

GCSE History

Teaching and Assessing Sources



Welcome to this Professional Development Course

Welcome to this training session on teaching and assessing sources.

The session will recap briefly on the assessment model for sources across Papers 1 and 3. It will consider what went well and where there is room for improvement across each of the question types, using exemplar student scripts.

The session will consider strategies for teaching sources and will conclude with a chance to share best practice and ask questions.

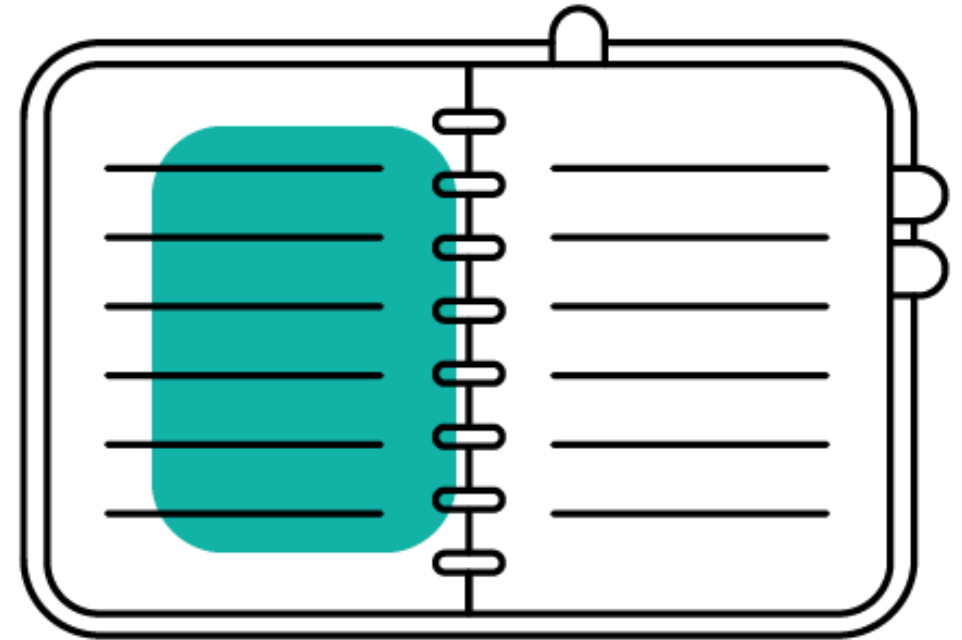
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Agenda – GCSE History: Teaching and Assessing Sources

In this session we are going to look at:

- how sources are assessed across Papers 1 and 3
- what students have done well and where there is room for improvement
- strategies for teaching sources
- common issues and FAQs.



Assessment of AO3 (Sources) Papers 1 and 3



AO3

Analyse, evaluate and use sources (contemporary to the period) to make substantiated judgements, in the context of historical events studied.

15%

Q	Total marks	Question description	Example question stem
Paper 1 Thematic Study and Historic Environment: Section A			
2a	8	Evaluation of source utility	How useful are Sources A and B for an enquiry into...
2b	4	Framing historical questions	How could you follow up Source [A/B] to find out more about...?
Paper 3 Modern Depth Study: Section A			
1	4	Making inferences from sources	Give two things you can infer from Source A about...
Paper 3 Modern Depth Study: Section B			
3a	8	Evaluation of source utility	How useful are Sources B and C for an enquiry into...

Planning and teaching sources (AO3)



Activity 1

Using the chat.

What challenges have you faced when preparing students for the source questions?

What changes have you made so far to overcome these challenges?

Feedback from the 2024 exams

Exemplar answers



Analysis and evaluation of source utility (8 marks)

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A simple judgement on utility is given, and supported by undeveloped comment on the content of the sources and/or their provenance¹. Simple comprehension of the source material is shown by the extraction or paraphrase of some content. Limited contextual knowledge is deployed with implicit links to the sources.
2	3–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Judgements on source utility for the specified enquiry are given using valid criteria. Judgements are supported by developed comment related to the content of the sources and/or their provenance¹. Comprehension and some analysis of the sources is shown by the selection and use of material to support comments on their utility. Contextual knowledge is used to support comments on the usefulness of the content of the sources and/or their provenance.
3	6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Judgements on source utility for the specified enquiry are given, applying valid criteria with developed reasoning which takes into account how the provenance¹ affects the usefulness of the source content. The sources are analysed to support reasoning about their utility. Contextual knowledge is used in the process of interpreting the sources and applying criteria for judgements on their utility.
Notes: 1. Provenance = nature, origin, purpose.		

