

# A Level History

Delivering coursework

Network event



# Agenda

Coursework requirements

Planning and preparation

Supporting your students:

- the debate
- different interpretations
- wider reading

Pearson support

# Objectives

This A level History network will allow delegates to:

- refresh understanding of the coursework requirements
- consider how to prepare to deliver the component
- discuss ways to support students effectively
- network and share ideas about good teaching practice.

# Coursework requirements



# Coursework requirements

The coursework makes up 20% of the assessment value of the total qualification.

The coursework assesses AO1 (5%) and AO3 (15%).

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.

# Students are required to:

- investigate a historical problem, question or issue to form a critical view based on relevant reading on the topic.
- analyse, explain and evaluate the interpretations of three historians on the topic.
- produce a written assignment of 3000–4000 words.
- include a bibliography and references for quotations and citations.
- analyse, explain and evaluate the interpretations in the three chosen works and reach an overall judgement on the view, making use of supplementary reading.

# Mark Scheme

## Bullet points

1. Identification of, selection from, and deployment of material relevant to an aspect of historical debate.
2. Ability to reach and sustain an overall judgement about a matter of historical debate in its historical context
3. Analysis and explanation of differences in historians' views
4. Evaluation of, and judgement on, historians' arguments
5. Demonstration of understanding of relevant concepts and organization and communication of a concisely formulated argument.

# Mark Scheme: bullet point 4

## Evaluation of, and judgement on, historians' arguments

- Level 1: Evaluation of the chosen works relates to their **information** rather than their argument or is based on **questionable assumptions**.
- Level 2: The evaluation recognises an element of argument in the chosen works but the **criteria for judgement are routine or left implicit** and **substantiation is limited**.
- Level 3: **Attempts** are made to establish valid criteria for evaluation of **some** arguments in the chosen works and to relate the overall judgement to them, although with **weak substantiation**.
- Level 4: **Valid criteria** are established by which the arguments in the three chosen works can be judged and they are **applied** in the process of making judgements, although some of the evaluations may be only **partly substantiated**.
- Level 5: **Valid criteria** are established by which the arguments in the three chosen works can be judged and they are **applied and fully justified** in the process of making judgements.

**Task:** Now take one other bullet point and similarly compare it through the levels.



# Exemplar

**Task:** Read the introduction, conclusion, Furet section (pp2–3) and part of the ‘reason for differences’ section (p7) of the exemplar – what level/mark would you give it?

Script A was awarded 40 marks, which places it at the top of Level 5.

- BP1 – there is a range of relevant material to the enquiry identified from reading, appropriately cited, and deployed with precision demonstrating a clear understanding of the issue under debate (Level 5).
- BP2 – there is a sustained judgement, which is integrated into the discussion throughout (Level 5).
- BP3 – there is analysis of the three chosen works and the differences between them, with explanation of the basis of the authors’ arguments – **look at the start of some of the paragraphs** (Level 5):
- BP4 – valid criteria are established and justified (Level 5).
- BP5 – knowledge is deployed to show understanding of the conceptual focus, it is concise, well-organised, logical and coherent (Level 5).

Shapiro takes quite a different approach to this; while he still argues that the rise of extremist groups set up the conditions to which the Constitutional Monarchy fell, he explains their rise through his theory of traumatic politics. Rather than blaming the inexperience of the deputies,

# Level 5

## Sustained analysis, explanation and evaluation of arguments

- A range of material relevant to the enquiry has been identified from reading, appropriately cited and selected and deployed with precision to demonstrate understanding of the issues under debate. Most of the relevant aspects of the debate will be discussed in a sustained evaluative argument.
- Material from reading is used with discrimination to sustain a considered overall judgement on the question. Contextual knowledge of the issues is fully integrated into the discussion of the debate.
- Analyses the views in the chosen works and the differences between them, explaining the issues of interpretation raised. Explanation of points of view and differences between them demonstrates understanding of the basis of the arguments of the authors and the nature of historical debate.
- Valid criteria are established by which the arguments in the three chosen works can be judged and they are applied and fully justified in the process of making judgements.
- Knowledge is deployed to demonstrate understanding of the conceptual focus of the enquiry, and to respond fully to its demands. The answer is concise and well organised. The argument is logical and coherent throughout and is communicated with clarity and precision.

