge to whisper, giggle like a grade schooler, or yell at this time and during any other blackouts in the show.

**8. SED** Before the performance begins, turn off all cell phones, pagers, beepers and watch alarms. If you need to text, talk, or dial back during intermission, please make sure to click off before the show resumes.

**7. TMI** Not to sound like your mom, but "if you need to go now, you needed to go then." Leaving the theatre during the performance is disruptive, so take care of any personal needs before the show starts.

**6. RTM** When you arrive at the theatre, read the production program. It's like a deluxe version of liner notes and a free souvenir, all in one.

**5. P-ZA? NW!** Though your ability to eat ten slices at one sitting may impress your friends, no one wants to listen to you chew, slurp, or smack, so please leave all food, drink, and gum outside the theatre.

**4. TLK-2-U-L-8-R** We know that you will be dying to discuss what you see onstage with your friends, but please wait until intermission. Any talking—even whispering—is very distracting for both the actors onstage and the audience seated around you.

**3. LOL** Without you, we really wouldn't have a show. It's your job to laugh when a scene is funny or maybe even shed a tear or two in a tender moment. However, since you are not the audience at *The Jerry Springer Show* please refrain from inappropriate responses such as talking, whistling, making catcalls or singing along with the performers.

**2. SOP** While it's great that you want a celeb picture of your day at The Rep, the theatre is off-limits to the paparazzi. Flash photography interrupts the performance and along with videorecording is prohibited by Actors Equity rules. You can sneak a peek at production photos on our website, [www.repstl.org](http://www.repstl.org).

**1. LLTA** Let the actors know that you respect their work by remaining for the curtain call at the end of the performance. Show your appreciation through applause.

# A/S/L

Eccentric English teacher HECTOR wants the boys to learn about music, movies, literature and life—things he believes to be more important than facts and figures. His classes pursue the beauty of knowledge, which is not all that helpful when exam time comes.

Young, new teacher IRWIN is recruited to help the boys and the school look good on their exams. He teaches polish and flair and is not as concerned with the truth as with what sounds good.

MRS. LINTOTT is a traditional, by-the-book teacher whose methods have gotten the boys this far, but is told she is not enough to ensure their success.

THE HEADMASTER has only one concern—making himself and his school look good; he doesn't really seem to care much about the boys, just their scores.

Young, innocent POSNER enjoys singing and poetry; he wishes he was one of the gang but never seems to quite fit in.

DAKIN is the leader of the pack. He's smart and good looking, and he's not above using his physical appeal to his advantage.

A devout Christian, SCRIPPS is an aspiring writer, and often the voice of reason for the boys.

RUDGE seems to be an empty-headed jock, but he's gotten as far as the other boys and knows how to work the system as good as anyone.

AKTHAR, CROWTHER, TIMMS & LOCKWOOD round out the class and together they don't hold back in testing their teachers.

## READ MORE ABOUT IT



We encourage you to explore the following books, movies and websites for more information.

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

Find tips on how to take the ACT, descriptions of what the test entails and even sample questions and answers.

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

Review directions and approaches to the SAT or print and take a practice test as you prepare for the real thing.

[www.kaptest.com](http://www.kaptest.com)

On the Kaplan website you'll find out the differences between admissions exams and which is right for you. This website also has a college admissions planner

complete with a school tracker for your chosen college, tips for perfecting your essay and a thank-you letter generator.

***The History Boys*, 112 minutes, Twentieth Century Fox, 2007, DVD.** The original Tony Award-winning cast comes together again for this movie version.

**Bennett, Alan. *The History Boys: A Play*. Faber and Faber, 2006.** You've seen it, now read it and see if you notice any differences between the script and stage.

**Pulliam, John D. *History of Education in America*. Prentice Hall, Ninth Edition, 2006.** A comprehensive look at the history of American schooling from colonial times to present day.

**Beller, Susan Provost. *The History Puzzle: How We Know What We Know About the Past*. Twenty-first Century Books, 2006.** From the World Trade Center to the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald to King Arthur, look at historical events in order to see how they have been colored by tradition, socioeconomic factors and religious beliefs.



