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Perhaps one of the most cliché answers to the question, “Why study history,” is that it allows for detailed insights into the successes and especially the failures of our ancient ancestors. We study this in order to learn from their mistakes and to not repeat the trend that could lead to our collapse. When we read about the terrible fate of the Easter Islanders, for example, some of us tend to connect this to our society. Seeing how we are more advance in our technology and more aware of the impact we can impose on the environment, we often think it is a lesson already learned. As was stated in L.P. Hartley’s novel, **The Go-Between**, “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” Us, with our high-tech electronics and extensive knowledge of science, mathematics, and history, are more knowledgeable and advance. We are more aware of our influence on the environment and have taken many measures to correct our past mistakes. Past societies such as the one on Easter Island may have failed to realize their faults but our society today is different from that long ago. We have better technology than those stone tools, cell phones and telephones that allow us to communicate further distances, and better weapons to defend ourselves.

Despite our successes, however, our society today as a whole is still struggling to correct similar problems that have led to many collapses. The main issue to be discussed is the impact we have on our environment today as compared to that of the past. Looking back on history, we see deforestation, pollution, warfare, and the competitive nature of our ancestors that has hindered the growth of their society and many times leading to their collapse. Looking forward into today’s society, however, we can see that these problems have not gone away. So, are our actions and mistakes today all that different from that of the past?

Essay Outline:

Major Theme of Essay

Opposing views on history

1. The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there
2. Diamond’s view

Introduction (paragraph above)

Following introduction

1. Failure to anticipate/perceive
2. Disastrous values
3. Unsuccessful solutions

Paragraphs

1. Diamond’s opposing views
2. Comparison of a,b,c to past and present societies
3. Failures in both societies

Contrast between today and the past

1. Technology today compared to the past
2. Awareness of impact on the environment

Conclusion