# Preparing to deliver



# Planning

## **What topic?**

The freedom to choose a topic you would like to cover, sufficiently complex and interesting enough to have generated disagreement between historians.

‘Historians have disagreed about...’

## **What question?**

It could include debates on change, continuity, causation, consequence, similarity, difference, significance or the key features of societies and periods.

Check there are sufficient published resources available for students to exercise individual judgement.

**In chat:** do you use the same title for your cohort or do your students choose different titles?

# Short taught course

A short skills-based course of study that develops understanding of:

- the range of methods used by historians in their work
- the diverse range of focuses and purposes that historians have
- the different perspectives of historians.

The course should also help students to develop enquiry skills, for example:

- effective record keeping and referencing
- planning skills
- effective use of a library and the internet.

White/gold or blue/black?



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# What is historical interpretation?

Ask students for their thoughts on why there isn't just one answer to their coursework question.

'The facts are really not at all like fish on the fishmonger's slab. They are like fish swimming about in a vast and sometimes inaccessible ocean; and what the historian catches will depend, partly on chance, but mainly on what part of the ocean he chooses to fish in and what tackle he chooses to use – these two factors being, of course, determined by the kind of fish he wants to catch.

'By and large, the historian will get the kind of facts he wants. History means interpretation.'

E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (Penguin, 1990), p.23



# What is historical interpretation?

The 'Prologue' to *What is History, Now?* offers a useful discussion of the centrality of interpretations to the study of history, and the value of engaging with a diverse range of voices.

'This book intends to prove... that history can be flexible, malleable, colourful and without bias – that history is, above all, interpretation. This is why this volume hosts a multiplicity of voices...

'This book is designed to offer a way in, proving that history is for everybody, and inviting you, the reader, to enter and share in the many ways in which history can be enjoyed and interpreted. It is for everyone who is questioning how to look at the past, how to think about the present, and how to act in the future.'

*What is History, Now?* ed. Helen Carr and Suzannah Lipscomb (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2021), pp.15, 16.

# What is historical interpretation?

‘Historical interpretations are *constructions* – things that historians *actively make* rather than simply find.

**In chat:** why are there different interpretations?

Historians:

- may be asking different questions
- may be selecting different types of evidence
- may be using different concepts or methods to make sense of the records that they are examining.
- might be influenced when they are writing by different events ’

‘Even the decision to study some things and ignore others is an act of interpretation.’ Discuss.

[Arthur Chapman, ‘Developing students’ understanding of historical interpretation’, \(abridged\) p9](#)



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# Historians making choices



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Two researchers are counting how many people are in a market square – at the same day and time – to judge its success. They concluded significantly different numbers which affected their judgements, but neither was wrong.

**In chat: why?**

Arthur Chapman, 'Developing students' understanding of historical interpretation', (abridged) p15.

# Historical interpretation: making choices

An historical debate: the question of the number of Chartists who attended the Kennington Common meeting, 10 April 1848, ranged at the time from 15,000 to 300,000. Was it a failure?

To count them we have to define what is meant by Chartists.

**In chat:** what decisions have to be made?



Source: William Edward Kilburn

Arthur Chapman, 'Developing students' understanding of historical interpretation', (abridged) p15

# Diverse range of focus and purpose

**Provide a factual account, with statistics and quotations, of an historical event.**

Give each group a different analytical task:

- select the economic statistics & facts & write a judgement on its economic significance
- select the quotations from & facts about people at the time and write a judgement on its important social effect
- select facts relating to the Church to conclude its religious significance
- select the political speeches or decisions and write a judgement on its political significance.

