

History Department

Parallel Histories Debates

Mrs G Johnston

Year 13 and 14 History and Politics students took part in debates held online against schools from within Northern Ireland, schools in the Republic of Ireland and London schools.

Parallel Histories' aim is to encourage students to study disputed history by looking at relevant and controversial situations in history which have competing narratives, studying both sides of the argument closely using provided sources and forming coherent arguments to support both sides, ultimately allowing students to form their own judgements. Through partaking in debates, students are challenged to consider multiple

interpretations of evidence and different points of view, and this is a skill which is very useful in the study of history, as well as important in healthy democracies.

Some of the topics covered included: "Is the British government responsible for the devastating impact of the Great Famine in Ireland?" "Who is to blame for The Troubles in NI?" and "Who is responsible for the slow progress of the peace process?" We were provided with sources supporting both sides of the argument to look at by Parallel Histories, and under the guidance of Mr Erskine we developed our arguments and took part in the first debate. The aim is not to arrive at a predetermined

interpretation, but rather to challenge students to consider different viewpoints and develop their critical thinking, oracy and debating skills. All students had the opportunity to receive feedback from the teacher at the opposing school to help further develop their public speaking skills and development of arguments, and this made the debates a rewarding activity to be involved in.

Although all the debates which took place were online, our students have this year been invited to a live debating conference day in Stormont at the end of September as a result of our participation in the debates.



PARALLEL HISTORIES