*THE HISTORY BOYS* begins in the present, with an aged Irwin addressing a few members of Parliament on the abolition of trial by jury. As his speech draws to a close, the action shifts back to the 1980s in a boys' school in the north of England. Students are returning to class in the fall to prepare for winter entrance examinations to universities. After scoring highly on their A-Levels, the students' sights are set on prestigious institutions, namely Oxford and Cambridge. Hector sets to preparing them this session with a General Studies course.

THE HEADMASTER, while convinced that this group of pupils is some of the brightest in years, does not believe that mere fact learning and retention will be enough. He believes that the boys need some extra "polish," and so he brings in Irwin to teach the boys how to succeed on the entrance examinations. Irwin's immediate assessment of the boys' work is that while there's nothing wrong with it, there's nothing interesting about it either. He tells the boys that their work will simply get lost in the shuffle of other entrance exams. He endeavors to enliven their work and help them stand out from the pack.

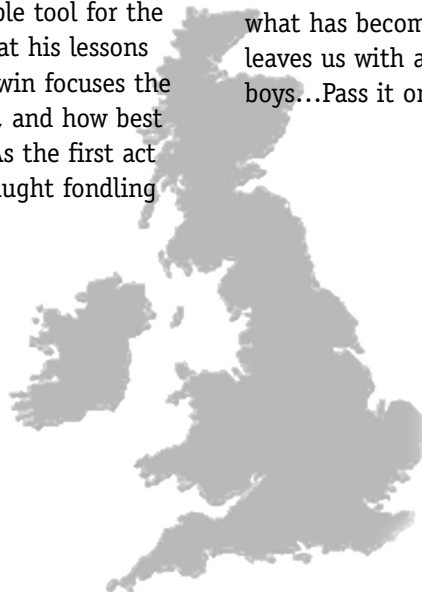
AS THE BOYS BEGIN to turn to Irwin's methodology, Irwin finds that he can turn Hector's lessons into a valuable tool for the boys. While Hector insists that his lessons are in preparation for life, Irwin focuses the boys entirely on their exams, and how best to exploit their knowledge. As the first act draws to a close, Hector is caught fondling

one of the boys as he gives him a lift home. The Headmaster decides to allow Hector to finish out the term as long as he leaves silently and shares some of his class time with Irwin.

AS ACT TWO begins, it is some time in the 1990s, and Irwin speaks before a camera. Posner reveals he has written an exposé on Irwin, Hector and the boys. The scene shifts back to the 1980s and the school, with Hector unhappily attempting to continue teaching. Things come to a head as Hector and Irwin share a lesson on the Holocaust. Hector is appalled at Irwin's detachment, calling him a "journalist" instead of a historian.

THE BOYS TAKE their entrance examinations for Oxford and Cambridge, and all of them are granted admission. Upon returning back to school, Dakin strikes up a conversation with Irwin, attempting to proposition him. After some considerable resistance, Irwin agrees to drinks with Dakin the next week. As Hector is about to take Dakin home from school, the Headmaster steps in, suggesting Hector take Irwin instead. Irwin rides along, and on the trip the two are in an accident which kills Hector and leaves Irwin without the use of his legs.

AS THE PLAY comes to a close, we learn what has become of the boys, and Hector leaves us with a final plea, "Pass it on, boys...Pass it on."