Groups to present their supported judgements in class, with resulting discussion on how different methods/focus/purpose led to different interpretations

**Task:** Identify the factual focus in each of the four extracts in your booklet, p8 on the impact of the English civil war.

Or read an account and focus on **either** the long-term consequences **or** the immediate effects of the event.

# Interpretations exercises

Provide a wide range of newspapers and periodicals to compare their op-ed sections on the same event or topic.

Consider how their columns construct different arguments according to contrasting editorial perspectives, with different political agendas and readership.



**In chat:** what class exercises have you done that helped students understand why historians have different interpretations?

# ‘Hot seating’ interpretations exercise

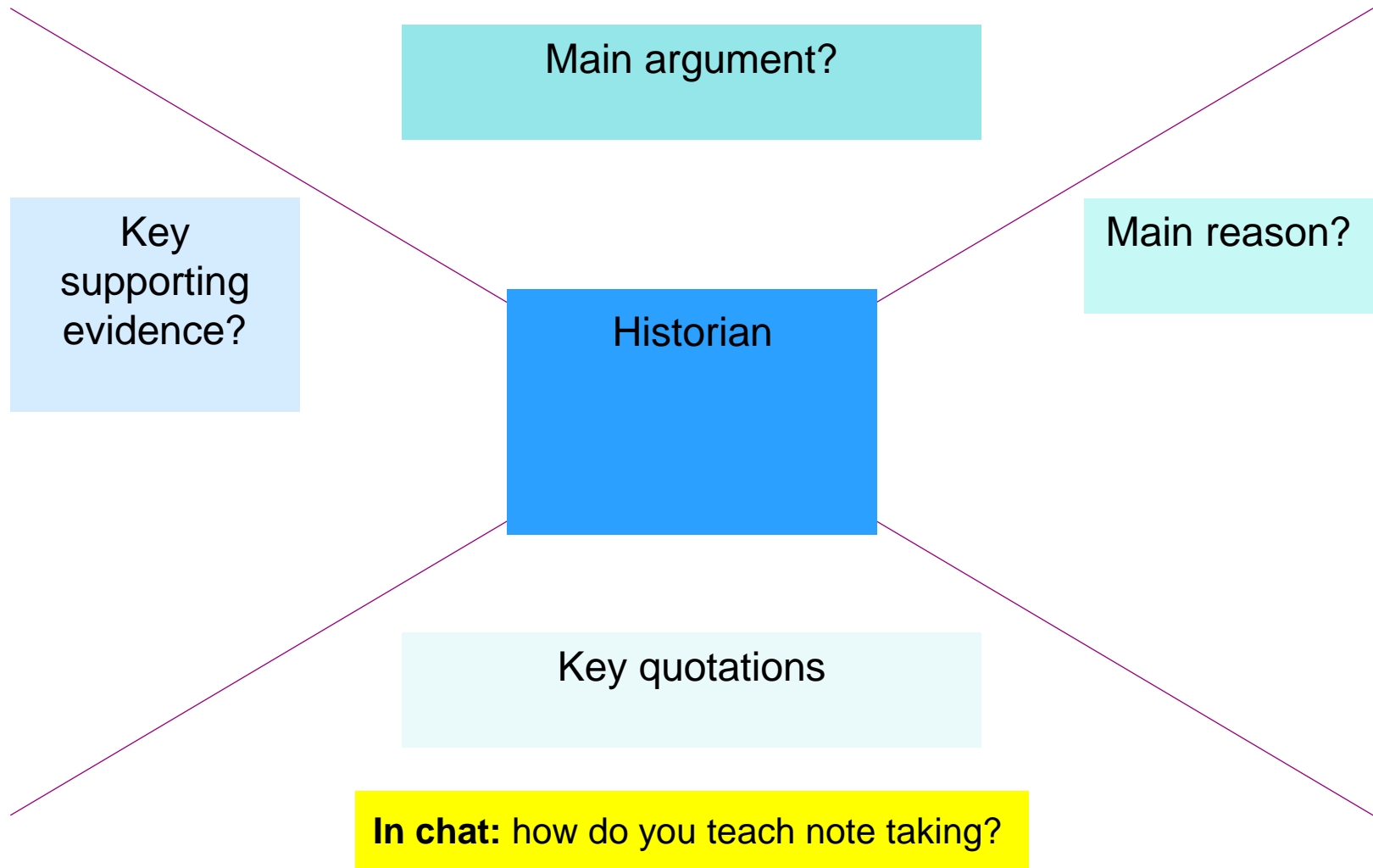
Nominate 3 students to represent 3 historians. Each given an extract from their historian and a brief crib sheet on their historian’s life. They prepare a summary of their historian’s argument & think (with your help) of possible reasons for their views.

