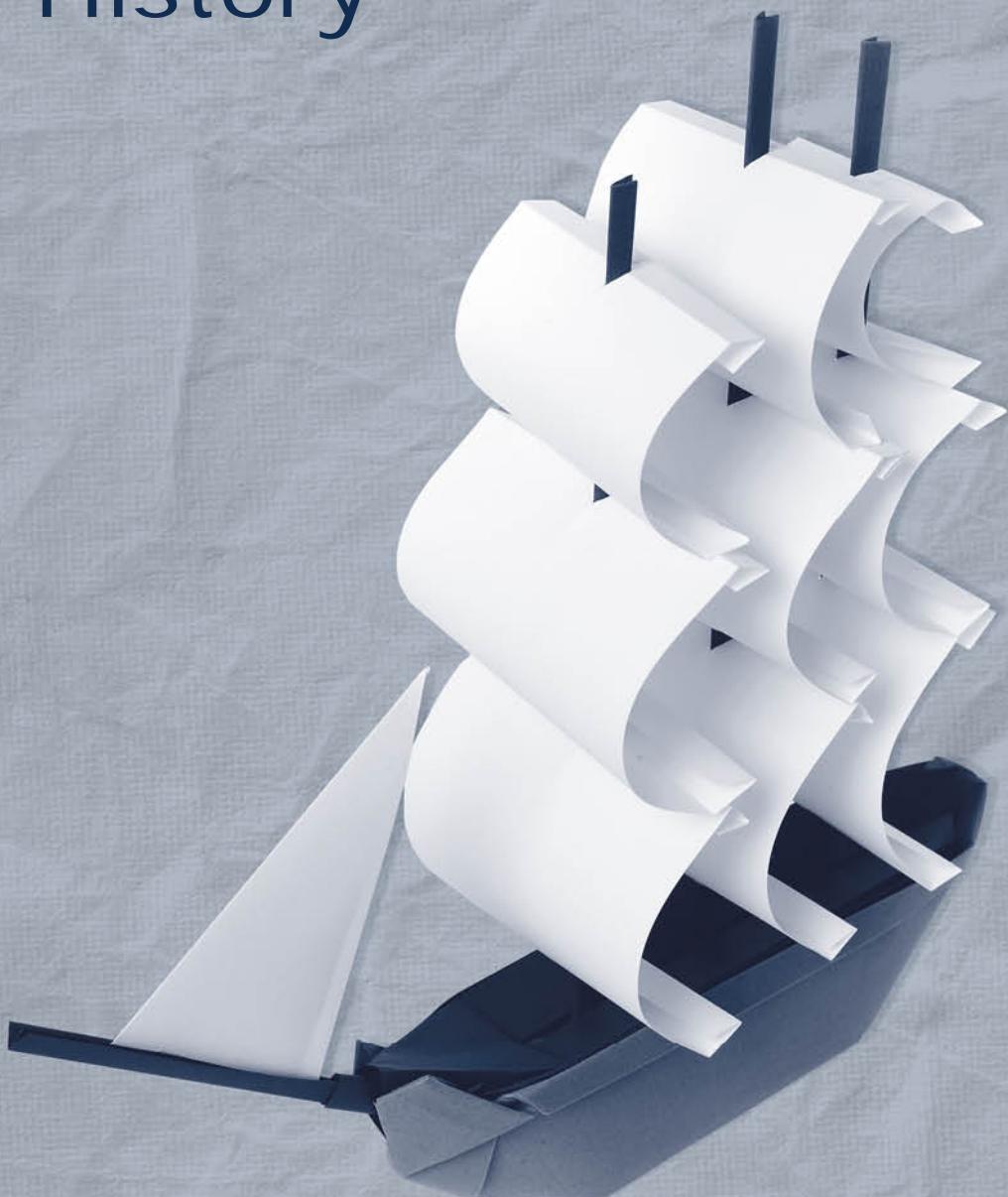


Pearson Edexcel A Level in History



EXAMPLE COURSEWORK QUESTIONS

Guidance on creating a coursework question

GCE History 2015: Coursework Questions

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Introduction

Within this guide is a selection of coursework questions to help you formulate your question(s).