Analysis and evaluation of source utility (8 marks)



Activity 2

- Use the mark scheme in your delegate booklet, p.1.
- What do you notice is the difference between a Level 2 and Level 3 answer?

Source utility

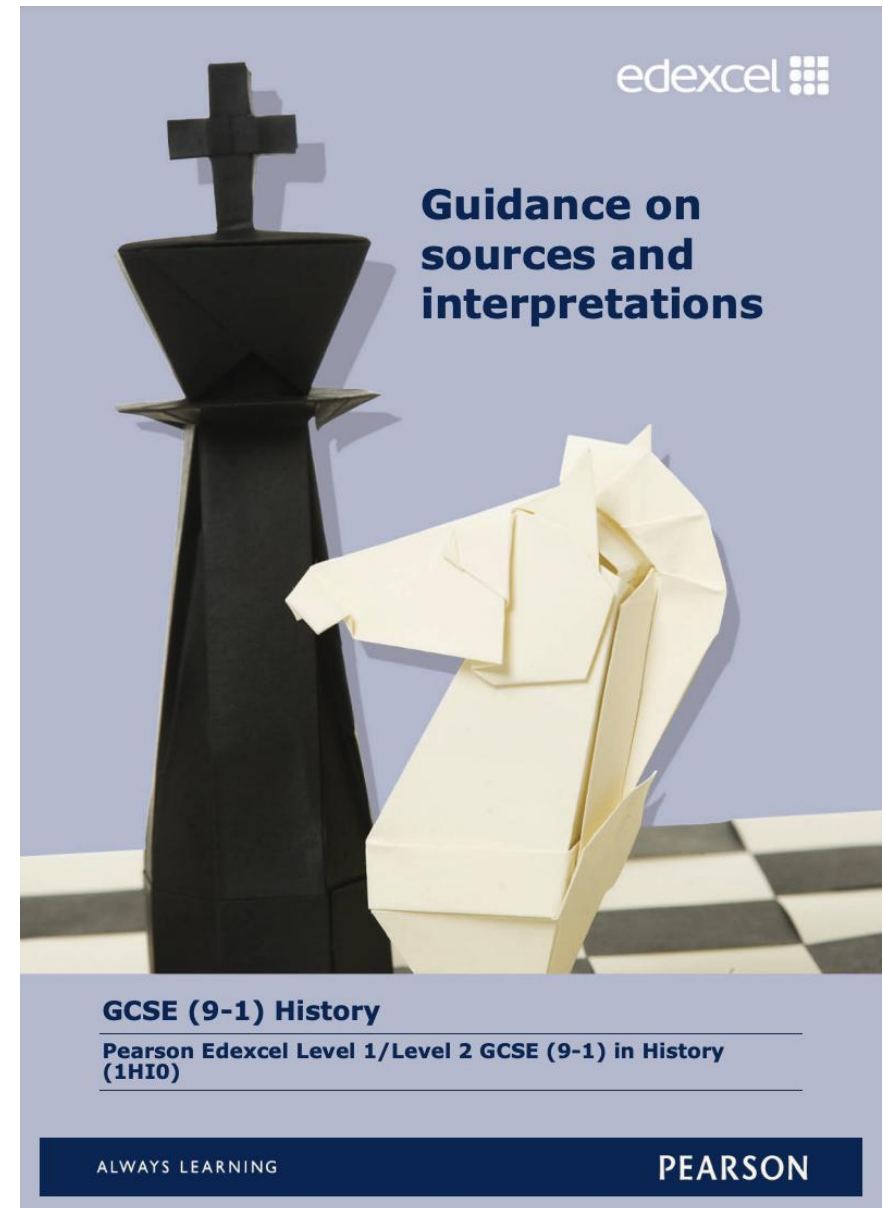
- The sources involved are always contemporary (primary) sources and may be written or visual.
- At Level 2, answers will analyse the utility of source content or provenance. Top L2 answers will add contextual knowledge.
- At Level 3, answers will explain how the provenance affects the usefulness of the source content.
- At Level 3, contextual knowledge should not be presented as additional information but integrated into other comments, for example confirming or challenging the content of the source, providing detail about the provenance to show why the date/author is significant, explaining whether a source is representative of the wider situation, etc.
- The two sources should be evaluated separately – there are no marks available for a comparison of their usefulness.
- The best answers make clear the criteria being used to form a judgement about the source's usefulness. This could be because the source is reliable, it provides insight into people's attitudes, it covers a wide timescale or is about important individuals/events etc.