Rest of the class given the same extracts, but not the crib sheet, & reminder of the debate topic; to prepare interview questions on the historians’ views and their reasons for those views.

After each historian has spoken, a class discussion on the merits of each historian’s interpretation, followed by the students’ own views, as well as their criteria for those views.

In groups of 3 to represent the 3 historians – each given a passage containing their historian’s argument and to think about reasons for their views – both from the passage itself (the focus, evidence used etc) & from subsequent research into their lives and other works. Share within the group and compare the different approaches, then feeding into a whole class discussion.

# Note taking







# Resources

As well as books and articles in your libraries, you can produce a bank of online resources for students to select from, whilst appreciating that this is their independent research so there needs to be a wide range.

Guidance can be given to help them find additional resources online themselves or from local libraries.

Liaison with the manager of your Learning Resource Centre/Library is crucial here. Perhaps they could come into the classroom to provide guidance on research skills and the online resources available?

From their reading, the student then selects three main historians and at least two supplementary works – the research record is evidence of this process.

# Criteria

Thinking of relevant questions, e.g.:

- Does their focus limit their understanding?
- Is it balanced or one sided?
- What is their time-frame?

**In chat:** what other criteria questions could you use?

For example, a historian's perspective, focus, or purpose etc.

‘the basis on which the question is judged’

[Edexcel Guide to Criteria](#)

## Level 5

Valid criteria are established by which the arguments in the three chosen works can be judged and they are applied and fully justified in the process of making judgements.



# Criteria

**Task: Identify the criteria in the exemplar, excerpt 1, in the booklet p.9;**

Exemplar, Script A:

1) “Considering the fact that Shapiro thus went into his work with the intention of analysing different evidence to gain a different outlook on the actions of the deputies from 1789–93, his conclusions are impacted by the evidence he selects – perhaps the fact that Shapiro predominantly relied upon the letters of deputies to their constituents to build his theory of trauma means that he gained a much more narrow view on why the Constitutional Monarchy was likely to fail from the outset as compared to Cobban and Furet.”

For further guidance, please see the support guide [Applying Criteria](#).

# Criteria

**Task: Using excerpt 2 in your booklet p9, highlight where the student is applying criteria to assess the three historians. What criteria are being used?**

“... Furet’s ‘Revolutionary France 1770–1880’ and Cobban’s ‘A History of Modern France, volume 1’ each respectively look at a hundred years of the French revolutionary period, and Cobban over his three volumes, 250 years. The significance of this is that it may impact their judgements of what exactly caused the downfall of the Constitutional Monarchy, as they may be trying to fit it into a longer-term framework of interpretation...wide periods may gloss over detail in order to produce a theory on the interconnectedness of events throughout the 200 years of French revolutionary study... compared to Shapiro who only covers the ‘Early French Revolution’ and thus does not need to create an overall ‘theme’ to explain why the next revolution happened and later failed in France in 1830 in the same way Cobban and Furet need to. Shapiro’s article...covers only 1789–90.... So it can be said that he looks at history on a much more limited timescale. His lack of interest therefore to come up with an overarching argument to do with French democracy on a 100–200 year scale inevitably means that his conclusions will be more as a result of detailed events...”