The GCE A level History specification allows for a free choice of coursework topic and title. The assessment focus is analysis and evaluation of interpretations and the choice of topic should be issue-based.

It is permissible for coursework to cover interpretations of a question, problem or issue related to content covered in the examined components (Paper 1, Paper 2 or Paper 3); however, coursework must not duplicate coverage of the historical interpretations section studied by students for Paper 1.

It is also permissible for coursework to cover a new topic area. This could reflect the interest of individual students or the teaching expertise and resourcing within centres.

If all students are following an enquiry into the same topic area, then different titles or the same title may be used for them all, provided their work is individual.

If you would like to have feedback on your coursework proposal, please submit your query to the [coursework advisory service](#).

Example Question 1 – end of the Cold War

Title

Historians have disagreed about the reasons for the end of the Cold War.

What is your view about the reasons for the end of the Cold War?

Summary of differences in interpretation

The basic discussion will be between those that believe Reagan's policies brought about the end, compared to those who favour the policies/values of Gorbachev. The interpretations on the importance of Reagan will vary between authors, from those who focus on his overstretching of the Soviet economy to those who concentrate more on his compromising skills after 1984. Other interpretations will consider the importance of the gerontocracy and the impact of their policies on the Soviet economy. Other historians have focused on the internal socio-political factors within the communist system (such as Serhii Plokhy), whilst some have looked at the influence of other key players especially George Shultz and Shevardnadze.

Relevant publications

Oberdorfer, Dan *The Cold War to a New Era* (1998)

Matlock, Jack *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War ended* (2004)

Schweizer, Peter *Victory* (1994)

Zubok, V *A Failed Empire* (2007)

Fischer, Beth *Reagan Revival* (1997)

Plokhy, Serhii *The Last empire* (2014)

Brown, Archie *The Gorbachev Factor* (1996)

BBC Documentary: *Summits: the Geneva Summit*, Professor David Reynolds

Note: This enquiry may **not** be combined with option 1E, where the Section C focus on the Fall of the USSR would involve too great an overlap.

The proposal, although it does not associate the listed works with particular views, indicates that a debate exists over the proposed issue. As long as the listed authors are between them associated with the range of views cited in the proposal, it would appear to offer candidates the required scope to explore interpretations.

This is a current GCE 2008 controversy.

Example Question 2 – Russian rule (1924)

Title

Historians have disagreed about the extent to which by 1924 the Russian people had exchanged one authoritarian regime for another.

What is your view about the extent to which by 1924 the Russian people had exchanged one authoritarian regime for another?

Summary of differences in interpretation

- Interpretation one: Tsarist rule was more authoritarian and oppressive than the Bolshevik regime which succeeded in 1917. Christopher Hill argues that there was popular support for the regime.
- Interpretation two: the Bolshevik regime was more authoritarian and oppressive than the Tsarist rule. Robert Service argues that the Bolshevik regime was more totalitarian than any of the other previous regimes.
- Interpretation three: there was continuity between the two regimes and there was very little degree of change. Richard Pipes argues that Russian society is dependent on strong control by the state.

Relevant publications

Pipes, Richard *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture* (2007)

Figes, Orlando *A People's Tragedy* (1997)

Volkogonov, D *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire: Political Leaders From Lenin to Gorbachev* (2010)

Schapiro, Leonard *The Russian Revolution of 1917: the Origins of Modern Communism* (1986)

Service, Robert *The Penguin History of Modern Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-first Century* (2015)

Hill, Christopher *Lenin and the Russian Revolution* (2007)

Example Question 3 – Russian Revolution

Title

Historians have disagreed about the causes of the Russian Revolution (1917).

What is your view about the cause of the Russian Revolution?