**CIRCUMSCRIBING:** restricting something within limits

**PARADOX:** a seemingly absurd statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true

**FELICITATIONS:** good wishes, best regards

**MATRICULATION:** admission to study at a college or university

**DECREPITUDE:** state of being wasted and weakened by the infirmities of old age

**CLOISTERS:** place or position of seclusion, especially referring to a monastery or convent

**CLANDESTINE:** held in or conducted in secrecy

**ABYSMALLY:** extremely bad

**HISTRIONICS:** insincere, exaggerated, theatrical behavior

**COMMEMORATING:** recalling or showing respect for, especially in a ceremony

**APROPOS:** relevant, significant

**ELIDED:** omitted or suppressed when speaking

**SPECTRE:** something that haunts, a spirit

**ELASTOPLAST:** elastic adhesive bandage for covering cuts or wounds

**ACQUIESCENT:** acceptant or compliant

**DIFFIDENCE:** modesty or shyness

**IMPINGES:** has an effect upon something else

**INCORRIGIBLE:** incapable of being corrected

**PHILANTHROPY:** active effort to promote human welfare

**APATHETIC:** having little or no interest or concern

**REREDORTER:** a latrine or toilet behind monastery dormitories

**CREDULOUS:** gullible, ready to believe on uncertain evidence

**VENERATE:** regard with great respect or revere

**CATECHISM:** summary or religious doctrine often in the form of questions and answers

**SUPINE:** mentally or morally slack

**PREDILECTION:** an established preference for something

**DECORUM:** propriety, good taste in conduct and behavior

## CHIEFLY BRITISH

**DON:** university head, fellow or teacher

**SOD:** a worthless person, a rascal

**TROLLOP:** a vulgar or disreputable woman

**A-LEVELS:** standardized British examination used as qualification for university entrance

**PENCE:** unit of British currency roughly equivalent to two cents

**POUNDS:** unit of British currency roughly equivalent to \$2

**SNOGGED:** kissed or embraced

**VICAR:** a member of the clergy





# AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT: ALAN BENNETT



**Q:** How did you start to write *The History Boys*? Was there a particular character or theme you wanted to explore? Were you aware of the current challenges in the education system when you started to write the play?

**A:** *Plays begin with characters—particularly in this one, the character of Hector. I suppose the contrasting methods of Hector and Irwin do say something about the education system today but that wasn't what I set out to write about. I wanted to put these two characters together in order to see what happened. That Irwin turned out to be (or end up as) a spin doctor rather took me by surprise, but the more history he taught, and his particular slant on history, made me see that there was a link between that sort of teaching and the sort of presentation that goes on in politics and the media.*

**Q:** How much do you know before you put pen to paper? Do you have a clear structure in mind, or do you simply see where the writing takes you?

**A:** *I like to know the end of the play, though with *The History Boys* I didn't quite. I knew the ending of *Wind in the Willows* obviously, and of *George III* and of *Lady in the Van*. The writing is just (just!) a case of getting there. Sometimes what happens takes me by surprise...for example Hector's death on the motorbike, and I don't think I quite knew that Dakin would seduce Irwin (or nearly, anyway).*

**Q:** You started by writing and performing satirical sketches in *Beyond The Fringe*. Do you think writing sketches has influenced your writing style at all?

**A:** *I've always tended to write in four or five-minute bursts. This maybe harks back to my origins in revue or maybe it's just about as much as I can get through in a morning. I always speak the stuff aloud and know how it should be said, which is another reason why I*

*like to go into rehearsals. I find it hard not to correct emphasis—which one should never do as it's no help to the actor—but I do try to steer them in the right direction. Nick (director) is very tolerant of this, which some directors wouldn't be.*

**Q:** This is the second play you have written set in a school (although admittedly the school in *Forty Years On* is a very different kind). Is there something about the setting that interests you?

**A:** *The school in *The History Boys* is more like the school I went to than *Albion House* in *Forty Years On*, which was a public school and much more of an allegorical device (as the name implies). Though my own schooling was 50 years or so ago I can see some similarities with the classes of the school in the play. Everybody wants to find similarities with *Forty Years On* but I don't see any.*

**Q:** Is there anything you find particularly special about writing for theatre (as opposed to film and television)?

**A:** *I find writing for the theatre much the hardest, so I feel that's why I have to do it. Films pay much more but you get proportionately mucked around. Television seems to have left me behind and I'm not sure any of the stuff I've written for the small screen would be thought suitable or even adequate today. A few weeks ago BBC2 had its 40th birthday and mounted a commemorative evening. Ninety percent of the stuff I've done for TV has been for BBC2, including *An Englishman Abroad*, *Talking Heads* and my early films with Stephen Frears. I didn't get a mention, so I suppose that means my BBC2 shelf life has run out.*

**Q:** In *The History Boys* there are a number of poets and authors who clearly inspire the boys—for example the poem “Drummer Hodge” seems to touch Posner very deeply. Were there any writers that inspired you when you were at school?