Source utility

We will provide either two text sources or one text and one image for source utility questions.

Sources, as assessed in the Edexcel GCSE History course, will be contemporary to the period of study. They will be evidence from the period and may record the experiences of those directly involved, or be contemporary evidence from those without direct involvement, for example contemporary cartoons or articles in newspapers written by those who were not direct witnesses to an event. They may also feature reminiscences and reflections written after the period but by those who were involved.

[Guidance on sources and interpretations](#)



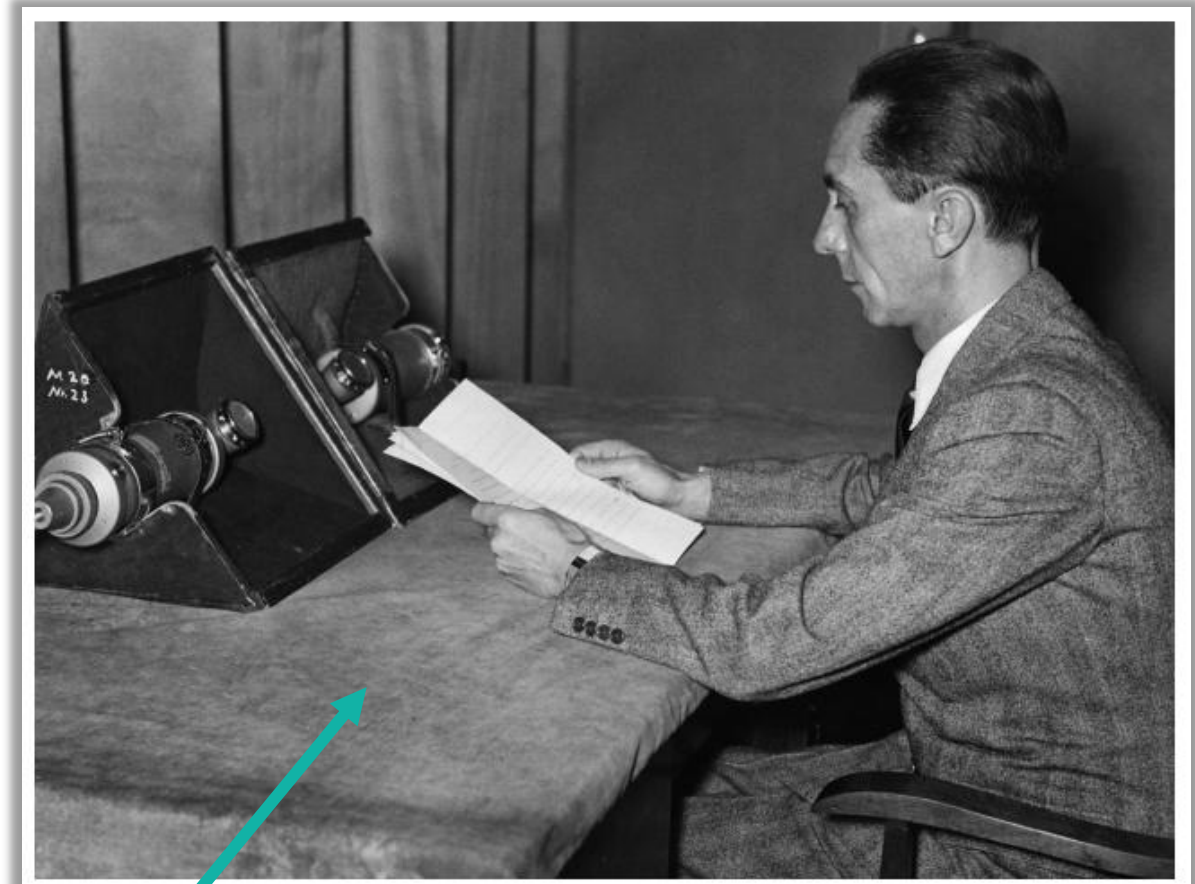
Source utility

Source C: A photograph published in a German newspaper in 1935. It was taken by Hitler's official photographer. The photograph shows Josef Goebbels, Hitler's Minister for Propaganda, making a radio broadcast. He is reading out Hitler's New Year message to the German people.

