

What is history? "Is history what happened, or what historians tell us happened?" "Is it the past itself?" Can historical facts ~~really~~ exist "independently of historian." (Barbara Tuchman, Practising History)
What role does the historian have in the construction of history?

As Kerth Jenkins explains in Rethinking History "the ^{actual} past is gone" all we have left are "traces" which are strung together by the historian. Barbara Tuchman ^{also} however ~~describes~~ describes in Practising History that she believes in "historical facts [existing] independently of the historian" and therefore she agrees with Professor Alan Mendelow's question from the source that "the historian [is] merely the midwife to the truth of the past." And Kerth Windshuttle in The Killing of History agrees ^{with} ~~with~~ ^{Mendelow's} ~~that~~ "historians' know things about the past."

Barbara Tuchman is viewed as she claims ~~and~~ objective historian. She had a strict methodology that she follows in her writing from the very ~~beginning~~ ^{beginning} where she "Research[es] the spot" to reading secondary sources only as a guide and using primary sources only for notes which she "distill[s] from the beginning." She believed in turning the facts ~~into~~ of the past into a narrative and that there is truth in history. It is her sole aim to present a well researched perspective on an

event of the past as she has done in the Pulitzer Prize winning book
"The Guns of August"

Jenkins is not an objective historian but rather bases his writing on that of Hayden White a Post modernist Historian. Their belief is that there is no truth in history rather that every account is valid and it is all relative. All we have left from the past is "traces" which are put together by historians. However unlike Tuchmans belief of objectivity, Jenkins claims that the background and knowledge of the historian "distorts what history is" (Munslow) even if only on a subconscious level. Therefore the historian in their construction of history is simply giving another perspective ~~which~~ no more right or wrong than the others simply a new perspective.

Keith Windschuttle however would dispute this claim ~~by~~ stating in "The Killing of History" that a historians work is "~~subject to corroboration~~" ~~to~~ subject to "testability and corroboration" by others in the field as he has done in "The Fabrication of ~~AN~~ Aboriginal History". ~~more~~ Therefore Windschuttle believes the historians role in the construction of history is to present a historical thesis to his other peers for "~~corroboration~~" "testability" and then after it has been accepted by ~~the~~ others in the field it becomes a true historical work. Windschuttle is seen ^{as} ~~not~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ objective not a conservative



historian but rather a revisionist as he explores the work of others in search of points in which he can present alternate points of view. An example of revisionist history is with the cause of the First World War where there was the traditional view, the revisionist view, the anti-revisionist standpoint and in the more modern era even Marxist views.

Windschuttle however does agree with Tuchman's use of a "methodology" which is key to all objective historians or historians who write objectively.

Many historians have many different opinions on a historian's role in the construction of history. The main agreed idea is that it is the historian's role to present a point of view on their chosen topic whether that be as Tuchman suggest a well researched well developed narrative on an event, an opposing point of view as Windschuttle has done or a point of view relative to the historian, as some Jenkins believe. Munslow simply states that "The study of the past has never been static... [however]... there remain two steady points in the historian's cosmos: empiricism and rational analysis..." and while doubts are emerging in recent years the knowledge gained by experience or observation remains unchallenged.