The Butterfly Effect

United States History---One Event that Changed Everything



The choices we make, the decisions on both small and large scales; these are the events that can change the future, but for this to be true... some form of reality must be predetermined.

**The Butterfly Effect**

You go out to the lake one evening, looking to catch a firefly. After searching for a long period of time, you finally catch one. Later that night, a little girl not too far from where you caught your firefly goes out to the lake in search of one, but doesn't find it. After spending some time looking for it, her father gets worried; as a result, he goes out, gets in his truck and starts looking for her. It's a rainy day, and the roads are slippery... he notices the street light has turned red and tries to stop, but his truck spins out of control and kills a pedestrian. As it turns out, that pedestrian's father is the owner of a large oil company that provides for several countries all over the world, and upon hearing of his son's death, he decides to shut down the oil rigs and end his own life. The countries are now depraved of oil, and seek other ways in which it can be achieved- as a result, wars start raging and people are becoming impatient. When other countries get involved in this situation in an attempt to help out their allies, a world war breaks out, and eventually... a majority of the world is in on it; some trying to stop it, others trying to help out their neighbors. A catastrophe has occurred, and many will suffer; the blood must be on someone's hands, and some might agree that it is on the boy who caught the firefly.

This dilemma is unlikely to occur, at least not with such accuracy. The butterfly effect is a theory suggesting that simple events, decisions or occurrences can alter the future drastically.  The scenario above is a good example of what the butterfly effect is, and how the concept can be applied to reality. Similarly, the butterfly effect is also influenced by the concept of time travel, and the ideology in which changing the past will inevitably change the future. Going back in time and preventing an event, such as world war two or world war one could impact the world in ways we cannot imagine; a majority of the people who were born as a result of the wars and the way in which they impacted the geography of Europe would not be born, and the baby boom would never have occurred. This change in time would remove many people who are alive today from existence, and most likely the person who went back in time to stop the war in the first place. If the person who went back in time is removed from existence, then he could never have gone back in the first place, and the wars would have occurred nonetheless. This paradox challenges the concept of time and acts as a window to new theories that may explain our very existence.

Time can be defined as a straight line representing the past, the present, and the future. Considering the paradox above, we can agree that time is not just one straight line, but several. The moment a person goes back in time to stop a world war, a new reality is formed, one in which the wars had not occurred and everything was different; however, the initial reality remains, with the absence of one person... the one who went back in time. By going back in time and changing the past, this figure has shaped a new future, one that he would visit when attempting to travel to the present. This new reality would most likely not have him on record, and it would be very different to him. The choices that we make in life may alter the future by creating a new one; yet the initial reality that exists before the decision that changes it must still exist. He has not returned home, but instead, to a world he made... a reality he shaped... a time 'line' he has branched out; and every decision we make may create the same effect, whether we travel back in time to do it or not.

**Project Guidelines:**

You are to write a paper, detailing how one small event in the History of the United States changed the rest of history after which it occurred. You must describe the event itself, the importance of the event, and its ramifications. You event should be explained in terms of how it impacted social, political, and social events and changes. After this part, you are to write a more creative, hypothetic analysis of how the history of the United States would be different had your chosen even never occurred. You should describe how social, economic, and political structure or the realities we know today would be changed had your chosen event never occurred.

**Outline:**

1. **Introduction**
2. 1 page.
3. Discuss what you will be talking about in your paper and how history is shaped by even the smallest events or people.
4. **Part I: Event that Changed History** 
   1. 3-4 pages
   2. State the event
   3. Why was the event significant?
   4. Why have you chosen to focus on this small event?
   5. How did it change the rest of history socially, economically, and politically?
      1. Must link the event with a minimum of 10 other major events, policies, or changes socially in US History. You must also reference 3-5 primary source documents, and site them.
   6. Track your event to the present.
5. **Part II: The Butterfly Effect**
6. 2-3 pages
7. Explain how our country would be different had your chosen even never occurred, or was avoided someone.
8. Be detailed and connect to major world events.
9. Track event to the present.
10. **Conclusion**
11. 1 page (two paragraphs)
12. P.1: Summarize your paper.
13. P.2: Reflection on this class, what you’ve learned, etc.
14. **Presentation**
15. You are to prepare to present the major ideas presented in your paper via PowerPoint, Prezi, or video.
16. You should be creative and utilize technology and pictures to make your case.

\*\*\*We will vote as a class on which even most changed history, and whoever does the best job

will get to drop their lowest grade. \*\*\*

1. You will present in class on our designated exam day. Presentation time: 7-10 minutes

Due date: Friday, June 6th, 2014