Provenance: Nature, origin, or purpose of the source.

Students will find this information in the caption.

Only one needs to be analysed. A developed explanation of how the provenance makes the source useful for the enquiry will take an answer into Level 2.



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Content: The information included in the source.

Students will find this information in the source (surrounded by a box). A developed explanation of how the content makes the source useful for the enquiry will take an answer into Level 2.

Source utility – mark scheme

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A simple judgement on utility is given, and supported by undeveloped comment on the content of the sources and/or their provenance¹. Simple comprehension of the source material is shown by the extraction or paraphrase of some content. Limited contextual knowledge is deployed with implicit links to the sources.
2	3–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judgements on source utility for the specified enquiry are given using valid criteria. Judgements are supported by developed comment related to the content of the sources and/or their provenance¹. Comprehension and some analysis of the sources is shown by the selection and use of material to support comments on their utility. Contextual knowledge is used to support comments on the usefulness of the content of the sources and/or their provenance.
3	6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judgements on source utility for the specified enquiry are given, applying valid criteria with developed reasoning which takes into account how the provenance¹ affects the usefulness of the source content. The sources are analysed to support reasoning about their utility. Contextual knowledge is used in the process of interpreting the sources and applying criteria for judgements on their utility.
Notes: 1. Provenance = nature, origin, purpose.		

2 (a) Study Sources A and B in the Sources Booklet.

How useful are Sources A and B for an enquiry into the work of medical staff in the Casualty Clearing Stations (CCS) on the Western Front?

Explain your answer, using Sources A and B and your knowledge of the historical context.

Source A: From an account by May Tilton, published in 1933. May Tilton was a senior nurse, working on the Western Front. Here she is commenting on her experiences in a Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) in 1917.

We worked night after night, in the thunderous noise of raging battles. We cleaned and bandaged the wounded. We comforted them, praised their courage, praised their endurance and strength of will. The atmosphere was full of the stink of blood, antiseptic and gas.

One patient said to me: 'I don't want to die.' He had a frightfully smashed up leg that fell to bits as we lifted him from the stretcher. He died before the next morning.

A big shell came over the CCS at three o'clock in the morning and killed fourteen gunners who were nearby.

Source B: From an interview with Effie Garden, in 1986. Effie Garden was a nurse in a Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) on the Western Front during the First World War. The interview was to gather information for a book on the work of nurses during wartime. Here Garden is commenting on her work in a CCS in 1917.

We worked in teams. Each team had two treatment tables. While one patient was being bandaged on one table, the next patient was being given his anaesthetic on the other table. When needed, our team worked from one o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the evening, although we worked shorter hours when a battle was not being fought.

Our CCS was supposed to deal with head injuries but there were usually other wounds as well. I was often given a scalpel to remove small pieces of shrapnel and clean up minor wounds. This gave the surgeon more time to deal with the more serious cases.

Source utility – exemplar answer 1 (extract)

(8)

Source A is useful because it suggests that the work of medical staff in the CCS was dangerous. It says in the text "A big shell came over the CCS ... killed ~~the~~ fourteen gunners who were nearby". Source A is useful because it also suggests that medical staff weren't just there to treat the wounded but to mentally assist them. I know this as it says "We comforted them, praised their courage". Source A is useful as it agrees with my own knowledge. I know that the FANY based in CCS and would be there to give not just medical treatment, but make them feel like they were doing a good job by saying positive things to encourage the wounded. Source A is useful as it was ~~based~~ on a senior nurse wrote from a senior nurse, who would have been an eye witness to the work of medical staff in CCS, and it was from ~~her~~ their experiences in 1917 which was when many battles were happening, such as Battle of Cambrai

so this would show typical work of medical staff. However its usefulness is limited as it was published in 1933, so perhaps they may have forgotten things and their experience is Vivid.

Content = red underline

Provenance = green underline

Contextual knowledge = blue underline

There is a judgement of Source A's utility based on how the provenance affects the usefulness of the content and contextual knowledge is used in the process of interpreting the source. The criterion of typicality is used in the judgement.

