

Sources: the Building Blocks of History

Historians have such an easy life. They read old documents and rewrite them... right? Actually, they do a bit more than that. For GCSE History, you have to become a historian, so you'd best be sure what they really do.

Historians use **Sources** to **Find Out** about the **Past**

- 1) Sources are things that historians use to find out about and make sense of the past.
- 2) They can be written (e.g. newspapers, government reports) or visual (e.g. photographs, maps, films).
- 3) Sources can be categorised as either primary or secondary:

Primary sources — evidence from the period you're studying

For example, a newspaper report on the First World War from 4th September 1914, or a picture of Henry VIII that was painted during his reign.

Secondary sources — evidence **about** (but **not from**) the period you're studying

For example, a 1989 book called 'Origins of the First World War', or a website providing information about all the portraits ever painted of Henry VIII.

Historians have to **Interrogate** and **Interpret** every source

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King Henry VIII, 1540

- 1) Historians have to be very careful with sources. To make sure they're using sources accurately, historians interrogate every source they use. This means they ask themselves a series of questions about the source's background.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is this source?
E.g. It is a painting of King Henry VIII. • Who made this source?
E.g. It was produced by the King's official painter, Hans Holbein. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did they make the source?
E.g. He was asked to paint it by the King. • Where and when was it made?
E.g. It was made in the Palace of Whitehall in 1540. |
|--|---|

- 2) Historians use their answers to work out how useful and how reliable a source is. For example:
 - This is a professional painting made during Henry's reign (meaning the painter could have met Henry). So this should be a useful source for finding out what Henry looked like.
 - BUT perhaps the painter would have been punished if he didn't show Henry looking good, so it may not be entirely reliable.
- 3) After they've interrogated a source, historians need to interpret it.

A source that presents a one-sided view is biased.

This means deciding what it tells them about the topic they're studying.

- 4) For example, Henry was probably quite a large man with fair hair and a beard. But the painter may have been told to make the picture to Henry's liking — so based on just this picture, you can't really say for sure how big he really was.
- 5) Historians look at lots of sources, and compare them against each other. If sources contradict one another, they'll try to work out why, and what this tells them about the past.

Henry was the king — people would have done what he told them to.

For example, another painting might show Henry as very unattractive. But a historian might interpret it differently, depending on whether Henry had seen and approved of the painting, or whether it had been made by one of Henry's enemies and was perhaps biased against him.

And if you're really good at history — they'll let you on the telly...

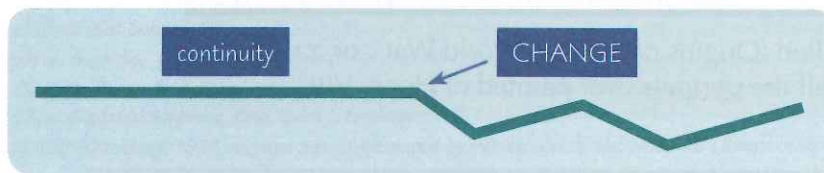
When you're studying GCSE History, you need to interrogate and interpret every source you see. Don't always assume what you see or read is an exact description of life way back when.

Building a Picture of the Past

Historians can use the information in various sources to get a better understanding of a particular period. This involves linking events together, and working out why things happened the way they did.

Historians study **Change and Continuity**

- 1) One way to get an idea of what happened in the past is to look at changes and continuities over time.
- 2) Change is when something happens to make things different.
 - Changes can be quick — e.g. a law making secondary education free.
 - Or they can be slow — e.g. a gradual change in a society's literacy levels.
- 3) Continuity is the opposite of change — it's when things stay the same — e.g. people believed for hundreds of years that disease was God's punishment for sin.
- 4) These ideas are opposites — think of continuity as a flat line going along until there is a sudden change and the line becomes a zigzag:



The most important changes in history are called turning points. After a turning point, life might never be the same again.

- 5) Change and continuity can happen at the same time in different parts of society.
 - For example, when the Normans conquered England in 1066, many of the richest people in English society lost their jobs and status (= change).
 - But life didn't actually change very much for peasant farmers (= continuity).
- 6) There are all sorts of things that a historian might look at for change or continuity. Some things might be obvious (e.g. a new king or queen would be an obvious change). But historians are also very interested in whether more everyday aspects of society are showing change or continuity — e.g. attitudes, lifestyles, beliefs, fashions, diets... the list is endless.

Historians think about **Causes and Consequences**

- 1) Cause means the reason something happened — e.g. the causes of the First World War.
- 2) Consequence means what happened because of an action — it's the result of an event, e.g. a consequence of the First World War was that a lot of young men were killed.
- 3) Causes and consequences can be either short-term or long-term.

Any time you have an event in history, think about what caused it and the effect it had — it's a really good way to show the examiner how different historical events are linked to each other.

