

A Different Angle on History

History.

It's pretty big overall and encompasses a great deal of time. A whole lot in fact. So when it comes to researching or writing a paper on History how the heck can you go about it? It seems overwhelming, and it can be. Like I said, there's a lot of it. Here are a couple ideas why. The most common pitfall is choosing too broad a topic. To be successful and make your search more directed you can narrow your search down to a specific topic, the more specific the better.

The second most common pitfall is choosing something you need rather than something you want. Let's face it, this is a hobby, you should be having fun. Therefore, pick something you like. I'm sure that means there will be a million papers on Gladiators or Irish kilts but that's fine. You'll learn an immense amount, have fun because you like it, and in the end have something you can be proud of. Knowledge, a good paper, a period kilt, whatever it is. And you will be able to help others. That is also what we do as Marklanders. Teach about history to those who do not have the time, dedication or what-have-you.

Let's take an example:

"I need information on vikings clothing."

Well that's a lot but a very common and good start. So ask yourself what you want really about the vikings? Are you looking for their sword? Garb? Housing?

"I don't know. Garb. I know I need that."

but do you want that?

"no, not really. I like swords! they're cool! I want a real viking sword!"

Well there you go then. Look into swords. Hit a library and look up Viking Swords in the libraries database. Hit a popular online bookstore and do the same search, or try the internet. All of which will reveal a wealth of books and such. Probably too many. That's fine. That means there are plenty of resources out there.

"But I don't wanna read all that."

Well you have to read to learn. However. You don't have to read all of them. Here you have your options. Choose 5 books (really the minimum to do any kind of remotely decent looking up stuff) or narrow your search. If you narrow your search you could narrow it to a timeframe of a hundred years, the ruling class, ritual swords, or whatever. In this example we will choose 5 books.

"How do I know which ones to pick?"

You don't. that's why libraries are best. They don't cost. In time you will want to expand your personal library. The oldest book is often times not the best, unless it is from the actual viking period or whatever you're researching. As time passes more research is done and newer things are learned. You can check out book reviews online. Or go to newsgroups. Now, having mentioned newsgroups again I mention the happiness and goodness of specifics. You will be surprised how often I see a posting like "What color did they wear in Medieval times?" and it never gets an answer. There isn't one. That again, is too broad. But a question like "Has anyone read the O'Callah Viking Sword Review and what did you think?", you are almost sure to get an answer or at least a reference to someone who had. That's called networking. But I

digress.

We have our 5 books. We leaf through them looking for pictures (we all do that, pictures are fun!) and we read the captions.

The Pommel of this Viking sword found in the Bog Finds has Immaculate silver inlay.

"they had silver inlay!?"

And that's my point. You will find a bajillion more things to look into once you start. Some will be of no interest whatsoever, some will be utterly fascinating. Let's look at the caption above. In there we can learn there was something called Bog Find (whatever the heck that was), There's a part of the sword called a pommel, they pointed it out so it must be interesting. (I'll remember to look at more pommels in the future) the vikings had silver, they had silver inlay, it was pretty intricate judging by the picture (how did they do that?), and the bog finds is plural, what the heck else did they find there and why was it all in a bog?

"Whoa! I didn't think there'd be all that!"

So now you have a few sources. Take a little time, read them over, write down the important stuff and in the end you will see you have a bundle of new information you will want to share. And let's face it, some of the most immortal people in the world are writers.