Analysis and evaluation of source utility (8 marks)



Activity 3

- Using the mark scheme in your delegate booklet (p.1), mark exemplar answer 2 (pp.4–5).
- Enter your level and mark in the poll.

Source utility – exemplar answer 2 (extract)

Source B is an important source to show the work of medical staff in 1917. Effie Garden talks about her time as a nurse. She talks about how the nurses used 'teams' in the CCs to help treat soldiers faster so they could get on the battlefield again. She also talks about how she had to 'remove shrapnel' and deal with 'minor wounds' which was correct as an emergency treatment would be in the

Base hospitals where they had several beds to perform treatment on the more serious infection. The CCs were where the FANY worked who were voluntary nurses who didn't have much experience but were able to treat minor wounds and injuries. Whereas the Base hospital was for the RAMC who used were more professionally trained doctors who had to perform emergency treatment.

Content = red underline / Contextual knowledge = blue underline

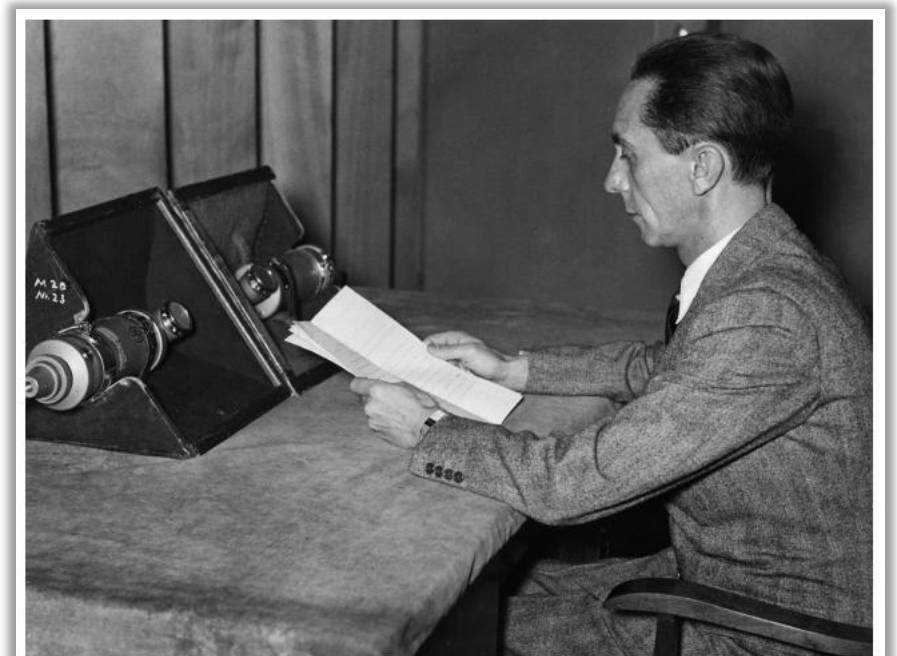
The answer to both Source A and Source B provides a developed comment on the usefulness of the source's content and provides contextual knowledge to support the comments of the source's usefulness.

This is a high Level 2 response. **5 marks.**

Source evaluation, reliability

- Comments that a source is reliable because it is from the time, that it is accurate because it is a photograph, that it may be exaggerated because it is a newspaper, are all generic answers, that could apply to any source and are Level 1 responses.
- Too many answers dismiss sources, saying they are biased. These answers need to provide support for this comment, e.g., examples of loaded language, but they also need to think more carefully about how this affects the usefulness of the source.
- A biased account can be useful evidence of what people thought, how the author wanted to present themselves, or the values of society.
- A photograph should not be dismissed because it might be staged – this again provides useful insight into the purpose of the photograph and the answer should consider who was the intended audience.

Source C: A photograph published in a German newspaper in 1935. It was taken by Hitler's official photographer. The photograph shows Josef Goebbels, Hitler's Minister for Propaganda, making a radio broadcast. He is reading out Hitler's New Year message to the German people.



Source evaluation, reliability

- Students should also take note of everything in the source attribution.
- For example, from the Warfare paper:

Source A: A photograph taken by a member of the London Fire Brigade. It shows firefighters dealing with a warehouse fire in London, 7 September 1940. The photograph was kept by the Fire Brigade as a record of its work during the Blitz.



However, many students suggested the photograph was unreliable because it was government propaganda.