Short-term cause: protest march on Washington

Short-term consequence: an increase in the number of black voters

EVENT: The introduction of new civil rights laws in America

Long-term cause: growing resistance to discrimination against African Americans

Long-term consequence: some people start to challenge discrimination against other groups (e.g. women).

- 4) Historians also think about how different causes and consequences interact. For example, there might be a chain of causes that lead to an event, or one consequence of an event might be more important than all the rest.

You can think of these as the **Four Cs of history**...

As you use this book, make sure you think about 'the Four Cs' on each page. When you identify causes, consequences, changes and continuities, add them to your revision notes and learn them.

Exam Skills for the Thematic Study

These two pages are all about how to tackle the thematic study section of your exam.

The Thematic Study covers a Long Period of time

For more general advice on how to answer exam questions, see p.135.

- 1) The thematic study covers up to 1000 years of history, right up to the present day. It's divided into four different time periods — but you'll need to think about the topic as a whole for the exam and make links between certain aspects of the different periods.
- 2) The study focuses on what changed (and what didn't change) over time and why.
- 3) You'll be expected to know the main factors of society in different periods — things like religion, government, science, technology and people's attitudes. You also need to know how these features affected the area of your thematic study — e.g. how improvements in science helped prevent disease.
- 4) Here are some things to bear in mind when you're revising for the thematic study part of your exam:
 - What created a need for change, or enabled it to happen? Did anything hinder change?
 - Important turning points — what were the most significant developments?
 - The extent of change — how much progress was made? What remained unchanged?
 - The impact of change — did some changes spark further developments?

There are Three basic types of exam question

- 1) You'll need to compare two different time periods. You'll be asked about a similarity or difference between these two periods, and will need to explain your answer.

Explain one way that beliefs about the spread of disease in the fourteenth century were similar to those in the seventeenth century. [4 marks]
- 2) The next question will ask you to explain something about a change — e.g. why something changed over a certain time, or why changes were slow / quick to happen. Make sure you analyse each point fully, including plenty of detail.

Explain why access to healthcare improved rapidly in the nineteenth century. [12 marks]
- 3) The final task will cover at least 200 years of history. You'll get a choice of two questions — answer the one you're most comfortable with. Each one will give a statement and you'll be asked how far you agree with it.

'The discovery of anaesthetics was an important development in surgery between c.1700 and c.1900.' Explain how far you agree. [16 marks]

 - Decide your opinion before you start writing, and state it clearly at the beginning and end of your answer.
 - Include evidence for both sides of the debate, and explain which factors are more important — these more important factors should be the ones backing up the opinion you've given.

There are also 4 marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar in this question (see p.136-137), so it's worth 20 marks in total.

In question types 2) and 3), you'll be given some 'stimulus points' — hints about things you could include in your answer. You don't have to include details about these stimulus points, so don't panic if you can't remember much about them. Even if you do write about the stimulus points, you must add other information too — if you don't, you can't get full marks.

Remember these things for All the questions

- 1) Always back up your points with specific evidence — this means that having a good knowledge of the facts is important. The evidence you use should be relevant to the question, and you should explain how it illustrates your point.
- 2) Your answer should be well organised and structured — each of your points should lead clearly to your conclusion.

Make sure you get your dates right — remember that the seventeenth century refers to the 1600s, the eighteenth century refers to the 1700s, and so on.

Exam Skills for the Thematic Study

Here are some sample answers to questions in the thematic study section of the exam.

Have a look at this **Sample Answer**

This sample answer will give you an idea of how to compare two historical periods. It's worth spending time thinking about how the answer has been structured — the comments will help you with this.

Explain one way that beliefs about the spread of disease in the fourteenth century were similar to those in the seventeenth century. [4 marks]

The first sentence directly addresses the question.

This gives more specific information.

One thing that was similar about people's beliefs about the spread of disease in both centuries was their belief in the 'miasma' theory. People believed that diseases were caught by breathing in 'bad air'. They thought that diseases came from things that weren't hygienic and had a bad smell, like abattoirs or dead bodies, and that the air transferred the disease. When the Great Plague hit London in 1665, people tried to stop it spreading by carrying around herbs and flowers to 'purify' the air around them.

This is an important feature of both periods.

The answer shows a good level of knowledge by giving an example of how people's actions were influenced by their beliefs.

Here's another **Sample Answer** to help you

This sample answer will give you an idea of how to respond to the 'how far do you agree' question. Look at the points that have been made and how they have been supported with evidence.

'The discovery of anaesthetics was an important development in surgery between c.1700 and c.1900.' Explain how far you agree. [16 marks]

This gives a basic answer to the question straight away.

It's important to give counter-arguments to show you've considered all the evidence.

