

Pass It On®...

Laughter Is the Best Teacher.

How humor and history go together in this classroom.

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Miss Arbury teaches history at the local high school. On the excitement scale, learning history for most kids sits somewhere between math and art. A few cool things and lots of facts to memorize. And yet Miss Arbury's classes have been the favorites at her school for over two decades. Students arrive early, sit quietly, and wait for class to begin. What could possibly make rowdy high school students so suddenly eager to learn?

When all are settled, Miss Arbury enters the classroom decked out in the full regalia of a British soldier during the revolutionary war. There are a few snickers as she approaches an old boom box. She pushes play and throws herself into a cheesy rap about the Boston Tea Party and the Declaration of Independence. She then challenges students to a rap off where they have to rhyme their responses to taxation without representation. Miss Arbury is not a good dancer. She looks nothing like a British soldier. She is short, a little round and by her own admission is mostly tone deaf. But the kids love it. And they know to come prepared with their own rhymes about world history.

At lunch time the cafeteria is abuzz with kids laughing about Miss Arbury's history class. She dresses up as a witch when teaching about the Salem Witch Trials. Wears a Winston Churchill mask when discussing the Battle of Britain. Her British accent is not even close, but the kids remember what she teaches.

At the end of the semester the lesson becomes clear. In order to make the future better we have to understand the past. Having a good laugh along the way makes the lesson much easier to remember. "I try to launch these kids into the future with a better understanding of how far we've come and how much more we can do," Miss Arbury says. And then adds wryly: "You know, the court jester always taught the most profound lessons."

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By The Foundation for a Better Life®