**A:** *I never did much reading until I started writing. Certainly my education at school was confined to what I needed to pass exams. I started reading plays when I was 16 or 17 but with no notion of writing any. I came to Hardy, whom I like very much, via Larkin. As it used to say in the play, Hardy is a good person to read when you're starting to write because he's so directly spoken and ungainly that you feel you can match him (or at least try to).*

**Q:** The relationship between the director and the writer is often considered to be turbulent. However, it would seem that you and Director Nicholas Hytner have an extremely close relationship. Richard Eyre once commented that you “love working with Nick, and I sometimes feel like Ratty deserted by Mole for Badger.” What is the secret to a successful writer/director relationship?

**A:** *I'm tempted to say that the secret of my relationship with Nick is gossip but that's a bit flippant. We don't know each other all that well and seldom see each other socially or between plays. I, in the first instance, like him because he works harder than any other director I have come across (and with pretty constant good humor); no writer, it seems to me, could help but be flattered by the attention he pays to the work. He is also very good with the text, as many directors are not. He makes rehearsing fun and gets more out of his actors in consequence. He takes risks; this play, in the state he first saw it anyway, was a risk. His production ideas, in so far as I understood them (the videos and so on) seemed quite risky, but I felt he had taken a risk on me and I ought to return the compliment.*

**Q:** You spent most of the rehearsal period of *The History Boys* in the rehearsal room with the actors and director. Not all writers choose to do this, however, your input to Nick and the cast was invaluable—how do you see the role of the writer in rehearsals?

**A:** *It depends on the play. The only rehearsals I've attended as regularly as I've done with these were for *The Madness of George III* and for the same reason, namely that the script was still evolving, and needed tightening up and fitting to the actors and the action. I didn't go to rehearsals for *Lady in the Van* nearly as much because it was a less complicated production and since it was also a play in which I was myself represented (twice) I felt if I was there too much it would inhibit the actors. Though I don't like to think so, I'm also quite gregarious. It's a treat for me to have come into work every morning rather than just sit at my table, to the extent that now we're coming to the end of rehearsals I'm getting quite melancholy. Rehearsing is a serious business, but it's also quite silly and I like being silly. I'm also grateful to the cast that they don't mind having me around and that the boys treat me like a human being.*

**Q:** What would you hope audiences would come away with, having watched *The History Boys*?

**A:** *I'd like the audience to come away wanting to spend more time in the company of the characters in the play. I'd like them to come away having understood and forgiven Hector and even Irwin. I wish I was Dakin or even Scripps, but I fear the character closest to mine is Posner. As Nick stated the other day in rehearsals—I fear many of us are closest to Posner.*

This interview was conducted by Thomas Hescott, the staff director for the original National Theatre production, for the background pack for *The History Boys* and is reproduced with their kind permission.



# B4



WITH THE EXCEPTION of only a handful of scenes, *The History Boys* takes place in and around a British grammar school. While we all know what it's like to go through the school system here in the States, what's it mean to be in school in England? Isn't grammar school for little kids?

LIKE US, British children begin schooling at the age of five. While we call kindergarten through fifth grade (or sixth depending on your school) our elementary school years, in England they call the years between age five and eleven primary school. While in primary school, British students study under a single teacher, tackling various subjects such as English, history, math, science, music, physical education and art.

WHILE WE TEND to mark our progress through school in grade levels (i.e. third grade, fourth grade, etc.), students in England follow a track of key stages. Through the course of their schooling (which is required up to age 16) students will pass through four key stages. At the end of the two key stages of primary school (when students hit age seven and again at age 11) British children take exams called the SATs. These tests aren't what we call the SATs over here in the States, as the British test is meant to measure a young student's (and school's) progress. The neat thing about the British school system is that regardless of how well a student does (or doesn't do!) on the exam, no child is ever held back a year. Each year every student moves upward and onward.