Many students focused on the time gap and suggested the account was unreliable because the author would have forgotten details; this ignored the point that the account was based on the diary Simmons had written at the time.

Source B: From an account written by R Simmons in 1994. The account was based on a diary he kept during the Second World War. Here he is recalling a V2 attack in January 1945. He was 15 years old at the time of the attack.

The destruction was complete. The V2 had fallen in the middle of the road, creating a large crater, and the houses had collapsed.

The rescue services were quickly organised. A team of people was allocated to each of the demolished houses. There were frequent calls for silence so that we could listen for trapped victims under the rubble. Being reasonably small, I was asked to crawl into one pile of wreckage because there was a little girl in the house. Her cries could be heard but a fire was starting to build up. A chain of rescuers began to remove the rubble while the firemen aimed their hoses at the fire. Eventually she was brought out only slightly cut and bruised.

Room for improvement – a summary

- Students must explain how the source is useful for the enquiry in the question.
- Students must support their analysis of content and/or provenance with contextual knowledge.
- Responses should focus on utility of source content, not what is missing, unless it might be expected to be included. The mark scheme does not require the noting of limitations. No source can provide a complete picture of events or situations. The 'it does not say/show' approach rarely strengthens the answer.
- To achieve Level 3, students must link content, historical knowledge and provenance.
- The application of contextual knowledge can note the accuracy/typicality/untypicality of the evidence.
- Students should not dismiss a source's usefulness because it is biased.

Source enquiry follow-up question

(b) Study Source A.

How could you follow up Source A to find out more about the work of medical staff in the Casualty Clearing Stations (CCS) on the Western Front?

In your answer, you must give the question you would ask and the type of source you could use.

Complete the table below.

(4)

- Answers to this Paper 1 question should show an understanding of the early stages of the historian's work.
- In the first two parts of the answer, the candidate identifies a detail to be followed up as part of a larger enquiry and suggests an appropriate question that would provide an appropriate line of research.
- The proposed question should relate to the broader enquiry in the question rather than follow up an individual detail in the source.
- Marks can be given for each of these parts of the answer.

Detail in Source A that I would follow up:

Question I would ask:

What type of source I could use:

How this might help answer my question:

Source enquiry follow-up question

- Part 3 should identify an appropriate source.
- Part 4 explains what sort of information that source might contain that would help to answer the proposed question.
- The source should be as specific as possible. Generic sources, e.g., newspapers, diaries, government records, army records, etc., are too broad to be suitable but they can be validated in Part 4 if the explanation is specific.
- The source should be something likely to already exist, not something the historian could create, for example a newspaper article containing an interview from the time is acceptable, but the suggestion that the historian should conduct an interview is not. Therefore, students should be familiar with the types of sources available for their Historic Environment.

Detail in Source A that I would follow up:

Question I would ask:

What type of source I could use:

How this might help answer my question:

Source enquiry follow-up example

(b) **Study Source A.**

How could you follow up Source A to find out more about the work of medical staff in the Casualty Clearing Stations (CCS) on the Western Front?

In your answer, you must give the question you would ask and the type of source you could use.

Complete the table below.

(4)

Source A: From an account by May Tilton, published in 1933. May Tilton was a senior nurse, working on the Western Front. Here she is commenting on her experiences in a Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) in 1917.

We worked night after night, in the thunderous noise of raging battles. We cleaned and bandaged the wounded. We comforted them, praised their courage, praised their endurance and strength of will. The atmosphere was full of the stink of blood, antiseptic and gas.

One patient said to me: 'I don't want to die'. He had a frightfully smashed up leg that fell to bits as we lifted him from the stretcher. He died before the next morning.

A big shell came over the CCS at three o'clock in the morning and killed fourteen gunners who were nearby.

Source enquiry follow up – exemplar answer 3

Detail in Source A that I would follow up:

~~Did medical staff perform surgeries as well as~~
"We cleaned and bandaged the wounded"

Question I would ask:

Did nurses perform simple surgeries as well as dressing wounds?

What type of source I could use:

Diary from a nurse working in a Casualty Clearing station in 1917.

How this might help answer my question:

Might explain the day to day life of nurses working on the western front and describe every role they took on.

Source A describes the work of a senior nurse in a Casualty Clearing Station.

A valid detail is identified in **Part 1** and the proposed question in **Part 2** is an appropriate follow-up question that would relate to the wider enquiry in the question.

