

GCSE History

Specification language
changes



Agenda

- The specification language changes and the rationale behind them
- How we'll support students in live series
- How the changes may affect your teaching
- Questions / feedback / support

Specification language changes





Why are we making
language changes?

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In 2021, we commissioned a review of our GCSE History specification to identify opportunities for more inclusive histories.

The review focused on content issues, but it also raised issues about language use in the specification.

In 2022, we commissioned a review by [Treated Spaces](#) of our American West period study; again the focus was on content selection but language issues were also raised.

Any content amendments will await next reform (whenever that will be), but, on the back of these two reports, **we have decided to proceed with making language changes to the current specification.**

Why are we making language changes?

We drafted a list of proposed language changes, and consulted with a range of teachers and other voices in the History teaching community, including our History advisory panel.

A big thank you to everyone we spoke to for your help in developing and refining these proposals.

The language changes appear in **Issue 4 of the specification** and apply for **first teaching September 2023** and **first assessment June 2025**.

Issue 4 of the specification is being released in early September 2023.

Issue 3 of the specification will continue to apply for the June 2024 exam series.

Why are we making language changes?

The focus has been on **language changes only**.

Content changes can be challenging for teachers and students mid-cycle, and the last few years have already been heavily disrupted.

The aim therefore has been to set a high bar for language changes, to ensure they involve **no actual or perceived content changes**.


Any content amends will be implemented at next reform, so that we have time to research, develop and test them properly.

Please note that the senior examiners are already reflecting these language changes in the indicative content in mark schemes.

A large, solid yellow circle is centered on a white background. Inside the circle, the text "What language changes are we making?" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and vertically.

**What language changes
are we making?**

What language changes are we making?

-  The most significant changes concern the terms **slaves**, **Indians** and **Native Americans**.

These appear in three Period studies:


- Spain and the ‘New World’
- British America
- The American West.

The impact of changes in other options is very minor, but important principles lie behind them.

Options with changes:

- 10 Whitechapel, c1870–c1900: crime, policing and the city (Crime HE) (minor)
- 13 Migrants in Britain, c800–present (very minor)
- B2 The reigns of King Richard I and King John, 1189–1216 (very minor)
- B4 Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88 (very minor)
- P1 Spain and the ‘New World’, c1490–c1555
- P2 British America, 1713–83: empire and revolution
- P3 The American West, c1835–c1895
- 31 Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39 (very minor)
- 33 The USA, 1954–75: conflict at home and abroad (very minor)

Indigenous peoples

 The terms **Indians**, **Native American** and **native population** are being replaced with **Indigenous peoples**.

“Names matter... For Indigenous peoples, who have been historically oppressed, marginalised and insulted, names matter even more. This is not just a question of respect, but also an intentional push against colonial attempts to erase Indigenous identities, and to obliterate their languages and beliefs, through deliberate cultural genocide. ... Indigenous beliefs and practices were prohibited, and Native communities uprooted and deliberately acculturated. ... For survivors and descendants, and their communities, the violence of colonisation remains very real...

“Indigenous peoples are still marginalised and disadvantaged across the Americas by most economic and social measures, subjected to stereotypes and discrimination, and disenfranchised from their own lands. Colonisation continues. ... Language can be an instrument of that colonisation. *[cont'd...]*

Indigenous peoples

“Although many people across North America still identify themselves as ‘Indian’ for a variety of reasons, it is increasingly considered to be derogatory. ‘Native American’ has become popular in recent decades, but is challenged by many Native peoples as centring colonial racial categories and validating the settler state by implying that the concept of ‘America’ existed even before the arrival of Europeans. ... only ‘Indigenous’ is generally seen as relatively neutral ... [and] is the UN’s favoured term...”

“[Using the capital I] reflects preferred practice in articulating a political identity for a diverse group of sovereign communities that face common challenges as a legacy of colonialism”.

Caroline Dodds Pennock, ‘Why words matter’,
On Savage Shores, pp.xiii–xvi, + note 3

NB Paper 3 USA option similarly now capitalises **Black**.

Enslaved people

 The term **slaves** is being replaced with **enslaved people**.