AT AGE 11 (after their sixth year of schooling) British students move on to secondary school. This period will take them through key stages three and four, which last until age 16. Secondary school gives students the opportunity to continue to explore an array of general subjects, along with a foreign language. Students may also begin to explore vocational studies like business or construction.

AT THE END of secondary school, British students take exams called the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations (aka—GCSE exams). These tests are single subject assessments of a student's progress over the course of their schooling. Most students take between five and ten GCSE exams in a variety of subjects. And while a high school diploma doesn't technically exist in England, passing five GCSE exams stacks up somewhere right around it.

Once a student has finished secondary school, there are several avenues upon which to move forward. Some step right into the work force, though most pursue further education. Between ages 16 and 18, students may continue on at school in the Sixth Form in a separate Sixth Form College, or students may choose to go to a College of Further Education. Keep in mind that British college should not to be confused with here in the States—*college* is still pre-University in England. Students who wish to focus on vocational or technical training will find themselves at home in a College of Further Education. This course work will give students a hands-on, focused preparation for their chosen field, equipping them to step into the work force upon completion.





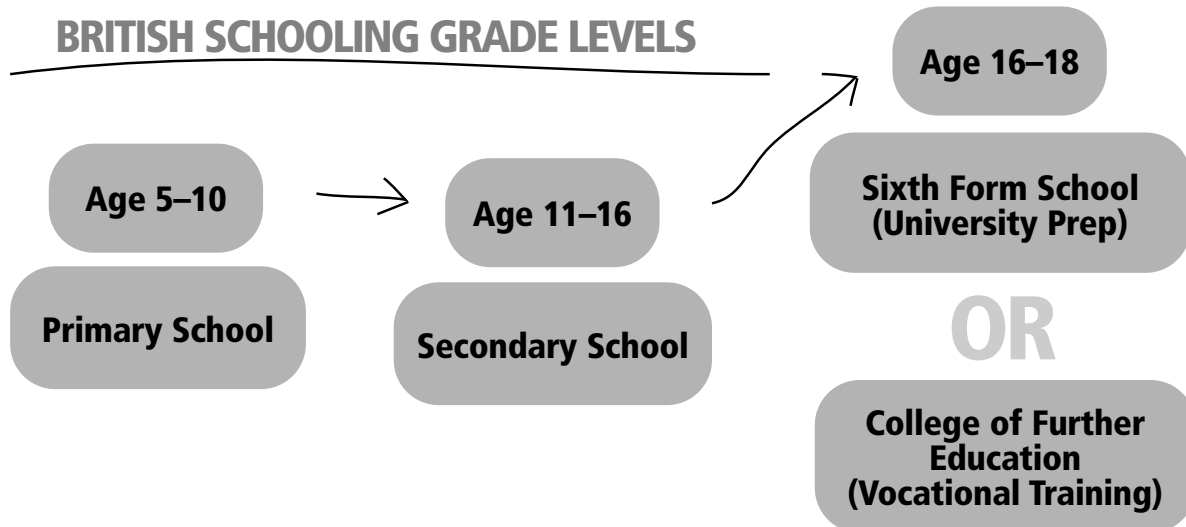


THOSE STUDENTS WISHING to prepare for University will choose a Sixth Form College. The Sixth Form (named after the fact it begins in the sixth year of a student's secondary education) is essentially an additional two years after secondary school in which students prepare for University. In the Sixth Form, students get a taste of what University study will be like as they take on more responsibility for their education. The coursework shifts from the lectures found in secondary school to a more open forum of discussion and debate among students and professors.