# Supporting your students:

- ▶ the debate
- ▶ different interpretations
- ▶ wider reading



# The Debate

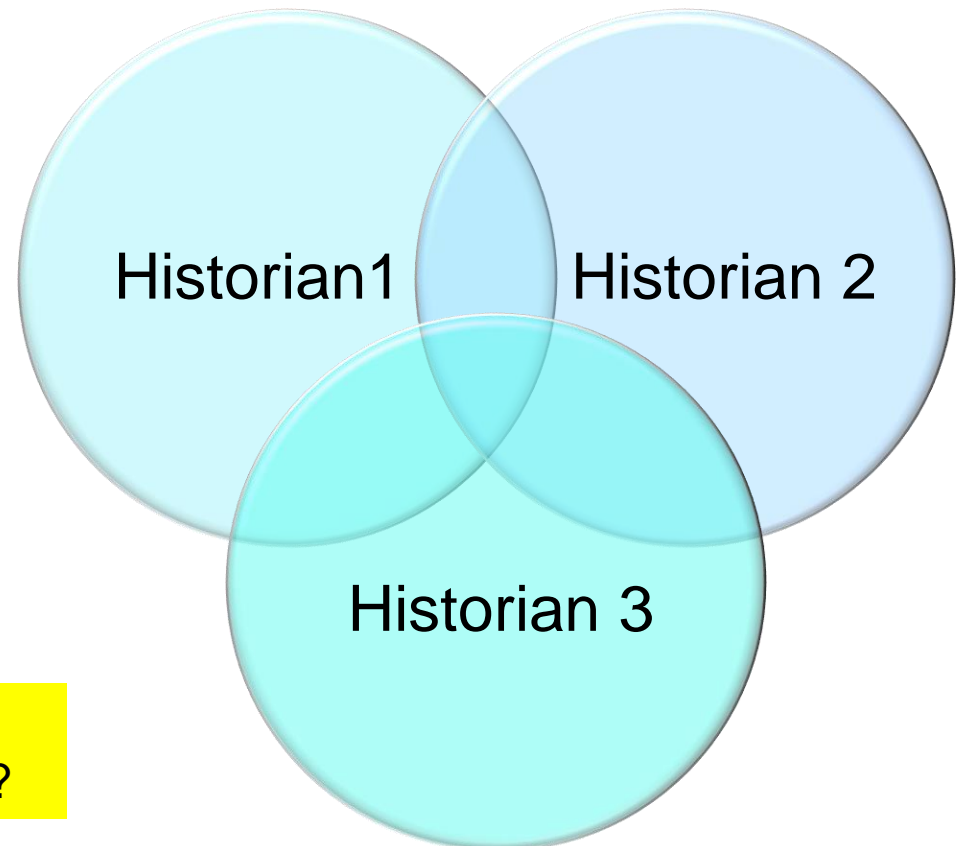
The 3 chosen historians 'must be sufficiently different for the student to be able to make valid comparisons and judgements'. (Coursework guide, p.9)

Students sum up in the circles the contrasting arguments.

They are not necessarily polar opposites! Disagreements can be more nuanced...

Is there any common ground?

This could be done several times until the student gets the combination of historians they want.



