

## History Lessons – Events from May

**Learning Objectives:** To highlight some of this month's history anniversaries. Practise language of debate, ranking and discussion.

**Skill/Grammar:** Reading, speaking/ranking importance, *more important than*, giving reasons

**Resources:** Student text

**Preparation Time:** 0 minutes

**Completion Time:** 15–30 minutes

**Age/Level:** Secondary–Adult/  
Intermediate and above

- Ask students what important historical events there are for May.
- Give out the list of historical anniversaries to students and ask them to read them.  
Some key vocabulary: *psychiatrist, unconscious, commit suicide, vaccine, eradicate, inject, telegraph, landmark moment, inventor, sculptor, represent*

Give them two minutes to read the anniversaries then ask them to turn over the text so they can't see it. Ask the following comprehension questions:

What war ended? (Second World War)

Who was a politician? (Margaret Thatcher)

Who invented the telegraph? (Samuel Morse)

What was a terrible disease? (smallpox)

Who was interested in your feelings? (Sigmund Freud)

Who painted the Mona Lisa? (Leonardo da Vinci)

- Ask students to get into six groups. Give each group a historical anniversary and ask them to prepare an argument to say why it is the most important event. They might want to use language such as '*... the most important because ...*', '*Obviously/Clearly ...*', '*While ... are important ...*', '*... more significant than ...*', etc.
- Bring the class together and ask each group to state their case in one minute. Other groups can ask questions.
- Ask the class which event they really believe is the most important.
- Finally, direct students to the final few hypothetical questions about the type of world in which they would prefer to live.

## History Lessons – Events from May

*You have two minutes to read about some important historical events that happened in May.*

**1856 The founder of pschoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, was born.**

Sigmund Freud is perhaps the most famous psychiatrist. Freud's theories were the foundation for treating many mental and psychiatric problems. He was very interested in the human unconscious, those feeling, memories and emotions that we are not aware of.

**1945 The Second World War in Europe ends**

After Adolf Hitler committed suicide the commanders of the German army decided to end a war that had cost over 50 million lives.

**1796 Vaccine for Smallpox developed**

Before this time, smallpox was a common and often fatal disease. Edward Jenner discovered that people could be vaccinated against the disease by injecting them with a milder form of the disease. Small pox was totally eradicated in 1979.

**1844 The first telegraph message was sent**

Samuel Morse sent the first telegraph message in the USA. The message was made up of dots and dashes (in sound) that represented letters. It revolutionised the way people communicated over long distances.

**1979 Margaret Thatcher becomes Britain's first female Prime Minister**

In a landmark moment in British politics, the country elected a female leader. Thatcher divides opinion. Some people admire her strength and economic policies while others hate her for decisions that damaged certain communities.

**1519 Artist Leonardo da Vinci dies**

Leonardo da Vinci is considered one of the greatest painters of all time. His most famous work is the Mona Lisa. He was also a talented inventor, architect, sculptor and engineer.

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**1 Your teacher is going to ask you some questions. Don't look at the text. Who can answer the quickest?**

**2 Ask your teacher about the words you don't understand.**

**3 Get into groups of four. Your teacher will give you an event. You must say why that event is more important than all the others.**

**4 Present your ideas to the class. Tell other groups why they are wrong!**

**5 Which event do you really believe is the most important?**

**6 Discuss in pairs. Would you prefer to live in a world ...**

*... with great artists or great psychiatrists?*

*... with no war or no disease?*

*... with telephones or equality between the sexes.*