This is to reflect the person's lack of freedom and personal rights, separating out the humanity of the person from what was done to them.

Terms such as slavery and slave trade are not being changed.

This change reflects contemporary practice, e.g.

- Liverpool Museum's [transatlantic slave trade online exhibition](#)
- Museum of London Docklands' [London, Sugar and Slavery online exhibition](#)
- National Trust's [colonial and historic slavery report](#)
- Nottingham Museums' [glossary on slavery and racial terminology](#) (this glossary goes further in its recommendations)

Language continues to evolve, and further changes may come.

Other language changes

The following slides will run through some of the other language changes that we are making. The impact of these changes in other options is very minor, but important principles lie behind them.

Options with changes:

- 10 Whitechapel, c1870–c1900: crime, policing and the city (Crime HE) (minor)
- 13 Migrants in Britain, c800–present (very minor)
- B2 The reigns of King Richard I and King John, 1189–1216 (very minor)
- B4 Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88 (very minor)
- P1 Spain and the ‘New World’, c1490–c1555
- P2 British America, 1713–83: empire and revolution
- P3 The American West, c1835–c1895
- 31 Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39 (very minor)
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Antisemitism

 Changing **anti-semitism** to **antisemitism** (B2 Richard and John)

This reflects academic practice. The hyphen allows for the idea of ‘Semitism’, which was a pseudo-scientific racial classification. Removing the hyphen clarifies the meaning of antisemitism as ‘prejudice against or hatred of Jews’.


See, for example,

- Centre for Holocaust Education’s [etymology of antisemitism](#)
- US Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism/what-is-antisemitism>
- International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/antisemitism/spelling-antisemitism>

 Changing Jews to Jewish people in two specific places (10 Whitechapel HE and 31 Weimar and Nazi Germany)

 Placing ‘Kristallnacht’ in quote marks (31 Germany)

Roma and Sinti

 Changing 'gypsies' to **Roma** and **Sinti** (31 Weimar and Nazi Germany)

Roma people trace their heritage back to north-west India.

Sinti are hereditary nomads who don't claim that heritage.

Both groups live in mainland Europe and were persecuted by the Nazis.

NB no changes to 13 Migrants in Britain – Romani Gypsies (mentioned in the topic booklet but not the spec) is the preferred term for this group living in England in the early modern period

The American West (misc. changes)

Various aspects of language are being addressed in P3 The American West.

- ✎ Changing **way of life** to **ways of life** – to recognise the many ways of life that existed among Indigenous peoples on the Plains
- ✎ Adding quote marks to **‘Permanent Indian Frontier’** – this was not an official term (cf. 1851 Indian Appropriations Act) but a contested concept
- ✎ Changing **Conflict with the Plains Indians** to **Conflict on the Plains** – to remove the implied settler/government perspective to how the content is approached
- ✎ Changing Key topic 3 heading from **Conflicts and conquest** to **Later developments in the West** – conquest is a contested term in this context.

