



# HISTORIA

## The Concord Review Summer

**HISTORY HAS BEEN ONE OF MY PASSIONS FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER. FROM FIRST GRADE TO THE PRESENT DAY, I HAVE TRAVELED TO 20 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, EACH OF WHICH HAS KINDLED MY LOVE OF CULTURE AND HISTORY. BUT IT WAS ACTUALLY MY INTEREST IN WRITING THAT LED ME TO A MORE SERIOUS STUDY OF HISTORY.**

I was searching online for writing competitions when I landed on *Imagine*'s listing of where young writers could submit their work. One publication in particular caught my eye: *The Concord Review* (TCR), a quarterly journal that publishes exemplary history papers by high school students. Thrilled to see a way to combine my love of history and my interest in writing, I subscribed to TCR. From the first issue, I was impressed by the talent of the featured high school writers—and was inspired to produce a serious history paper of my own. But first, as a high school freshman who had never written a paper like those in TCR, I knew I needed to build up my research and writing skills.

I decided to start by preparing a paper for the National History Day competition. As the child of two Korean-born parents, I have always been especially curious about South Korean history and culture. I began reading about South Korea's president, Park Geun-hye, and soon learned that her father, Park Chung-hee, the third president of South Korea, had been a controversial figure. He had ruled as a benevolent dictator, a leader who governs with absolute power but is seen to do so largely for the benefit of his people. One

can surmise that this system of leadership would produce conflicting opinions, as dictatorships are rarely perceived as positive. My paper was not extensive, as the National History Day word limit was 2,500 words, but it provided me with an introduction to historical research and writing.

### Serious Study

Later that year, I visited TCR's website and saw that TCR would be piloting a two-week summer program. The application required students to come up with a specific topic, list 10 potential sources for the topic, and write an abstract or plan for the eventual path the paper would take. I decided to expand upon my History Day topic, as I felt that my knowledge of the topic was incomplete and that I needed more sources to back up my claims. I eagerly applied and was delighted to be accepted to the program.

The program was held from June 29th to July 10th at the Babson Executive Conference Center in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Our class was small, with one student from a Korean International School, one from Virginia, two from Boston, and two, including myself, from New York. The small class size allowed our instructor, Ms. Samantha Wesner, and our proctor, Ms. Carrie Salvato, to give each of us individual attention.

The rigorous schedule included a research and writing block every day. In addition, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, we attended lectures in the morning from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and a writing period in the afternoons. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the whole day was typically devoted to research and writing. Our instructor had graduated from Harvard that year as a history major, so she was able to arrange for us to have access to Harvard's online HOLLIS Library in addition to the Wellesley Public Library.

### Practicing the Process

The writing lessons were invaluable, covering material and strategies I had never learned in school. Our first lesson was on "mapping" our topics and making them easier to understand. Although I initially believed this might be a step backward for the first draft of my paper—after all, I had already structured my argument in a paper for NHD—I soon found that mapping my paper helped to clarify my own thinking. In the mapping process, we created subsections for our papers; I found that titling these subsections of my

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## er Program by Ryan Chung

work made it easier to find more evidence for each part and easier to read through the paper as a whole.

Another lesson focused on note-taking, a foundational skill for conducting research. Done properly, note-taking would help us better understand the material, credit sources properly, and remember key points. We learned to analyze our sources by addressing each author's potential and obvious biases and cross-referencing each citation with another primary source. This was especially important for me: Most of my primary sources were Park Chung-hee's autobiographies and speeches, so I would need unbiased sources to support his claims. To follow up on the research, our instructor taught us how to source citations in "Chicago style" (using the *Chicago Manual of Style*), which allows writers to annotate their bibliographies and cite sources through footnotes or endnotes.

Another topic I found especially intriguing and useful to learn about was historiography—literally, "the history of historical writing." It encompasses how a topic in history is interpreted by others, how the writer interprets it uniquely, and how the topic fits into the context of events leading up to it and following it. In the case of my paper, I placed Park Chung-hee in the setting of presidents who came before and after him. I also analyzed the assertions and writings of both his admirers and his critics, which allowed me to form my own opinion of Park's rule.

Finally, we learned the specifics of revising and editing. One of the most valuable editing skills I learned was highlighting the primary

and secondary sources referenced within my paper in two different colors. If there was a dearth of one color in a section, I knew to go back and find more information to help strengthen my claims.

**B**ecause this program gave me the opportunity to delve deeply into my topic and focus intensely on writing, I nearly doubled the length of my paper to 18 pages (not including the bibliography), added a significant number of new sources, and completed my paper, thereby expanding my knowledge of my topic. Providing an environment that allows for focused research and thought, the TCR Summer Program taught me how to read and learn enough about a topic to write a substantial and well-argued research paper, a powerful skill that isn't limited to history papers and that I know I will use through my academic career. ■



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