



01

[1] Why doesn't the modern American accent sound similar to a British accent?

[2] After all, didn't the British colonize the U.S.?

[3] Experts believe that British residents and the colonists who settled America all sounded the same back in the 18th century, and they probably all sounded more like modern Americans than modern Brits.

[4] The accent that we identify as British today was developed around the time of the American Revolution by people of low birth rank who had become wealthy during the Industrial Revolution.

[5] To distinguish themselves from other commoners, these people developed new ways of speaking to set themselves apart and demonstrate their new, elevated social status.

[6] In the 19th century, this distinctive accent was standardized as Received Pronunciation and taught widely by pronunciation tutors to people who wanted to learn to speak fashionably.



02

[1] Having extremely vivid memories of past emotional experiences and only weak memories of past everyday events means we maintain a biased perception of the past.

[2] We tend to view the past as a concentrated time line of emotionally exciting events.

[3] We remember the arousing aspects of an episode and forget the boring bits.

[4] A summer vacation will be recalled for its highlights, and the less exciting parts will fade away with time, eventually to be forgotten forever.

[5] As a result, when we estimate how our next summer vacation will make us feel, we overestimate the positive.

[6] It seems as though an imprecise picture of the past is one reason for our inaccurate forecasts of the future.



03

[1] From a correlational observation, we conclude that one variable is related to a second variable.

[2] But neither behavior could be directly causing the other even though there is a relationship.

[3] The following example will illustrate why it is difficult to make causal statements on the basis of correlational observation.

[4] The researchers at the U.S. Army conducted a study of motorcycle accidents, attempting to correlate the number of accidents with other variables such as socioeconomic level and age.

[5] They found the best predictor to be the number of tattoos the rider had.

[6] It would be a ridiculous error to conclude that tattoos cause motorcycle accidents or that motorcycle accidents cause tattoos.

[7] Obviously, a third variable is related to both—perhaps preference for risk.

[8] A person who is willing to take risks likes to be tattooed and also takes more chances on a motorcycle.



04

[1] Reading is like skiing.

[2] When done well, when done by an expert, both reading and skiing are graceful, harmonious activities.

[3] When done by a beginner, both are awkward, frustrating, and slow.

[4] Learning to ski is one of the most embarrassing experiences an adult can undergo.

[5] After all, an adult has been walking for a long time; he knows where his feet are; he knows how to put one foot in front of the other in order to get somewhere.

[6] But as soon as he puts skis on his feet, it is as though he had to learn to walk all over again.

[7] He slips and slides, falls down, has trouble getting up, and generally looks – and feels – like a fool.

[8] It is the same with reading.

[9] Probably you have been reading for a long time, too, and starting to learn all over again would be humiliating.



05

[1] Studying history can make you more knowledgeable or interesting to talk to or can lead to all sorts of brilliant vocations, explorations, and careers.

[2] But even more importantly, studying history helps us ask and answer humanity's Big Questions.

[3] If you want to know why something is happening in the present, you might ask a sociologist or an economist.

[4] But if you want to know deep background, you ask historians.

[5] That's because they are the people who know and understand the past and can explain its complex interrelationships with the present.



06

[1] From the beginning of human history, people have asked questions about the world and their place within it.

[2] For early societies, the answers to the most basic questions were found in religion.

[3] Some people, however, found the traditional religious explanations inadequate, and they began to search for answers based on reason.

[4] This shift marked the birth of philosophy, and the first of the great thinkers that we know of was Thales of Miletus.

[5] He used reason to inquire into the nature of the universe, and encouraged others to do likewise.

[6] He passed on to his followers not only his answers but also the process of thinking rationally, together with an idea of what kind of explanations could be considered satisfactory.