Summary of differences in interpretation

- Interpretation one: Liberal view
- Interpretation two: Soviet view
- Interpretation three: Revisionist view

Relevant publications

Ulam, Adam *Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia*

Volkogonov, Dmitri *Lenin: A New Biography* (1994)

Figes, Orlando *A People's Tragedy: the Russian Revolution 1891-1924*

Pipes, Richard Edgar *The Russian Revolution*

Pipes, Richard Edgar *The Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes, Richard Edgar *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (1995)

Service, Robert *Lenin: A Biography* (2000)

Service, Robert *Lenin: A Political Life* (1985)

Service, Robert *A History of Twentieth Century Russia*

Service, Robert *A History of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Putin*

Service, Robert *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution 1917-23*

Schapiro, Leonard *The Origins of the Communist Autocracy* (1977)

Fitzpatrick, Sheila *The Russian Revolution* (1982)

Note: The proposal, although it does not associate the listed works with particular views, indicates that a debate exists over the proposed issue. As long as the listed authors are between them associated with the range of views cited in the proposal, it would appear to offer candidates the required scope to explore interpretations.

Example Question 4 – Papal response to Comnenus

Title

Historians have disagreed about the significance of the Papal response to Alexius Comnenus in the years 1095-1120.

What is your view about the significance of the Papal response to Alexius Comnenus in the years 1095-1120?

Summary of differences in interpretation

Historians have debated that Pope Urban II and his response to Alexius Comnenus was significant for the following different reasons:

- the launching of a war based on religion and pilgrimage
- the reduction of conflict between Christians in the west and the changing of feudal society
- the raising of the political status of the Papacy and Pope Urban II
- the uniting of the Muslims against Christian invaders
- the legacy created by the Crusades.

Relevant publications

Smith, Jonathan Riley *The Crusades: A History*

Asbridge, Thomas *The Crusades: The War for the Holy Land*

Asbridge, Thomas *The First Crusade: A New History*

Tyreman, Christopher *Gods War: A New History of the Crusades*

Runciman, Steven *A History of the Crusades*

Philips, Jonathan *The Crusades*

Note: The proposal, although it does not associate the listed works with particular views, indicates that a debate exists over the proposed issue. As long as the listed authors are between them associated with the range of views cited in the proposal, it would appear to offer candidates the required scope to explore interpretations.

Example Question 5 – Appeasement (1937–39)

Title

Historians have disagreed about the appropriateness of Appeasement as the basis of British Foreign Policy 1937–1939.

What is your view about the appropriateness of Appeasement as the basis of British Foreign Policy during 1937–1939?

Summary of differences in interpretation

The controversy centres around the ‘traditional’ approach that Chamberlain’s policy towards the dictators was inappropriate, that Appeasement rather than avoiding war actually convinced the dictators that Britain would not fight Nazi aggression, and as such, rather than restrain Hitler actually encouraged him to embark on a belligerent foreign policy. This view neglects to assess the practicality of Chamberlain’s position based upon military, diplomatic and economic considerations which possibly indicate that there was not a suitable pragmatic alternative to Appeasement during 1937–39.

Relevant publications

Ferguson, Nail ‘Chapters 9 Defending the Indefensible’ and ‘Chapter 10 The Pity of Peace’ in *The War of the Worlds*

Overy, Richard *The Road to War*: emphasis on imperial past underlying appeasement

Charmley, John *Chamberlain and the Lost Peace*: Revisionist viewpoint

Self, Robert *Neville Chamberlain and Rearmament*: Revisionist viewpoint

Q2 Squared Debates: *Did Neville Chamberlain do the Right Thing?*

Speakers: Sir Richard Evans, John Charmley, Glyn Stone, Piers Brendon

Godland, Graham *Was Britain’s Appeasement Policy a Mistake?*

Channel 4 Summit series: *Hitler and Chamberlain: The Munich Summit*, Professor David Reynolds, critic of Chamberlain’s policy

Note: This enquiry may **not** be combined with option 1G, where the content would involve too great an overlap.

Example Question 6 – impact of New Deal

Title

Historians have disagreed about how successful the impact of the New Deal was by 1941.

What is your view about how successful the impact of the New Deal was by 1941?