**In chat:** what other ways to help them compare & select do you use?

# Evaluating the tone

Class could make a glossary of different adjectives, e.g. persuasive, measured, limited...

and then select or think of other adjectives by which to describe their historians

**In chat:** what other adjectives can you think of?

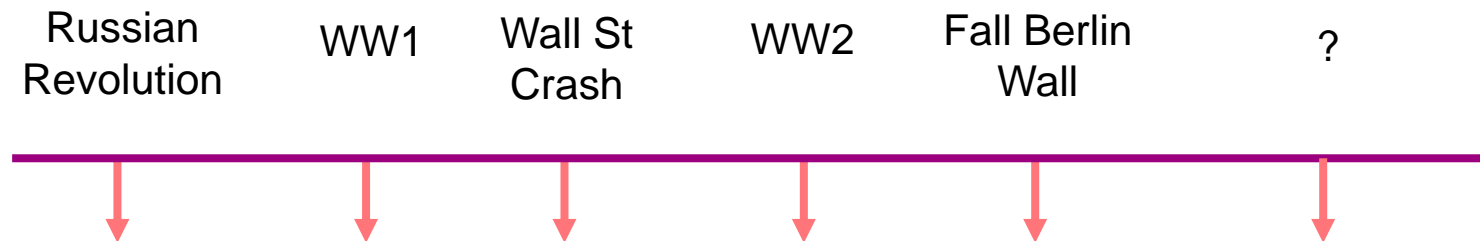
# Why do my historians have different views?

Research the historians' biographies.

What historians choose to investigate is often shaped by their experiences or what is happening when writing.

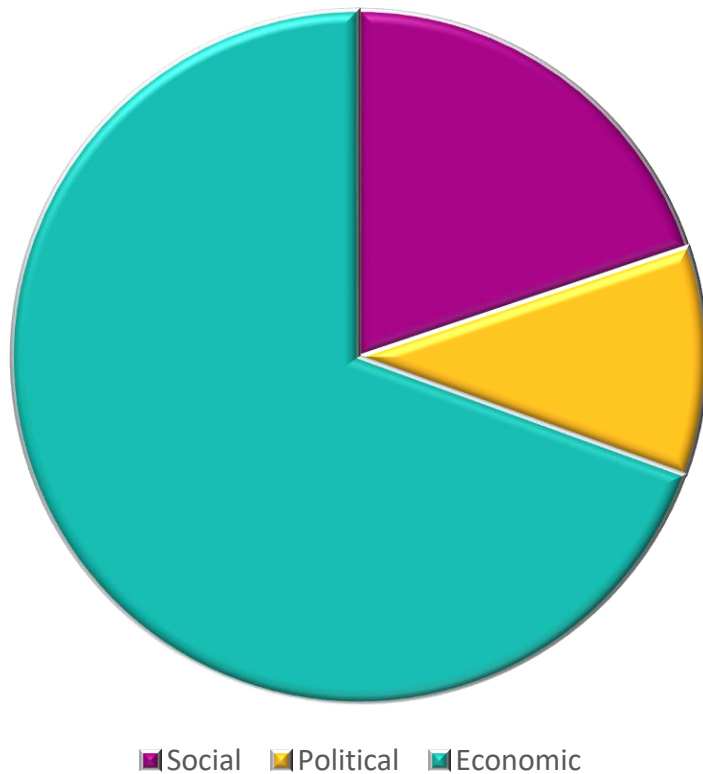
Students could create a timeline of key dates covering their historians' time period(s) – could this have been an influence on their selection of evidence, theme choices and judgements?

e.g., twentieth-century historians...



# Why do my historians have different views?

Historian 1's Selected Evidence



**In chat:** how do you guide students to consider why different views?

Students could assess the predominant evidence category selected by each historian, then consider why that might be:

- perhaps in relation to the timeline?

Was Historian 1 perhaps writing during or just after the 1929 Wall Street Crash, or the 2007–08 credit crunch etc?

- or their previous career path, or focus?

Had Historian 1 been an economic advisor? Were their previous books/articles economic analysis or histories?

# Why do my historians have different views?

Whilst this is not a requirement, sometimes it might be relevant to recognise that an historian's view is influenced by a particular theory or school of historical thought.

e.g. Historian 1 might agree with Keynes' economic theory, that government intervention can stabilize the economy, or subscribe to the late nineteenth-century supply-and-demand theories of the neo-classical approach.

Or maybe is part of the 1950/60s Annales school of thought, following Braudel in emphasising the role of large-scale socio-economic factors in history...