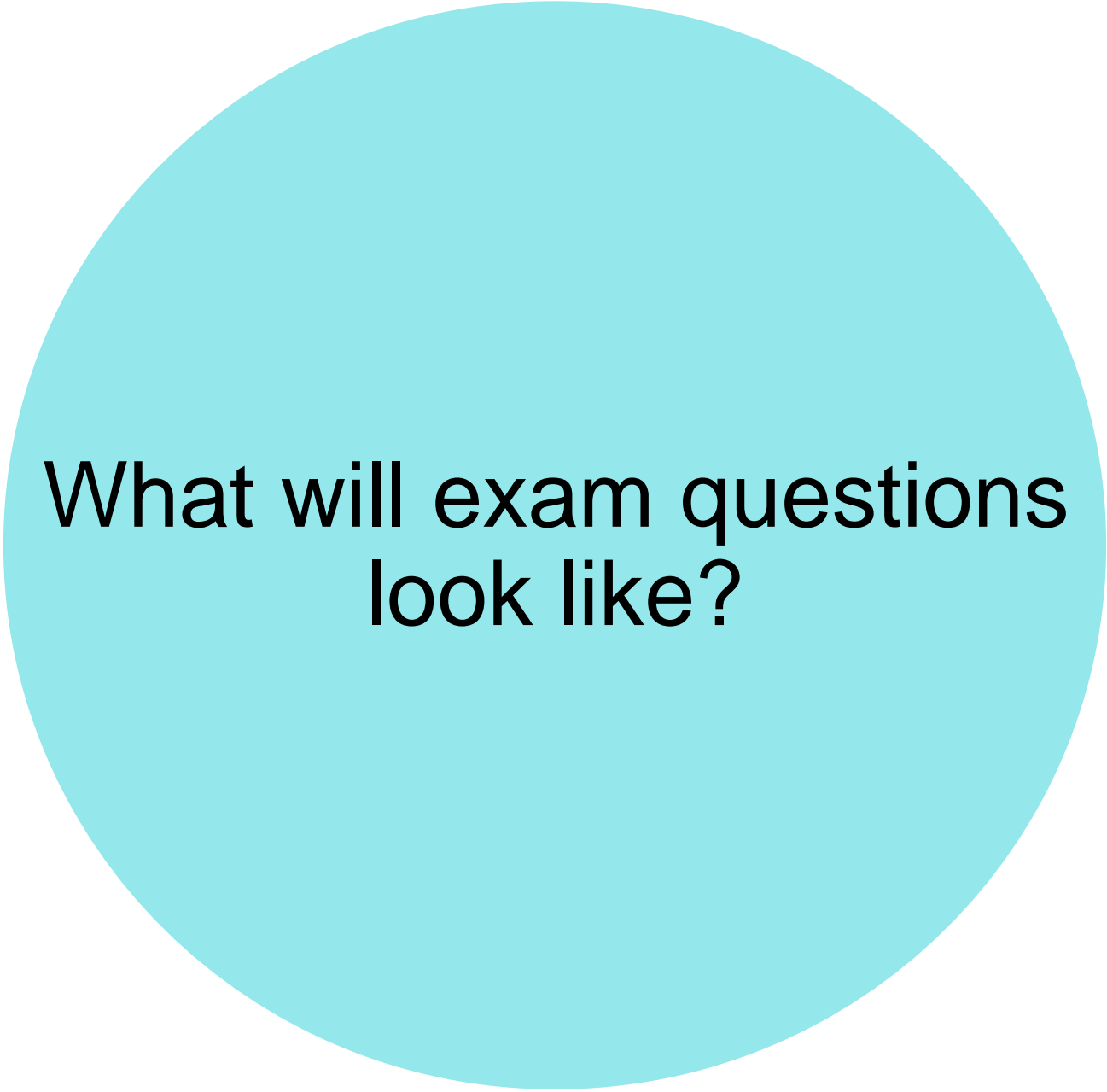
The Americas

- ✎ Changing **'New World'** to **Americas** (P1 Spain and the 'New World' and B4 Early Elizabethan England)

The geographically accurate term, and it removes the Spanish perspective (even with quote marks that recognise this).

There are two exceptions:

- The P1 option title itself – we can't change this mid-cycle
- P1 Key topic 3 sub-topic 3 heading – this is about the impact on Spain and therefore remains relevant, but we've changed 'New World' to Americas and Spanish Empire in the second and third bullet points, to reflect geographic and political aspects respectively.



**What will exam questions
look like?**

Glossing in question papers

We recognise that some students will need a bit of time to get up-to-speed with one or two of the language changes.

We do not want any student to encounter a term they do not know in the exam hall.

To support students, we will provide a transition period, and will **gloss** the term Indigenous peoples in live series from June 2025, for the remainder of the current specification.

In any exam series, **students are credited for any relevant and appropriate ‘terms’ that they use.**

Students are therefore welcome to use, for example, Indigenous or enslaved person in the summer 2024 series; students can also continue to use Plains Indians or slave in the summer 2025 series and beyond.

Glossing in question papers

Over time, our expectation is that teachers and students will move over to the language we are adding to the specification. But we will not penalise any students for using relevant and appropriate ‘terms’ that do not appear in the specification.