Summary of differences in interpretation

- The New Deal marked a continuation of the long struggle between public power and private interests, but Roosevelt moved that struggle to a new level. The unrestrained power of the business community was finally confronted with an effective challenge, and what emerged was a system of reformed capitalism, with far more protection for workers, farmers, consumers, and others than in the past.
- The New Deal was a halfway revolution that enhanced the positions of some previously disadvantaged groups (notably farmers and urban workers) but did little or nothing for many others (such as African-Americans and the urban poor). However, given the restrictions imposed on it by the period's political and ideological realities, the New Deal probably could not have done much more than it did.
- The New Deal was counter-productive. Federal planning extended the nation's economic crisis through erratic policies that unnecessarily tinkered with the economy and which did not lift the United States out of the Great Depression. Instead, recovery only came with the abandonment of these policies by the 1940s.

Relevant publications

Adams, D. K. *Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal* (Historical Association Pamphlets, 1979)

Renshaw, P. *Franklin D Roosevelt*, (Longman, 2009)

Powell, J. *FDR's Folly; How Roosevelt and his New Deal Prolonged the Great Depression* (2005)

Shlaes, A. *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* (Jonathan Cape, 2007)

Badger, A. J. *FDR, The First 100 Days* (A Cohen, 2008)

Badger, A. J. *The New Deal: The Depression Years 1933-1940* (Macmillan, 1989)

Kennedy, David M. *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War 1929-1945* (Oxford 1999)

Conkin, Paul *The New Deal* (1968, 3rd ed. 1992)

Schlesinger Jr., A. *The Age of Roosevelt* (1957-1960)

Leuchtenberg, William E. *Franklin D Roosevelt and the New Deal* (Harper and Row, 1963, new ed. 2009)

Note: The cited works are not associated with particular lines of argument. As long as the appropriate publications are between them associated with the range of views cited in the proposal, it would appear to offer candidates the required scope to explore interpretations.

This is a current GCE 2008 controversy.

Example Question 7 – nature of Napoleon's rule

Title

Historians have disagreed about the nature of Napoleon Bonaparte's domestic rule in France.

What is your view about the nature of Napoleon Bonaparte's domestic rule in France?

Summary of differences in interpretation

Napoleon's rule of France has provoked great controversy. Historians such as Andrew Roberts and Vincent Cronin admire Napoleon for his modernising reforms based on the principles of the French Revolution. Others compare him to the Enlightened Despots of the eighteenth century. A third group, including Alfred Cobban, criticise the repressive nature of the regime seeing him as a ruthless dictator who was far more concerned with self-interest than the good of France. Historians disagree about the extent of popular support Napoleon enjoyed and how far he furthered the principles of the French Revolution.

Relevant publications

- Cobban, Alfred *History of Modern France Vol 2 1799-1871* (1961)
Cronin, Vincent *Napoleon* (1971)
Crook, Malcolm *Napoleon comes to power: Democracy & Dictatorship in Revolutionary France 1795-1804* (1998)
Ellis, Geoffrey *Napoleon Profiles in Power* (1997)
Johnson, Paul *Napoleon* (2002)
Matthews, Andrew *Revolution and Reaction: Europe 1789-1849* (2001)
Price, Roger *A Concise History of France* (Cambridge 1993)
Roberts, Andrew *Napoleon* (BBC Documentary 2015)
Roberts, Andrew *Napoleon the Great* (2014)
Rudé, George *Revolutionary Europe 1783-1815* (1964)
Wright, D.G. *Napoleon and Europe* (1985)

Note: Not all the lines of argument are associated with cited works. As long as the appropriate publications are between them associated with all three views cited in the proposal, it would appear to offer candidates the required scope to explore interpretations.

Example Question 8 – origins of the First World War

Title

Historians have disagreed about the significance of German Imperial ambitions in the origins of the First World War.

What in your view about the significance of German Imperial ambitions in the Origins of the First World War?