It's good to end by clearly stating your overall opinion in the conclusion.

I agree that the discovery of anaesthetics was an important development. Before anaesthetics were discovered, many patients died from the trauma of pain in surgery. Anaesthetics such as chloroform, whose effects were discovered by James Simpson in 1847, improved surgery by removing pain. They also allowed surgeons to carry out longer and more complicated procedures.

However, the importance of anaesthetics was limited at first because they also caused a rise in death rates in the short term. The period between 1846 and 1870 is known as the 'Black Period' of surgery, because surgeons used anaesthetics to perform more complicated operations, which caused greater bleeding and infection. While anaesthetics saved some lives, they also caused more deaths because of the way they were used by surgeons, meaning their impact was limited at first.

Overall, I agree that the discovery of anaesthetics was an important development in surgery because they meant patients were in a lot less pain and made it easier for surgeons to operate. Although they contributed to more deaths in the short term, anaesthetics (combined with the use of antiseptics) had greatly improved surgery by 1900.

This explains how things used to be, to show that the development of anaesthetics was significant.

The answer gives examples of how anaesthetics improved surgery.

This is a shortened example — in the exam, you'll need to make several more points for both sides of the argument.

As painful as exams might be, anaesthetics won't help you...

Thematic studies are a long old haul, but don't worry — you'll probably know the last bits already because they'll have happened in your lifetime. That's sixteen-ish years in the bag. Just 984 years to go, then...

Exam Hints and Tips

These pages will show you how to use your knowledge to get those all-important marks.

You will take 3 Papers altogether

- 1) Paper 1 is 1 hour 15 minutes long. It's worth 52 marks — 30% of your GCSE. This paper will be divided into 2 sections:
 - Section A: Historic Environment (see p.33-43 for more information).
 - Section B: Thematic Study (see p.3-4) for more information).
- 2) Paper 2 is 1 hour 45 minutes long. It's worth 64 marks — 40% of your GCSE. This paper will be divided into 2 sections:
 - Section A: Period Study (see p.44-45 for more information).
 - Section B: British Depth Study (see p.86 for more information).
- 3) Paper 3 is 1 hour 20 minutes long. It's worth 52 marks — 30% of your GCSE. This paper will be divided into 2 sections, both about a Modern Depth Study (see p.87-89 for more information).
 - Section A: 2 questions on a source, testing knowledge and understanding.
 - Section B: A four-part question based on 2 sources and 2 interpretations.

The Thematic Study covered in this book is Medicine in Britain, c.1250-present (see p.5-32).

The Period Studies covered in this book are The American West, c.1835-c.1895 (see p.46-66), Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941-91 (see p.67-85) and Early Elizabethan England, 1558-88 (see p.90-112).

The Modern Depth Study covered in this book is Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918-39 (see p.113-134).

Make sure you know which Thematic Study, Period Study and Depth Studies you're studying. It might not be the ones we've covered in this book. And remember... some of your exam papers will contain questions on topics you haven't studied — **IGNORE THOSE**. Only answer questions on the topics you've studied.

Remember these Four Tips for Answering Questions

1. Don't spend Too Long on Short Questions

- 1) Learn the rule — the more marks a question is worth, the longer your answer should be.
- 2) Don't get carried away writing loads for a question that's only worth 4 marks — you need to leave time for the higher mark questions.

2. Plan your Essay Answers, but not the others

- 1) You don't need to plan answers to the shorter questions in the exam. That will waste time.
- 2) For longer essay questions, it's very important to make a quick plan before you start writing.
- 3) Think about what the key words are in the question. Scribble a quick plan of your main points — cross through this neatly at the end, so it's obvious it shouldn't be marked.

3. Stay Focused on the Question

- 1) Make sure that you directly answer the question. Back up your points with relevant facts. Don't just chuck in everything you know about the period.
- 2) You've got to be relevant and accurate — e.g. if you're writing about the rise of the Nazi Party, don't include stories about a London camel called George who moved rubble during the Blitz.
- 3) It might help to try to write the first sentence of every paragraph in a way that addresses the question, e.g. "Another way in which Chamberlain was an important cause of World War Two is..."

4. Use a Clear Writing Style

- 1) Essay answers should start with a brief introduction and end with a conclusion.
- 2) Remember to start a new paragraph for each new point you want to discuss.
- 3) Try to use clear handwriting — and pay attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation (see next page).

Exam Hints and Tips

In Paper 1 and Paper 3, the examiner will be marking you partly on your spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG). SPaG is worth nearly 5% of your overall mark, so don't forget to write nicely (as my mum would say).