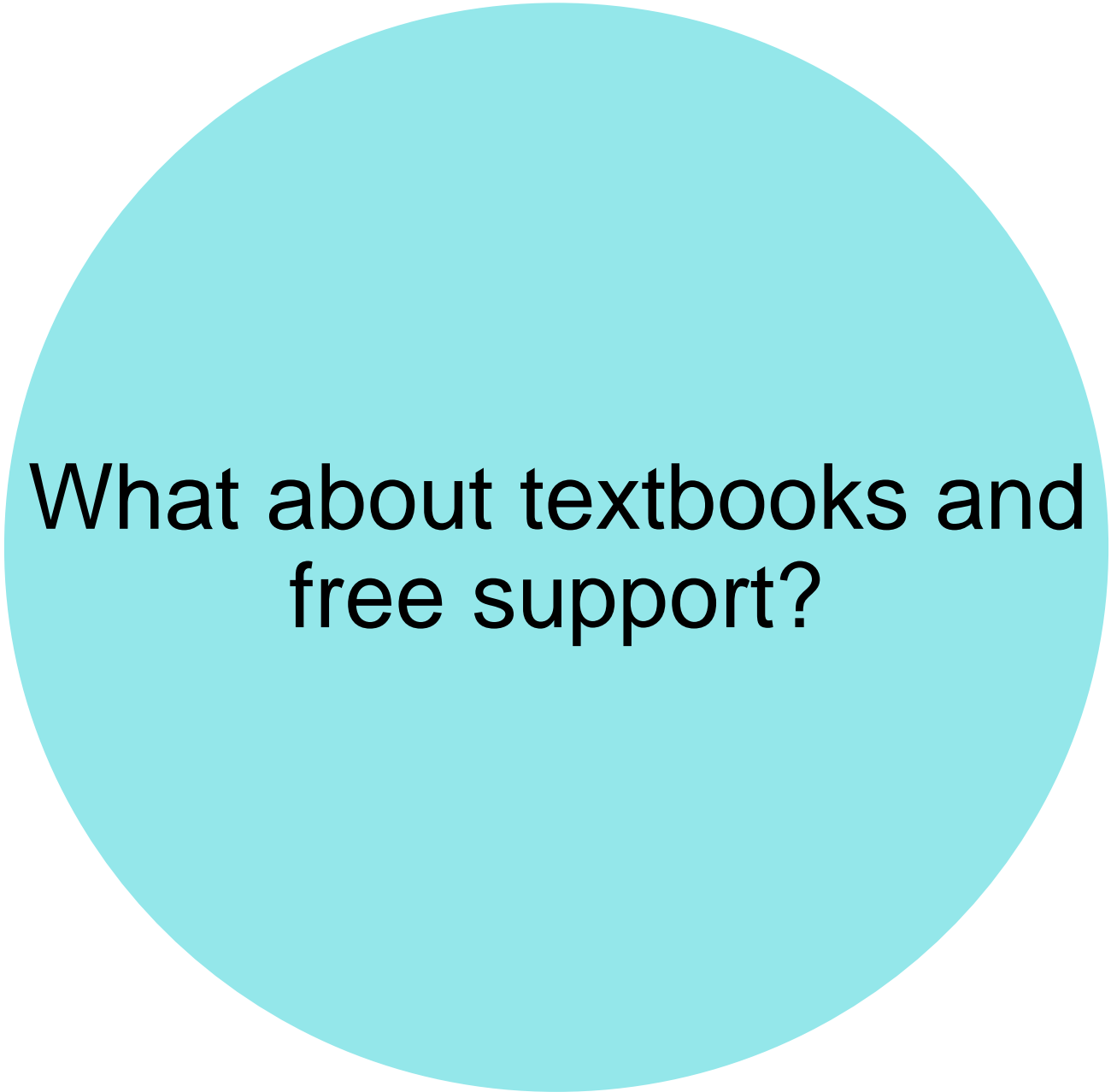
Below is an example from the Sample Assessment Materials of what this will look like.