Summary of differences in interpretation

There are a multitude of differing interpretations as demonstrated below:

- Gerhard Ritter - Germany was defensive like much of Europe
- Fischer - German Aggression
- Fischer - German foreign policy and German domestic tension
- AJP Taylor - War by timetable: No one particularly wanted war, however mobilised quickly as a deterrent. Generals created grand timetables
- Hillgruber - war was due to encirclement
- Erdman - Germany slipped into war
- Austria were to blame.
- Due to Russian mobilisation.

Relevant publications

Johl, James *Origins of the First World War* (2006)

Fischer, Fritz *Germany's aims in the first world war* (1968)

Henig, Ruth *Origins of the First World War* (2001)

Taylor, AJP *War by timetable, how the first world war began* (1969)

Joll, James *1914 debate continues* (1966)

Clark, Christopher *Lecture: Sleep walkers, how Europe went to war in 1914* (2014)

Note: This is a current GCE 2008 controversy.

Example Question 9 – end of American civil war

Title

Historians have disagreed about why the Union defeated the Confederacy in the American Civil War.

What in your view about why the Union defeated the Confederacy in the American Civil War?

Summary of differences in interpretation

- That the Union defeated the Confederacy due to its greater economic and industrial strength.
- That the Confederacy lost due to internal divisions in the Confederacy.
- That the Union won due to more effective military leadership.
- That the Union won due to more effective political leadership.

Relevant publications

Current, Richard N. 'God and the Strongest Battalions' in *Why the North won the Civil War*, ed. David Herbert Donald (2005)

Potter, David M. 'Jefferson Davis and the Political Factors in Confederate defeat' in *Why the North won the Civil War*, ed. David Herbert Donald (2005)

McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom* (1988)

Sewell, Richard H. *A House Divided* (1988)

Williams, David *A People's History of the Civil War* (2005)

Brogan, Hugh *The Penguin History of the USA* (1999)

Note: The cited works are not associated with particular lines of argument. As long as the appropriate publications are between them associated with the range of views cited in the proposal, it would appear to offer candidates the required scope to explore interpretations.

This is a current GCE 2008 controversy.

Example Question 10 – the Holocaust

Title

Historians have disagreed about the extent to which the Holocaust was a long-term plan.

What is your view about the extent to which the Holocaust was a long-term plan?

Summary of differences in interpretation

- Intentionalist interpretation that the Holocaust was predetermined
 - Hildebrand and Andreas Hillgruber: Hitler's unique and direct authorship going back to the earliest years as *Mein Kampf* was the blueprint
 - Fleming and Dawidowicz: Hitler was key and committed to the Holocaust from the start of his career)
- Extreme structuralist interpretation that the Holocaust arose due to the failure of emigration and the impact of war.
 - Mommsen and Broszat: the turning to genocide as such was something new resulting from the years 1939–41.
- Moderate structuralists interpretation advocating gradualism
 - Schleunes: no direct path and lack of clear directions
 - Kershaw: twisted road
 - Aly: bureaucracy

Relevant publications

- Hildebrand, Klaus *The Third Reich* (1984)
- Fleming, Gerald *Hitler and the Final Solution* (1992)
- Schleunes, Karl A. *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews, 1933–39* (1990)
- Berghahn, V R *Modern Germany* (1982)
- Peukert, Detlev *Inside Nazi Germany* (1982)
- Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996)
- Kershaw, Ian *Hitler* (2000)
- Dawidowicz, Lucy *The War against the Jews 1933–45* (1975)
- Mayer, Arno J. *Why did the Heavens Not Darken: the Final Solution in History* (1988)
- Aly, Gotz *Final Solution* (1999)
- Aly, Gotz and Heim, Susanne *Architects of Annihilation* (2003)
- Browning, Christopher *The Origins of the Final Solution* (2005)
- Longrich, Peter *The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution* (2005)
- Farmer, Alan 'Hitler and the Holocaust' in *History Today*, Issue 58 (Sept 2007)

Note: If you are planning to combine this with Paper 1G, please bear in mind that students must avoid overlap with the controversy in their selection of works and discussion of issues. The roots of policy might involve some commonality of reading for both areas as the focus of the controversy is not exclusively international relations; it involves an understanding of Hitler's ideas and his role in the shaping of Nazi foreign policy.