Remember to **Check your Spellings**

- 1) You should leave about five minutes at the end of the exam to check your work.
- 2) Check as many questions as you can, but make sure you read over the questions which award SPaG marks especially carefully. (Marks are shown very clearly at the end of each question.)
- 3) There won't be time to check everything thoroughly, so look for obvious spelling mistakes...

where / wear / were

your / you're

though / thought / through / thorough

there / their / they're

to / too / two

of / off

silent letters, e.g. know, science, could

effect / affect

double letters, e.g. aggression, success

don't confuse 'past' with 'passed'

If you're not confident with any of these things, learn them now.

- 4) Make sure you haven't repeated words like 'and', 'but' and 'because':

Cholera became an epidemic in 1832 and it killed thousands of people and it eventually declined.

Using 'and' both times sounds really boring.

Cholera became an epidemic in 1832 and it killed thousands of people, but it eventually declined.

This doesn't sound so repetitive.

- 5) Don't worry if you find a mistake when you check your work. As long as you make your corrections clearly, the examiner won't mark you down.
- 6) If the mistake is just one word or a short phrase, cross it out neatly and write the correct word above it.

Many settlers ^{believed} ~~beleived~~ that Native Americans were lazy and savage.

Spell **Technical Words** correctly

- 1) There are a lot of technical words in history. You need to be able to spell them correctly. Learn these examples to start you off. The underlined letters are the tricky bits to watch out for.

alliance

argument

biased

controversial

consequences

defence

democracy

fascism

foreign

government

interpretation

parliament

source

successful

- 2) You'll also have to learn how to spell names and technical terms from the topics you're studying. Go back through them and make a list of tricky names and words. Here are some to look out for:

Names of historical figures:

Gorbachev

Hippocrates

Khrushchev

Pasteur

Names of places:

Afghanistan

Czechoslovakia

Roanoke

Ypres

Technical terms:

anaesthetics

détente

putsch

vaccination

Learn this page and make spelling errors history...

Mnemonics can help you remember how to spell tricky words. For example, you can remember 'biased' with the phrase 'Bleary Insomniacs Avoid Sleep Every Day'. Or something similar...

Exam Hints and Tips

How do you spell 'penicillin'? That's no problem for you. You've got all the tricky words down — now you just need to make sure your ideas are presented well by using correct punctuation and grammar.

You need to **Punctuate Properly**...

- 1) Always use a capital letter at the start of a sentence.
Use capital letters for names of particular people, places and things. For example:

All sentences start with capital letters. → In 1933 Hitler was made Chancellor of Germany.

The name of a person. A title. The name of a country.
- 2) Full stops go at the end of sentences, e.g. 'General Custer was killed in June 1876.'
Question marks go at the end of questions, e.g. 'How successful was the Nazi propaganda?'
- 3) Use commas when you use more than one adjective to describe something, or to separate items in a list:

Elizabeth I was intelligent, confident and powerful.
- 4) Commas can also join two points into one sentence with a joining word (such as 'and', 'or', 'so' or 'but'):

The work of Galen was central to medieval medical teachings, so doctors found it difficult to disagree with him.
- 5) Commas can also be used to separate extra information in a sentence:

Gorbachev, who became General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1985, was more open to the West than previous leaders.

...and use **Grammar Correctly**

- 1) Make sure your writing isn't too chatty and doesn't use slang words. It should be formal.

Edward Jenner's smallpox vaccine was well successful. Edward Jenner's smallpox vaccine was very successful.

This language is too informal for an exam. This is more appropriate.
- 2) Don't change tenses in your writing by mistake:

The mountain men explored the West first — they hunted animals for their skins.

Both verbs are in the past tense — which is correct. Writing 'hunt' instead of 'hunted' would be wrong.
- 3) Write your longer answers in paragraphs.
 - A paragraph is a group of sentences which talk about the same thing or follow on from each other.
 - You need to start a new paragraph when you start making a new point.

You show a new paragraph by starting a new line and leaving a gap (an indent) before you start writing: → From 1933, Hitler started a programme of public works, such as the building of huge new motorways. This gave jobs to thousands of people.
Even though there was increased employment, the Nazis altered the statistics so that things looked better than they were. Wages were also poor.

If you've forgotten to start a new paragraph, use a double strike (like this //) to show where the new paragraph should begin.
- 4) Remember — 'it's' (with an apostrophe) is short for 'it is' or 'it has'.
'Its' (without an apostrophe) means 'belonging to it'.
- 5) It's always 'should have', not 'should of' (and also 'could have' and 'would have' too).
- 6) If you know that you often confuse two words, like 'it's' and 'its', watch out for them when you're checking your work in the exam.

That's that, then — all that's left to do now is to sit the exams...

Good SPaG is a great way to get marks in the exam. So make sure you've learnt all the stuff on this page, and also everything about anything that's ever happened in all of history, and you should be okay.