

2&3 Colloquial English History

collocations fact or fiction

1 THE INTERVIEW Part 1

- a Read the biographical information about Mary Beard. What do you think "Classics" and "classicist" refer to?

Mary Beard is Professor of Classics at the University of Cambridge and a fellow of Newnham College. She is the author of many books about ancient history, and writes a popular blog called *A Don's Life*. In 2010, she hosted the historical documentary, *Pompeii: Life and Death in a Roman Town*, which showed a snapshot of the residents' lives before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79. In 2012, she wrote and hosted the three-part television series *Meet the Romans*, about "the world's first global metropolis." She also wrote and hosted *Caligula with Mary Beard* in 2013, where she attempts to sort the truth from the myth. Her frequent media appearances and sometimes-controversial public statements have led to her being described as "Britain's best-known classicist."



- b **3.14** Watch or listen to Part 1 of the interview. What does she think is the right (and the wrong) way to get people interested in ancient history? What does she think we can learn from history?

- c Now listen again. Complete sentences 1–5.

- 1 If a place name ends with *-chester* or *-caster*, it means that it...
- 2 London is the capital of Britain because...
- 3 In 63 BC there was a terrorist plot in Rome to...
- 4 When Cicero discovered the plot, he decided to...
- 5 Mary Beard compares this situation with...

Glossary

(63) BC Before Christ. These letters refer to the years before 1 AD (*Anno Domini*—the year of our Lord)

torch (verb) set fire to

Marcus Tullius Cicero /'sɪsəroʊ/ a Roman politician and lawyer, one of Rome's greatest orators

the Senate a political institution in ancient Rome

be exiled be sent to another country for political reasons or as a punishment

Guantanamo Bay a US military prison, where many suspected terrorists have been held

Part 2

- a **3.15** Now watch or listen to Part 2. Mark the sentences **T** (true) or **F** (false).

- 1 Mary Beard would not like to go back in time to any historical period.
- 2 She thinks that women have a better life now than at any time in the past.
- 3 She doesn't think that men would suffer from going back in time.
- 4 On her program *Meet the Romans*, she decided to focus on the celebrities of the ancient world.
- 5 She thinks that most history textbooks don't answer questions about how people dealt with practical issues in the past.
- 6 She thinks that questions about practical issues are just as interesting as why Julius Caesar was assassinated.
- 7 She doesn't think we can learn much from studying the assassination of Caesar.



- b Listen again. Say why the **F** sentences are false.

Glossary

Julius Caesar /'dʒʊljəs 'sɪzər/ a Roman general (100–44 BC) who played a critical role in the fall of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire. He was assassinated by a group of senators led by his former friend Brutus

Part 3

- a **3.16** Now watch or listen to Part 3. Answer the questions.

- 1 How important does Mary Beard think accuracy is in historical movies?
- 2 What historical movie did she really enjoy and why?
- 3 How does she feel about the fact that there are so many historical movies nowadays?



b Listen again. What do you think the **highlighted** informal words and phrases mean?

- "I think that, that, um, film and television, um, program makers can be a bit, can be a bit sort of **nerdish** about accuracy."
- "...if we're going to have a dog in the film should it be an Alsatian or, you know, a Dachshund or **whatever?**"
- "...look, these **guys** are getting the whole of Roman history...utterly wrong..."
- "...never mind its horribly **schmaltzy** plot..."
- "...there's no such good story as a true story—and that's what history's **got going for it...**"
- "...nonfiction in a, in a kind of way is always a better **yarn** than fiction is."

Glossary

Alsatian, Dachshund /æ'l'seɪʃn, 'dʌkshʊnd/ breeds of dog

2 LOOKING AT LANGUAGE

Collocations

Many of the expressions Mary Beard uses are typical collocations, that is, where one word frequently goes with the other. Try to learn these expressions as phrases. Incorporating them into your active language will help you both to understand spoken English more easily and to sound more fluent in your own speech.

3.17 Watch or listen to some extracts from the interview and complete the collocating words.

- "...an **lot** of our culture and our geography and our place names and so on are actually formed by the Romans..."
- "...one **example** of that is a famous incident in Roman history in 63 BC where there's a **terrorist** in, in the city of Rome..."
- "Now, in many ways that's the kind of **problem** we're still **...**"
- "I mean, what—how far does, how far should homeland security be more important than **rights...**"
- "And in part we've learned from how they debated those **rights and ...**"
- "...if it, if it was a small antidote to modern **culture**, I'm extremely pleased."
- "...look, these guys are getting the whole of Roman history in, in **the big** **utterly wrong...**"
- "But I think also, I mean, it shows that you don't always have to be **deadly** **about history.**"

3 ON THE STREET

a **3.18** Watch or listen to five people talking about history. Match the speakers (**D, He, Ha, Ad, and An**) with the people they admire. What reasons do they give?



Daisy
English

Heather
South African

Harry
English

Adam
American

Andrew
American

- Filippo Brunelleschi
- Bess of Hardwick
- Julius Caesar

- Nelson Mandela
- Queen Elizabeth I

b Watch or listen again. Who (**D, He, Ha, Ad, or An**)...?

- doesn't mention a specific time they would like to go back to
- would like to listen to some philosophers talking
- is studying the period they would like to go back to
- has read a lot about a specific person
- would like to go back to the most recent historical period

c **3.19** Watch or listen again and complete the Colloquial English phrases. What do you think they mean?

- "She was a real **...**"
- "I would have loved to **...** in California..."
- "...she actually stood up and was a person to **...**"
- "...he was a **...** person..."
- "I think there was a lot of innovation and interesting new ideas **...** in that time period..."

Glossary

Derbyshire a county in the middle of England

the Agora the main meeting place in ancient Athens

4 SPEAKING

Answer the questions with a partner.

- What periods and places in history did you study in school? Did you enjoy it as a subject?
- How do you think a teacher can get students interested in history?
- Do you think you have learned more about history from school or from books and movies?
- Why do you think historical movies and novels are so popular?
- Is there a person from history whom you admire or find especially fascinating?
- Is there a period of history that you would like to go back to?



Go online to watch the video, review the lesson, and check your progress