

Notes

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ICE BREAKER

INTRODUCE YOURSELF
TO ONE PERSON YOU
DON'T KNOW.

GIVE ONE CHALLENGE
AND ONE SUCCESS
FROM THE FIRST YEAR
OF TEACHING THE NEW
SPECIFICATION.



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A LEVEL HISTORY SUMMER NETWORK 2016



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Aims of the network

- To network and share teaching experiences
- To celebrate successes and discuss/problem-solve challenges of the first year
- To discuss approaches to planning and teaching the A Level Coursework component



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Agenda

- Review the first year of teaching the new specification
- Approaches to Coursework
 - Introduction
 - Taught skills course
 - Interpretations
 - Scheme of work
 - Exemplar response
- AOB

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Review of Year 1

- How have you approached the first year?
- Any concerns for next year?
- How have you found the Edexcel support materials? Have you seen the [additional specimen papers](#)?



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APPROACHES TO COURSEWORK





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Coursework: Assessment overview

A Level only
40 marks (20%)
AO1 5%; AO3 15%
3,000–4,000 words

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Planning coursework



Coursework could cover:

- interpretations of a question, problem or issue related to content covered in the examined components (but **not** Paper 1 Section C)

or

- a new topic area question, problem or issue, dependent on the interests of the students and provided there is a range of suitable interpretations available. In this case, it would be permissible to **deliver a short course** to provide students with the contextual background.


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Choosing works

- Students should have the opportunity to **choose** works relevant to the chosen question, problem or issue.
- The works must be the size of a chapter or article (electronic resources are fine, e.g. podcast lectures, documentaries, etc. as long as they are an equivalent size, a clear historical interpretation and produced by historians).
- Centres can provide packs of suitable online/printed works, as long as students have **sufficient** independent choice (as will be shown in the research record).

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Setting the question

Historians have disagreed about [the chosen question, problem or issue]. What is your view about [the chosen question, problem or issue]?

With reference to **three** chosen works:

- analyse the ways in which interpretations of the question, problem or issue differ
- explain the differences you have identified
- evaluate the arguments, indicating which you found most persuasive and explaining your judgements
- make use of supplementary reading as appropriate.

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Proposals

The proposal must:

- give the assignment title and selection of three chosen works
- identify two other works for supplementary reading
- show that the chosen works contain differences of view and have scope for debate
- show that articles or chapters from longer works are manageable within word count
- select works authored by historians.

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THE TAUGHT SKILLS COURSE

- What to cover: note taking, research skills, synthesis, planning...
- Teaching historical interpretations
- Evaluating an interpretation
- Sharing ideas for activities



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Taught skills course: Note taking

Activity 1: sharing ideas

- **How do you teach students to take notes?**
Selecting main points, use of sub-headings and questions, summaries of notes made, use of shorthand (govt., etc.)
- **What active reading strategies do you know?**

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Taught skills course: Identifying arguments

Argument is crucial to history! Students need to determine the key argument and identify the historical debate: the differing claims and judgements.

Discuss

How do we teach this necessary skill?

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Identifying arguments

As well as understanding what an historian is saying, claiming or arguing, an equally or perhaps more important aspect of comprehension is understanding what an historian is *doing*.

For example:

- providing *an answer to a question* that its author has posed, tacitly or explicitly
- providing an explanation, assessing significance or justifying claims.

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Identifying arguments: card sorting

Reason 1
There were simply not enough Gestapo officials to go around. [There were only 28 secret police officials for the entire Würzburg region of nearly a million people.]


+

Reason 2
Somewhere between 80–90% of the crimes that were reported to the Gestapo came from ordinary citizens.

∴

Conclusion
The Gestapo could not have operated without the cooperation of the citizens of Germany.

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Identifying arguments: considering the title

C Eaton *The Southern Confederacy*

What will be the focus of the following chapters?


- Chapter 9 'Naval Power in the Civil War'
- Chapter 13 'The loss of the will to fight'

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UNDERSTANDING INTERPRETATIONS

'A level specifications must require students to develop an understanding of the nature and purpose of history as a discipline and how historians work.'
(DfE, 2014, pp2–3)



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What are historical interpretations?

