

Paper Reference(s)

9846/01

Edexcel

History

Advanced Extension Award

Monday 27 June 2005 – Afternoon

Time: 3 hours

Materials required for examination

Answer book (AB16)

Items included with question papers

Nil

Instructions to Candidates

In the boxes on the answer book, write your centre number, candidate number, paper reference, surname and other names, and your signature. The box entitled examining body should be left blank.

Answer ALL parts of the question in Section A and ONE question in Section B.

Information for Candidates

The total mark for this paper is 60: 40 marks for Section A and 20 marks for Section B.

You will not be credited for using the same information in more than one answer.

Advice to Candidates

You are advised to spend two hours on Section A (Question 1) and one hour on Section B.

You are reminded of the importance of clear and orderly presentation in your answers.

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SECTION A

Question 1

Study Sources 1 and 2 and then answer questions (a) to (c) which follow.

SOURCE 1

Taken from 'On History from Below', a lecture delivered by Eric Hobsbawm which appears in his book On History, published in 1997.

Line

1 Grassroots history, history seen from below or the history of the common people, no longer needs commercials. However, it may still benefit from some reflections on its technical problems, which are both difficult and interesting, probably more so than those of traditional academic history.

5 Before turning to my main subject, let me ask why grassroots history is so recent a fashion – that is, why most of the history written from the beginning of literacy until, say, the end of the nineteenth century, tells us so little about the great majority of the inhabitants of the countries or states it was recording. The answer takes us into both the nature of politics – which was until recently the characteristic subject of history – and
10 the motivations of historians.

Most history in the past was written for the glorification of, and perhaps for the practical use of, rulers. Indeed certain kinds of it still have this function. Those fat biographies of politicians which have recently become the fashion again are certainly not read by the masses. Politicians [however] gobble them up like popcorn. This is
15 natural enough. Not only are they about people like themselves, and activities like the ones they are engaged in, but they are about eminent practitioners of their own trade, from which – if the books are good – they can learn something.

The practical business of ruling-class politics could, for most of history until the latter part of the nineteenth century and in most places, normally be carried on without more than an occasional reference to the mass of the subject population. They could be taken
20 for granted, except in very exceptional circumstances – such as great social revolutions or insurrections. Grassroots history therefore becomes relevant to, or part of, the sort of history that was written traditionally (the history of major political decisions and events) only from the moment when the ordinary people become a constant factor in
25 the making of such decisions and events – not only at times of exceptional popular mobilisation, such as revolutions, but at all or most times. By and large this did not begin to happen until the era of the great revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century.

The Marxist, or more generally the socialist, interest in grassroots history developed
30 with the growth of the labour movement. And though this provided a very powerful incentive to study the history of the common man – especially the working class – it also imposed some quite effective blinkers on the socialist historians. They were naturally tempted to study not just any common people, but the common people who could be regarded as ancestors of the movement: not workers as such so much as trade
35 unionists and labour militants. And they were also tempted – equally natural – to suppose that the history of the movements and organizations which led the workers'

struggle, and therefore in a real sense 'represented' the workers, could replace the history of the common people themselves. But this is not so. Not until the 1950s did the left begin to emancipate itself from the narrow approach.

40 Whatever its origins and initial difficulties, grassroots history has now taken off. And in looking back upon the history of ordinary people, we are not merely trying to give it a retrospective political significance which it did not always have, we are trying more generally to explore an unknown dimension of the past. And this brings me to the technical problems of doing so.

45 Every kind of history has its technical problems, but most of these assume that there is a body of ready-made source material whose interpretation raises these problems. The classical discipline of historical scholarship, as developed in the nineteenth century by German and other professors, made these assumptions which, as it happens, fitted in very conveniently with the prevailing fashion of scientific positivism¹. This sort of
50 scholarly problem is still dominant in very old-fashioned branches of learning such as literary history. To study Dante², one has to become very sophisticated in interpreting manuscripts and in working out what can go wrong when manuscripts are copied from each other, because the text of Dante depends on the collation of medieval manuscripts. To study Shakespeare, who left no manuscripts but a lot of corrupt printed editions,
55 means becoming a sort of Sherlock Holmes³ of the early seventeenth-century printing trade. But in neither case is there much doubt about the main body of the subject we are studying, namely the works of Dante or Shakespeare.

Now grassroots history differs from such subjects, and indeed from most of traditional history, inasmuch as there simply is not a ready-made body of material about it. In
60 most cases the grassroots historian finds only what he is looking for, not what is already waiting for him. Most sources for grassroots history have only been recognised as sources because someone has asked a question and then prospected desperately around for some way – any way – of answering it. We cannot be positivists, believing that the questions and the answers arise naturally out of study of the material. There is
65 generally no material until our questions have revealed it.

