

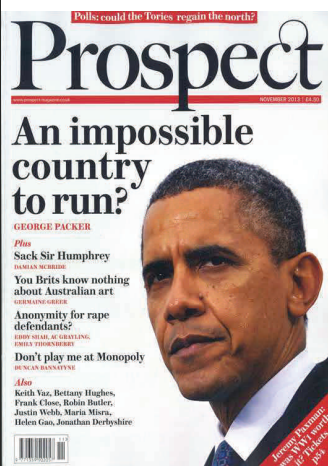
HISTORY BULLETIN

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OXBRIDGE

Getting used to reading really challenging material is vital if you are thinking about applying to Oxford, Cambridge or other really competitive universities. You will be expected to digest difficult texts with ease. This means you need a good vocabulary and knowledge of historical and political concepts. There is also no 'quick fix' here. It takes years of practice. **Prospect** is a monthly magazine (in the library) which focuses on current affairs including social policy, politics and economics. The articles are written by first class commentators and academics. You don't have to read it from cover to cover—but trying a few articles each month is good preparation and should be rewarding. There is also a free online newsletter.



STILL TALKING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Seventy years after World War Two and we are still trying to understand the Third Reich. Schools may be criticised for studying the Nazis but the issues are undeniably both massive and fascinating. Many strike at the core of society.

If you follow current affairs, (you should!) you will have seen trials being carried out in German courts where defendants and witnesses are in their nineties. These are the last remaining people to be tried for 'war crimes'. The conviction of a Ukrainian American John Demjanjuk in 2011 as an 'accessory' to the murder of 27,900 Jews has opened the way for more cases to be heard in Germany. There was no evidence that he was directly involved in killings so the ruling overturned the prevailing belief that anyone who served under the Nazis had been forced to do so and was therefore not personally guilty. Only 29 of the 6,500 SS members who served at Auschwitz were ever brought to justice. The trials have raised heated



Oscar Groening, the 'book keeper of Auschwitz', tried in Germany as an accessory to the

ethical debates and refocused attention on the relationship between the Nazis and the German people. For more on this look at the penetrating work of **Nicholas Stargardt** and also **Richard Evans'** book of very readable essays *The Third Reich in History and Memory*.

The library also has a copy of **David Cesarani's** new book on the Final Solution. Cesarani challenges accepted thinking on the efficiency of the camps and what Hannah Arendt called the 'banality of evil'. The book is massive—

so just dip in. Looking at online reviews is also helpful. The phrase 'banality of evil' was used by Hannah Arendt with reference to the trial of Eichmann in 1961. She raised the question of whether evil is simply a function of thoughtlessness, a tendency of ordinary people to obey orders and conform to mass opinion without a critical evaluation of the consequences of their actions. If you study Psychology make the most of links between your subjects!

SON OF SAUL WINS OSCAR FOR BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM

This Hungarian film about the Holocaust is due to be released in Britain in April. Reviews, not surprisingly, use the word 'harrowing' rather a lot so it might not be your idea of a great Saturday night out but it will undoubtedly be worth watching.

Variety's critic said "as grim and unyielding a depiction of the Holocaust as has yet been madea masterful exercise in narrative deprivation and sensory overload that recasts familiar horrors in daringly existential terms."



ART HISTORY

The series **The Renaissance Unchained** is now on Clickview.

The art historian Waldemar Januszczak does not just present the art, he challenges existing views about the Italian origins of the Renaissance.

There are a number of interviews and articles online in which he explains his views. Read these before you watch the programmes.



BOTTICELLI REIMAGINED AT THE V & A

A major new exhibition opens at the Victorian and Albert Museum on 5th March. Botticelli was admired in his own lifetime but then ignored until the C19th when his work was rediscovered.

The exhibition not only showcases 50 Botticelli originals, it shows how he inspired art, design, fashion and photography from William Morris to Andy Warhol.

SIMON SCHAMA: THE OBLITERATORS

If you have not come across the work of Simon Schama, it is time that you did. This programme on Radio 4 (Sunday 29th February) was on a different scale to blockbuster TV series. Schama ponders the thinking that the ISIS perpetrators might see as justifying the destruction of ancient sites such as Mosul and Palmyra. In the process Schama outlines comparisons, revealing similar events—in Britain.

In the seventeenth century extreme English Puritans roamed the country destroying what they saw as 'Romish idolatry. The most notorious of these, William Dowsing, destroyed thou-



sands of medieval artefacts. The people who carry out these acts are quick to point out how their holy book excuses their behavior. Schama also highlights the streak of delight in vandalism and the trade in looted antiquities which is pulling funds into Isis' coffers.
Dowsing: We broke down

about a hundred superstitious Pictures; and seven Fryars hugging a Nunn; and the Picture of God and Christ; and divers others very superstitious; and 200 had been broke down before I came. We took away 2 popish and we beat down a great stoneing Cross on the top of the Church. (1664)

HISTORY EXTRA PODCASTS AND NEWSLETTER

The BBC produces a vast array of history programmes on TV and radio as well as the BBC History magazine. The site historyextra.com pulls all of this work together,

summarizing what is available. You can download a wide range of podcasts and find links to programmes. On 25th February, the podcast focused on the

Middle East whilst the previous week covered subjects as diverse as Verdun and the Renaissance. You can also sign up to receive the

HARPER LEE: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

The death of Harper Lee, the reclusive author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, raises once again the importance of fiction for historians. Nearly everyone has read the story of race relations and legal injustice in the '30s South. However, the reason the book was so explosive was the timing of its publication—1960. Lee was writing in the aftermath of *Brown vs the Board of Education* and the bus boycotts. When her book was high on the New York Times bestseller lists, white students were rioting at the University of Mississippi to prevent integration. Moreover, the book and Lee are not without critics and con-

troversy. The book was banned from some US libraries when parents objected to the use of the 'nigger', the language of the time. On its 50th anniversary the Wall Street Journal attacked the book for its 'bloodless, liberal humanism' whilst the publication in 2015 of *Go Set a Watchman* led to yet more controversy. Partly this was over whether the novel should ever have been published. But the *Watchman* story also forces a re-evaluation of the central character of Atticus. *Watchman*

reveals Atticus to be a racist—the last thing we might expect. Think about reading *Mockingbird* again and re-evaluating the book as a historical document in its own right. Look up the obituaries of Harper Lee to see how her legacy is seen. The book is more than a good story—it gets to the heart of some of America's most complex and unresolved issues.

