**History is not everything from now backwards.**

**That is the past… by Becky Taylor**

Becky Taylor is a professor at the University of East Anglia. She conducts research and writes about minority groups, migration, and the state. As Britain’s leading historian of Gypsies, Roma, and Travelers, her work contributes directly to histories of state expansion, migration, ideologies, and violence. In addition she examines the histories of empire, xenophobia (fear of outsiders), and identity.

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| **Secondary Source**:  The historian A.J.P. Taylor declared that ‘History is not just a catalogue of events put in the right order like a railway timetable’. This is a modern way of expressing the root of the word history itself, which comes from the Greek word, historia, meaning inquiry. Herodotus, generally acknowledged as the first European historian, first used this term in the mid-fifth century BC. Before him, in Homer, a history was someone who passed judgment based on the facts as the result of an investigation. Immediately, by thinking of history as inquiry we move from simply thinking about it as the past, to asking questions of the past and therefore seeking answers. As soon as we move towards this understanding of history we are starting to think both about analysis, and how the different kinds of questions we might ask will shape the answers we can construct. Added to this, the audience for any history is important—who is this history being written for? how will read it? why will they read it? All these issues feed into not only the questions we ask of our evidence, but how we shape and present our writing of history.  At its simplest level today history is probably accepted as being an account of the past, based on evidence. This highlights how historians no longer believe there can be one single history. Instead history is seen as being made up of multiple accounts and multiple perspectives; but the importance of evidence to support that account takes history, in theory at least, out of the realm of fiction, of myth and of legend. And yet, our look at propaganda and the history of nationalisms shows just how fuzzy this line can sometimes be, and how contested the idea of truth can become. | **Notes:** |