

# The wisdom of seventh graders: John Locke and influential persons

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My friend the seventh grade teacher was leading the class in a discussion of the most influential persons in history, and after two days of the students collectively deciding whom they would put on the list, my friend revealed the list compiled by the author Michael H. Hart. The students felt bad that their collaborative list didn't match the one this author came up with (as if this author's list was somehow the "correct answer"), but my friend pointed out how many names matched between the author's list and the student's list, as well as the fact that the list was the author's informed opinion and not some absolute truth. Not surprisingly, there were many names on the list that the students were unfamiliar with. These students are, after all, only twelve years old. "The only Homer I know is Homer Simpson." "Did Francis Bacon invent bacon?" (From the class smart aleck.) "I thought John Locke was a character on *Lost*."

There are those who fear that we're raising an entire generation for whom the name John Locke will call to mind only the character from *Lost*. Then there are those who believe that this has already happened, and they vote.

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