¹ Nineteenth-century 'scientific positivism' was dismissive of speculative thinking and abstract theorising, calling instead for concentration on reaching conclusions on the basis of what could be observed and measured through experimentation.

² Dante (1265-1321): Italian poet and one of the greatest writers in world literature, best known for his poem *The Divine Comedy*.

³ Fictional detective created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930).

SOURCE 2

Taken from 'Fiction in History', an essay by A. J. P. Taylor which appears in his book Essays in English History, published in 1976.

Line

1 History is not just a catalogue of events put in the right order like a railway timetable. History is a version of events. Between the events and the historian there is a constant interplay. The historian tries to impose on events some kind of rational pattern: how they happened and even why they happened. No historian starts with a blank mind as a jury is supposed to do. He does not go to documents or archives with a childlike innocence of mind and wait patiently until they dictate conclusions to him. Quite the contrary.

10 His picture, his version of events, is formed before he begins to write or even to research. I am told that scientists do much the same. They conduct experiments to confirm their ideas. They do not sit open-mouthed until an idea falls into it. Similarly the historian is after details to thicken up his picture and make it look intellectually convincing. Usually he finds them. Sometimes the opposite happens. He comes across events that upset his preconceived picture.

15 When an historian is working on his subject, the events or statistical data or whatever he is using change his mind all the time and his ideas about these events change with them. He upgrades some of the evidence and downgrades other parts according to the changes of his outlook. Sometimes, I am afraid, he exaggerates the importance of a piece of evidence because it fits in well with what he is trying to say. Sometimes he puts an unwelcome piece of evidence at the bottom of the pile. But, if he is any good, the omitted piece nags at him. He pulls it out and confesses: 'Oh dear, I was wrong.'

Certainly we guess. We are writing to shape into a version a tangle of events that was not designed as a pattern. Guessing is the only way of explaining when the solid evidence runs out.

25 There are gradations of guessing. Consider a general conducting a battle. If we know from his later dispatch or from what others recorded at the time, we say: 'He saw the enemy advancing.' If we can deduce what he saw from studying the map or ourselves reconnoitring the battlefield, we say: 'He must have seen the enemy advancing.' If we can only deduce what he saw from his subsequent actions, then we say: 'Probably he saw the enemy advancing.' If he behaved like a complete idiot, as generals often do, we fall back on what we know of his character or previous actions. We never actually invent, though we sometimes practise sleight of hand. History, just like historical fiction, is an exercise in creative imagination, though in our case the exercise is restrained by the limits of our knowledge.

35 Certainly we speculate. We produce explanations that seem reasonable to us rather than being provided by the evidence. But we draw a clear line and warn the reader what we are doing.

Karl Marx was fond of quoting the Ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who wrote: 'all things move'. This is the one truth we seek to recapture when we write history. We know that our version, being set into words, is itself false. We are trying to stop something that never stays still. Once written, our version too will move. It will be challenged and revised. It will take on appearances that we did not expect. We are content to repeat the words with which Pieter Geyl¹ finished his book *Napoleon: History is an argument without end.*

¹ Dutch historian (1887–1966) whose book *Napoleon: For and Against*, published in 1949, explored the differing interpretations of Napoleon's career by nineteenth and early twentieth-century French historians.

1. (a) Study Source 1.

In what ways, according to the author of Source 1, do 'grassroots history' (line 1) and 'traditional academic history' (line 4) differ?

(6)

(b) Use your own knowledge.

Identify one major political decision you have studied which was influenced in some way by the 'common people' (see Source 1, line 1). In relation to the decision you identify, use your own knowledge to explain the nature and extent of the impact the 'common people' had on the thinking of those in political authority.

(14)

(c) Study Sources 1 and 2, and use your own knowledge.

'History is an argument without end' (Source 2, line 44). How do you account for the frequency with which historians disagree in their interpretations of the past? Develop your answer by making use of both sources and by specific reference to any historical period or periods you have studied.

(20)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A: 40 MARKS

SECTION B

Answer **ONE** question from this section.

You will not be credited in this section for repeating information that you have used in Section A.

2. 'History is shaped just as much by chance as it is by long-term social and economic trends.' To what extent do you agree with this claim? Develop your answer by specific reference to any historical period or periods you have studied.

(Total 20 marks)

3. 'All political careers end in failure.' How valid, in your judgement, is this claim? Develop your answer by specific reference to the political careers of historical figures you have studied.

(Total 20 marks)

4. 'Difficult to research and of its essence partisan.' How acceptable do you find this comment on gender history? Develop your answer by specific reference to your own studies and to historical works you have read.

(Total 20 marks)

5. 'Television history is only worthwhile if it confines itself to topics where visual evidence is of paramount importance.' To what extent do you agree with this assertion? Develop your answer by reference to your own historical reading and viewing.

(Total 20 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION B: 20 MARKS

TOTAL FOR PAPER: 60 MARKS

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