- 2 Write a narrative account analysing the destruction of the traditional ways of life of Indigenous peoples of the Plains (Plains Indians) in the years 1876–c1895.

You may use the following in your answer:

- Battle of Little Big Horn (1876)
- Dawes Act (1887)

You **must** also use information of your own.



**What about textbooks and
free support?**


Support materials

New free support materials are available on the Edexcel website and in the pack for this event:


- [Language changes with track changes on](#)
- [Rationale for the language changes](#)
- [FAQs](#)

**Pearson Edexcel GCSE History:
free support materials, with details and links**

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Mark Battye
History



Email : teachinghistory@pearson.com
Twitter : @PearsonHistory
Phone : (+44) 333 016 4084 (Teaching Services team | Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm GMT)

> [Access the history community](#) 
> [Sign up to receive subject advisor updates](#)

[History qualification page](#)

The latest news on our History qualifications, plus contact details for our History subject advisor, Mark Battye. Email: teachinghistory@pearson.com. Follow @PearsonHistory on [Twitter](#).

Sign up to receive monthly subject advisor updates [here](#).

A hyperlink is provided for each piece of support. Some links are directly to specific files, some are to the webpages or dropdowns where the files are stored.

Support materials	Details
Specification and sample assessment materials	The starting point for information on content and assessment in GCSE (9–1) History, including details of the changes made for

We are updating our **existing free support materials** on the Edexcel website, e.g. topic booklets, getting started guide, paper guides, knowledge boosters.

The aim is to complete this by September 2023.

We have a useful guide to finding things on the website:

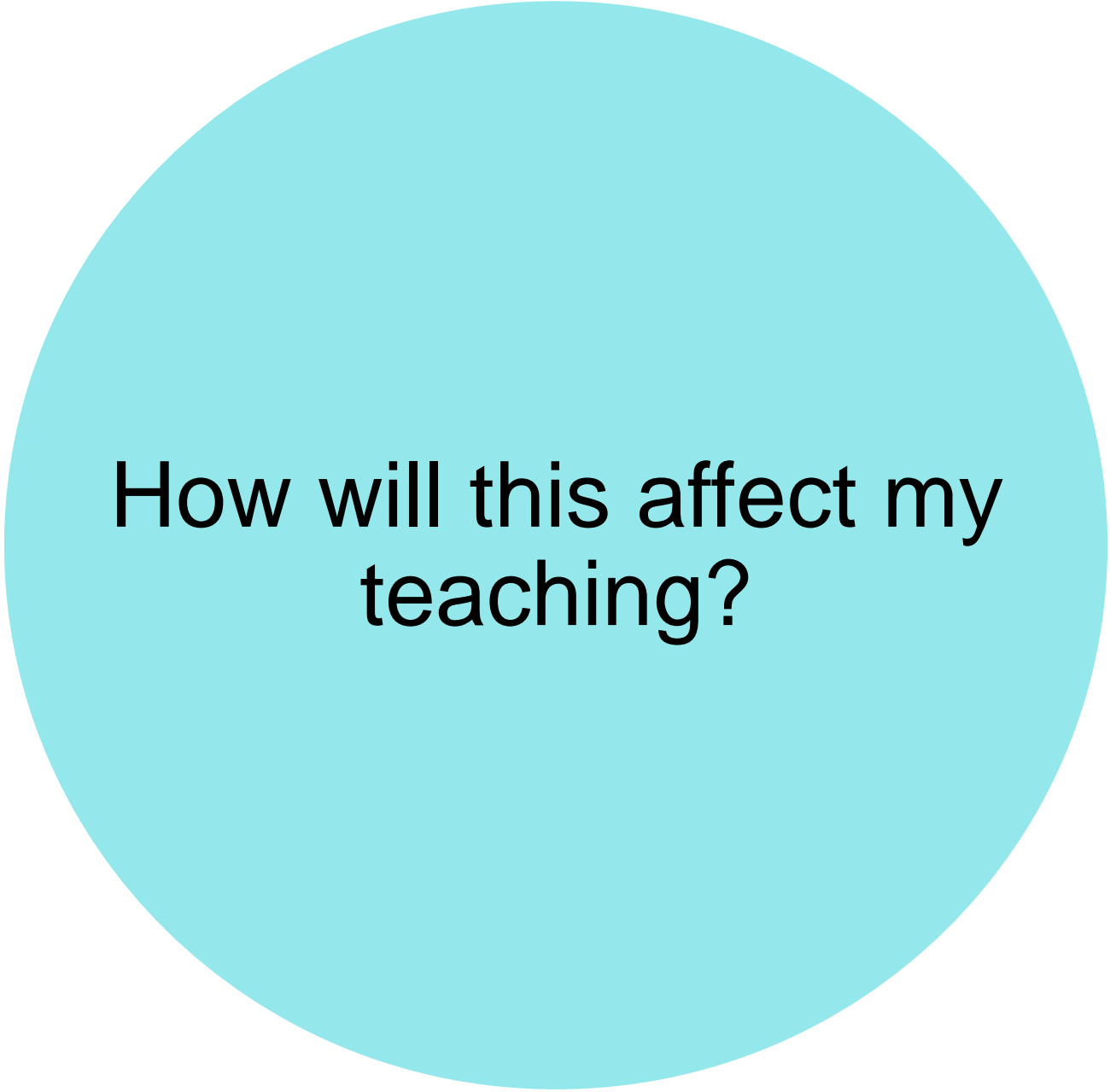
<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/History/2016/Teaching-and-learning-materials/gcse-history-support-materials-details-and-links.pdf>