PART OF PREPARATION for the University is preparation for Advanced Level (A-Level) examinations, and Sixth Form focuses intensely on this preparation. The exam is a two-parter, the first part being the Advanced Subsidiary or the AS exam. The first year of sixth form is all about preparing for the AS exams, and students usually study four

subjects related to their specific course of study for the test. For example, a student hoping to enter medical school may study Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics and Psychology. In their second year of Sixth Form, students usually focus on their three best subjects for the second part of the A-Level exams, the A2. When both the AS and A2 are passed successfully, Advanced Level is achieved. These scores are then reviewed for University entrance as well as by future employers.

IF A STUDENT SCORES particularly high A-Level marks, then he or she may move on to an additional term of study to prepare for entrance exams and interviews to the most prestigious Universities. This additional term is often called the "Oxbridge" term, named for the esteemed Oxford and Cambridge Universities. It is in this additional term that we meet the History Boys as they prepare for their entrance examinations and interviews.



## HISTORY

A MAJOR THEME that *The History Boys* grapples with is history and how we consider it in the present. While methods of how best to address the issue collide throughout the play, the scene in which the boys consider the Holocaust typifies the debate the play wrestles with. In the scene, Irwin argues that the Holocaust is merely “history.” He encourages the boys to distance themselves in their discussion of the event, speaking of it as a topic instead of something they are emotionally connected to. Meanwhile, a disgusted Hector asks, “Why can you not simply condemn the camps outright as an unprecedented horror?” Rather than attempt to investigate the Holocaust, Hector’s personal bias is to simply dismiss it as a horror. *The History Boys* forces us to look how we consider history and what responsibility we have in choosing how to study the past.

## EDUCATION

AS THE BOYS RETURN back to school for the fall session, they set to preparing in earnest for the entrance examinations. While Hector insists throughout the play that his lessons are to guide the boys in life, the Headmaster and Irwin have differing educational goals. Their plan is to teach the boys how to pass the test, to give their work polish and make them stand out. *The History Boys* pits these dueling philosophies on education—learning for life and learning how to pass a test—against one another, encouraging us to examine what truly is most practical in our own educational system.

## INNOCENCE

*THE HISTORY BOYS* deals quite heavily with the issue of growing up. Not only does the future of the boys hang in the balance with the entrance exams, but the school’s reputation lies squarely upon their shoulders. As Hector and Irwin battle over educational ideologies, the boys become aware of how the world works, no longer simply clinging to rote memorization of facts and quotes. They are forced to step outside of their childlike innocence and stake claim to a more critical and cynical assessment of their surroundings. The play also takes on the issue of sexual identity, as the boys deal simultaneously with Hector’s sexual abuse and the confusion of trying to find their own identities.

## THE ARTS

IN KEEPING WITH its dealings on educational philosophies, *The History Boys* also confronts the value of the arts in education. In Hector’s plans to equip the boys for life, he employs poetry, literature, movies and various other forms of art. Hector is attempting to broaden the boys’ horizons and deepen the well from which they may draw, even though this information may not be of much use in the “real world.” The Headmaster, on the other hand, finds little practicality in the arts. Along with Irwin, his philosophy centers more around what he believes to be more practical knowledge—the facts and figures along with a sense of intrigue in answering questions. Their concern centers less upon a broad base and depth of understanding and more upon a specificity of facts and clever polish in rhetoric.

## EXAM CRAM

IN *THE HISTORY BOYS*, the boys are preparing for entrance examinations that will determine what university they are able to get in to. As college may be just around the corner for you, now is the time to start thinking about what kinds of things you can do to prepare yourself for entrance exams. While we may not have things like the A-Levels here in the United States, we do have the ACT and the SAT. Schools use these tests to determine what students fit best into their programs. Test scores may also help determine what kind of merit-based financial aid you are eligible to receive (scholarships, grants and other awards based on how high your grades and test scores are).

THE FIRST STEP in preparing is to figure out which test is for you. If you have a school in mind, check with them to see what they require. Typically schools in and around the Midwest accept ACT test scores, while schools elsewhere may require SAT scores for admission. If you're undecided about what college you want to go to, you may want to take both.