## Task: look at exemplar in booklet; highlight explanations for why they are taking their view.

“Shapiro similarly focuses on political history, though this is as a result of his own goal of tying together the disciplines of psychology and history together rather than a lack of interest on the economic and social history...Shapiro may have attempted to apply a specific lens when analysing the outcomes of the period such to fit his psychoanalytical framework about trauma... he viewed his work to be a response to the revisionist view on the Revolution.”

“Both Cobban and Furet had similar political beliefs and therefore interpreted the Revolution in a classical liberal fashion. It also should be noted that Furet was once part of the ‘Annales school’...predominantly focused on social and economic history as opposed to political history. Furet grew to reject this proposal and notably rejected his own Marxist views and instead grew to advocate the classical liberal view that Cobban had championed. He came to emulate Cobban’s focus on political history... This impacts their judgements because they therefore solely focus on political history, in the form of their direct focus on the Constituent and Legislative assemblies.”

# Historical reviews

Historical reviews of their historians' books and articles are often a useful resource for assessing their arguments, as well as offering possible reasons for their historians' views? e.g., JSTOR (if your school/college subscribes) or <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/>

In support of the argument that Furet may well 'gloss over detail in order to produce a theory', the student in Exemplar A refers to a review:

“as pointed out by many when assessing his work: ‘his conceptual approach to history, in which he preferred to overlook minute detail in favour of political and philosophical analysis’ (footnote)”.

**In chat:** which resources do you use & find helpful?

# Supplementary and wider reading

A bank of sentences could be useful here to get students thinking about how their additional reading can be *applied*. Start it off in class by sharing exemplars from other coursework topics and asking students to identify helpful sentences, such as:

*“X’s argument can be further supported by Y where she argues that...”*

*“Whilst X’s focus is more on... compared to Z’s emphasis upon..., his overall judgement is compatible with Z’s in that...”*

*“Y’s evidence base challenges Z’s central premise that...”*

*“Y offers a similar argument to X when she argues that...”*

# Writing up

There is no required structure for the assignment.

Students are required to present their own view and to analyse three relevant works.

Students may find it helpful to complete the assignment in **two sections**:

- the analysis, explanation and evaluation of the differing interpretations in their three chosen works
- the presentation of their view.

Students may prefer to divide the essay into **four sections**:

- 1–3) each of the three bullet points in the question
- 4) the presentation of their view.

**In chat:** what structure do you advise?

# Resource record

Lists all resources used.

This is useful for the teacher to check on the research progress.

It provides evidence for the teacher of the quality of the work.

In the comments section, they indicate which they have chosen as their main and supplementary historians, and briefly why.

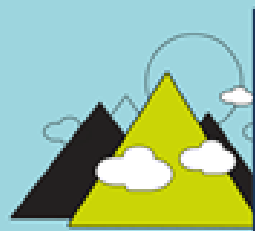
Doyle, W., The Execution of Louis XVI and the End of the French Monarchy, <i>History Review</i> (March 2000)	pp. 21-24	<p>Doyle presents several arguments for the reasons behind Louis XVI's execution. He focuses on one in particular, the long-term desacralisation of the monarchy that by the time of the revolution the image of the monarchy was in such a state to be challenged. However, he goes on to argue that this alone is not adequate enough to explain Louis XVI's death, instead that the reasons for the downfall of Constitutional Monarchy was the Flight to Varennes, which was in turn caused by the rejection of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Thus argues that Constitutional Monarchy was not doomed from the outset.</p> <p>I will use this work as a supplementary work, as it does not explore Doyle's argument in the relatively short number of pages such that I would be comfortable of it using it as a core work, but it is useful nonetheless because of his presentation of the desacralisation argument, even if he does disagree.</p>	22/08/2021	28/09/2021 TCHN
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# History subject advisor

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Networking / sharing:  
which coursework  
topic(s) do you do?



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