

## “Those Who do Not Learn from the Past...”

Many people think that problems are unnecessary in this world, that life would be much simpler without them. However, Daniel McCullough begs to differ in his essay “Why History?”: he thinks that we learn the most in “times of tumult”.

Personally, I believe problems to be a “necessary evil” for they lead us –both individually and collectively– to change. Even if we are troubled by them, we can only grow if we face and try to solve them.

Those “times of tumult” make us react: if there were not problems, we would not have any need to change; and if we do not change, we do not grow, we do not move forward. What is even worse is ignoring the problem, “burying the head in the sand”, for then not only do we not change, we do not learn. Learning is important in life since it prevents us from repeating the same mistakes we –or other people before us– have made.

In 1984, for instance, history is used as a means of “mass control”. The lower class has no idea of what is happening because the government is always changing the facts so as to preserve the status quo. Even more alarming that the idea of some people controlling history is that the lower classes do not seem to care: Orwell depicts a society in which the proletariat does not see the constant war as a problem, so that particular need of change never arises.

I think Orwell wrote 1984 as a warning for the generations to come: history is powerful because if we do not know what has happened before, then how will we ever be able to stop making the same mistakes over and over again? It is true that we learn from mistakes, but by not learning from the past we undermine those who have come before us and we teach nothing to those who come after us. Moreover, if we cannot learn to recognise and accept problems as part of our lives, how will we ever be able to react to them and change?

“Times of tumult” do not necessarily refer to wars or revolutions that prompt national growth; they can refer to problems that affect us personally, such as a death in the family or a divorce, and lead us to grow as individuals, for we gain experience and become wiser.

Life is about changing and learning, so we need problems no matter how unnecessary they may seem at first. Why? Because problems lead to changes, and changes –for the better or the worse– lead to learning. We grow wiser after being through troubled times, and therefore we can share what we have learned with other people. However, we must also learn from the people who have faced trouble before us, for those who do not learn from the past are condemned to repeat it.