WHAT IF YOUR CHOSEN university accepts either ACT or SAT scores? You should take a look at the structure and content of each test to see which might better play to your strengths. The ACT includes four multiple choice test sections covering English, Math, Reading and Science; along with a fifth optional section that covers Writing (an essay question). The SAT includes ten multiple choice test sections, covering Critical Reading, Math and Writing (which includes an essay question). The essay question on the ACT is optional and comes last on the test. The essay score isn't factored in with the rest of the test, instead it is scored separately. On the SAT, however, the essay question is the first thing you do, and it is factored in with rest of the test. On the ACT, Math accounts for one-fourth of the

overall test score, assessing Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry. The SAT weighs Math a little higher, at one-third of the overall test score, assessing Basic Geometry and Algebra II.

THE TWO TESTS are scored differently—the ACT taking an average of the four test sections (the highest possible score overall is a 36) while the SAT totals all ten test sections together (the highest possible score overall is a 2400). On the ACT, there is no penalty for entering a wrong answer. On the SAT, however, if you answer incorrectly you lose one-fourth of a point per wrong answer.

NOW THAT YOU KNOW a little bit about the tests, how do you prepare? Talk with your teachers and counselors about their recommendations for you. Typically, taking college-preparatory courses (advanced English, math, science and social studies) will help you to succeed not only on the tests, but in college as well. In the short term, here are a few tips to set you up for success:

- Practice identifying key words in questions. As both the ACT and SAT are timed tests, cutting through to the key words in a question will help you move more quickly and efficiently towards the correct answer.
- Answer all the questions that you positively know the answers to first. Go through the questions you are less sure of next. This strategy will help you maximize your time and the number of potentially correct responses you give.
- On essay questions—before digging in and just writing, try drawing diagrams, charts, or any other visual representation of your ideas. This strategy can help you more easily recall and link concepts together.
- PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE!—Get your hands on sample tests and take as many as you can!



# SWDY?

***"Irwin: I have just read seventy papers all saying the same thing, and I am asleep..."***

***Scripps: But it's all true.***

***Irwin: What has that got to do with it? What has that got to do with anything?"***

- In this exchange, Irwin seems to be telling the boys to make up their answers rather than focus on the facts. What do you think of his strategy? What do you think the examiners would think? What will this sort of view of exams do for the boys in the long run?

***"Timms: Sir. I don't always understand poetry.***

***Hector: You don't always understand it? Timms, I never understand it. But learn it now, know it now and you'll understand it whenever."***

- What do you think of Hector's teaching technique? It seems that he is simply asking his students to memorize poems and passages he likes, not really caring if they find any meaning in the material. Is this a good use of their school time? What does he mean "you'll understand it whenever?" Do you believe Hector when he says that he never understands it?

***"You've force-fed us the facts; now we're in the process of running around acquiring flavor."***

- Rudge gives this as his description of what the boys do in Irwin's class. What do you think he means by "flavor?" What do you think Mrs. Lintott's reaction should be since she was the one "force-feeding" them the facts?

***"Mr. Hector's stuff's not meant for the exam, sir. It's to make us more rounded human beings."***

- The boys seem to know that Hector's lessons aren't doing them any good for the exams ahead, so why do they keep studying with him? What are the benefits of his lessons if they're not going to help the boys get into University?

***"Well, it's true he was the one who made me realize you were allowed to think like this. He sanctioned it. I didn't know you were allowed to call art and literature into question."***

- Dakin seems to have found a new way of thinking in Irwin's classes. Hector taught him to know art and literature, but never to really think about it. What do you think is the purpose of art and literature? What do you think Hector would say? What would Irwin's answer be?

***"I count examinations, even for Oxford and Cambridge, as the enemy of education. Which is not to say that I don't regard education as the enemy of education, too."***

- If Hector thinks exams are the enemy of education, what does he think education should be? What do you think education should be? What is most useful for us to learn?

***"I just said the Holocaust was a historical fact like other historical facts. It was my uncle who hit me..."***

- Posner's family had quite a strong reaction to his statement about the Holocaust. What do you think of the idea that history is just a bunch of facts—in the past? How does the past influence us now? Are we able to really leave it behind? Should we?