Textbooks

We have kept **endorsed publishers** (Hodder, OUP, Pearson) notified of the changes that we are making.

They will be updating textbooks in due course – most likely at next reprint for each relevant title.

Some published resources already use the term Indigenous, e.g. new KS3 textbooks.



How will this affect my
teaching?

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You may wish to consider updating your teaching resources for any options you teach that are affected by these language amendments.

You may in particular wish to consider how best to introduce the term Indigenous to your students. For example,

- can you add the term where relevant in your Key Stage 3 teaching?
- do they use the term Indigenous elsewhere, e.g. Key Stage 3 Geography?
- are your students already familiar with the importance of language as part of respecting diversity?
- include it as part of the tier 3 vocabulary instruction?
- discuss the origins and use of the term in an introductory lesson?

How will this affect my teaching?

“We introduced the term by using it interchangeably with Plains Indians and Native Americans but overall found it a smooth process. We discussed the change in terminology explicitly and the students understood because they'd had conversations in other curriculum subjects about the way language, particularly around race and gender, changes throughout history. It felt like a natural shift and a good opportunity to expand our discussion of contemporary Indigenous experiences.”

Nicole Ridley [@RidleyHistory](#)
History teacher, Malet Lambert School

How will this affect my teaching?

“Students were introduced to using the term 'Indigenous peoples' rather than 'Indian'. We explained why this term while still very broad was more fitting; the peoples we were learning about were not 'Indian', even the term 'Native American' was not fitting to groups who at the time we study fought very hard to *not* be American. Students, having heard both terms before, were very quick to adopt the term 'Indigenous' in writing and discussions. 'Indigenous peoples' shows that we are not learning about one homogenous group, but a rich, diverse continent of distinct groups. We prefer to talk about specific tribes and bands but 'Indigenous' shows our student's wish to show greater understanding and cultural sensitivity. Students took to this term very easily and I have seen recently students evidencing knowledge of the differences of tribes.”

Terry Graham [@USA_HistandPol](#)
Head of History, Heworth Grange School



**Mark scheme amend:
stimulus points cap**

Stimulus points cap: removal at Level 2

We are making a minor amendment to the **stimulus points cap** in the mark scheme – this has been approved by Ofqual.

From June 2024, the Level 2 cap will no longer exist on any question.

The Sample Assessment Materials will be updated to reflect this alongside the language amendments.

The cap applies to the following questions:

- **Explain why** (12 marks) – Paper 1, Paper 2B, Paper 3
- **Judgement essay** (16 marks) – Paper 1, Paper 2B
- **Narrative analysis** (8 marks) – Paper 2B



Any questions?

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