Why is there no singular and definitive account of the past?

'The topics, issues and themes that we think merit attention, the questions that we consider it worth asking, the methods of research and analysis that we use to answer these questions and the sources that we have available to us all change with time and histories are always and inevitably products of the particular moments in time in which they are written...'

Dr Arthur Chapman, *Coursework guide*

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What assumptions might A Level students make about historical interpretation?

1. Students may believe that variation is a problem – that there should be one 'true' account of the past.
2. They may believe that you can explain away variation in terms of bias, political distortion, etc.
3. ... or in terms of simple errors on the part of historians.
4. They may trivialise differences in interpretation – as if these are merely differences of 'opinion' that historians choose to 'express'.

Discuss
How do we help students realise that variation is legitimate and, in many practical senses, inevitable?


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We need to help students come to understand:

- that historical interpretations are **constructions** – things that historians **actively make** rather than simply find
- that histories are more like **theories** – developed in answer to questions or in response to problems – than they are like pictures
- that although histories involve **representation** (description, explanation, etc.), they are not simply re-presentations of a fixed past.

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Activity 2: helping students develop their thinking about historical interpretations

Two research teams have been instructed to count the exact number of people in Kingston marketplace at precisely 11.57am on Tuesday 15 February 2016. One team reports the number as 267.5 people and the other as 1,756.

How on earth do we explain this dramatic discrepancy?

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Historical equivalents to the 'square' problem

For example, the question of the number of 'Chartists' who attended the Kennington Common meeting of 10 April 1848 (the answers at the time ranged from 15,000 to 300,000).

We cannot count the number of 'Chartists' or 'Chartist supporters' at a meeting without making decisions **about how to define these concepts**.

Asking students to define the concepts and then to apply them to a source ought to make it clear that **decisions and judgements are involved** and that answers to such questions are **constructed as much as they are 'found'**.

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Why different interpretations?

Historians:

- may be asking different questions
- may be consulting different source materials
- may be using different concepts to make sense of the records that they are examining.

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Activity 3: evaluating an interpretation

Chapter 3: The Impact of the Blockade' in *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, by Beringer, Hattaway, Jones & Still, US 1986, pages 56–60


The historians argue in this work that the South did not lose the American Civil War because of the Union naval blockade.

Evaluate the historians' interpretation with reference to:

- their focus – questions asked
- the evidence they used
- their method.

Group 1 - 2nd half of p56 Group 2: 2nd half of p58 Group 3: p60

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Evaluating an interpretation

Focus: The economic impact of the blockade on the South

Evidence used:

p56 blockade runners slipping through the blockade


p60 little Confederate government regulation of blockade runners

pp58–59 not referenced much in Confederate officials' writings

Method: Looking for signs of southern concern about the blockade.

What additional evidence/different method/questions might have challenged the conclusions reached here?

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Activity 4: teaching interpretations

Discuss

What ideas for skills exercises do you have to teach students why there are different historical interpretations?

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How to use the resource record

This must:

- list all the resources used
- be checked regularly by the teacher, in order to validate the research process and verify the independence of the research undertaken
- provide evidence from the student in the 'comments' column of why they selected the three chosen works, including a short summary of the main differences between them.

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Activity 5: planning the Coursework scheme of work

Discuss

- How will you plan your coursework?
- How will you plan Year 2?

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Activity 6: exemplar response

Read the exemplar student response provided in your booklet and discuss the approach taken by the student.

- What was done well?
- What could be improved?
- What are your thoughts on its structure?

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Support

- Coursework advisory service [information sheet](#) and checking service
- [Example coursework questions](#)
- [Getting Started guide](#)
- Dr Arthur Chapman's *Coursework support guide: Understanding interpretations*
- Teacher marking and standardisation training (Coursework)

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In conclusion

- Ideas for further support or networks
- Any further questions?
- A final chance for networking!

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