Part 3 of the answer suggests a specific source that would provide more information relevant to the enquiry.

Part 4 of this answer does explain how the information such sources might contain would answer the proposed question.

This answer received **4 marks**.

Room for improvement – a summary

- Part 1 – student should select a detail from the source that links to the broader enquiry in the question.
 - Part 2 – the question posed must provide more information about the broader enquiry in the question.
 - Part 3 – the source chosen must be specific, existing and likely to contain the answer to the question in Part 2.
-
- Proposing a valid follow-up question (Part 2) is the key to unlocking this question!

Source inference

- Many candidates scored the full 4 marks on this Paper 3 question.
- They have understood that the inference must be linked to the enquiry in the question and needs to be supported by details from the source rather than from their own knowledge.

Study Source A below and then answer Question 1.

Source A: A painting by a German artist, 1937. The painting is called *In the Beginning was the Word* and shows Hitler in the early 1920s.



- 1** Give **two** things you can infer from Source A about how Hitler increased support for the Nazi Party in the early 1920s.

(i) What I can infer:

.....

.....

.....

Details in the source that tell me this:

.....

.....

.....

(ii) What I can infer:

.....

.....

.....

Details in the source that tell me this:

.....

.....

.....

Source inference – exemplar answer 4

(i) What I can infer:

Hitler was a good public speaker

Details in the source that tell me this:

The people who are there ~~at~~ look
to be drawn in by him speaking

(ii) What I can infer:

He's very passionate about sharing
his ideas

Details in the source that tell me this:

~~He~~ His body language shows he's
talking rather intently

Two inferences are identified – Hitler's effect on his audience and his quality as a speaker.

These inferences are valid because they look at different aspects of the way Hitler's speeches increased support, and different detail is offered in support of each inference.

This answer received **4 marks**.

Room for improvement – a summary

- The inferences chosen must be focused on the enquiry in the question.
- Student must select two different valid inferences.
- The detail chosen must support the inference.

Teaching Sources Ideas and Strategies



Teaching sources – ideas and strategies



Activity 4

Using the chat.

What lesson activities have you used that have been successful in developing students' ability to analyse source utility?

Teaching sources – ideas and strategies

Carry out a source investigation

Before teaching a topic, start the lesson by presenting the topic in the form of a collection of sources for students to make inferences. This will help students to perceive what is meant by a historical enquiry, and also opens up the possibility of discussing source skills, such as ranking sources by usefulness, or thinking of further questions to ask and sources that could be consulted.

Hold a ‘source auction’

The teacher provides a selection of sources and groups of students are given an enquiry title, an amount of money and asked to bid for the sources they think would be most useful for their enquiry. Groups then decide how much each source is worth and what to do if another group is bidding against them. To develop the idea of utility further, different groups can have different enquiry questions which will affect the importance of a source to their enquiry. If the availability of printed resources allows, students could use the sources that they ‘purchased’ to make a wall display on their assigned enquiry.

Teaching sources – ideas and strategies

Match the source to the enquiry

Have a set of cards on the desk in pairs, naming a wide range of sources relevant to the Historic environment. For example, for Whitechapel it could include housing and employment records, Charles Booth's survey, workhouse records, local newspapers, national newspapers, etc.


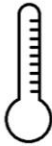

Pose a series of questions to the class, and in pairs, students should sort the same group of cards into two piles for whether they would help investigating that particular enquiry or not. As a differentiated extension, students could also rank the useful sources or select a most useful source from the pile.

Present the same source with different enquiries (see right)

Link content, provenance and reliability to utility by using different enquiries with the same source – how does the degree of utility vary?

Using sources

Students are often good at commenting on content or reliability but not linking this to utility. By presenting the same source with differing enquiries, students should see that the utility varies. This will help break them to break free from generalisations, such as newspapers being exaggerated, etc. In the example task, the teacher could identify alternative enquiry foci for the two empty boxes.

Option in this example	Option 10: Crime and Punishment in Britain, c1000–present
Historians have many pieces of evidence. It is important to evaluate how useful each piece of evidence is. However, the usefulness depends on the question that is being investigated. A source might be very useful for one enquiry but less so for another enquiry. Take a look at Source A.	How useful is Source A for an enquiry into... ... the effectiveness of the police in Whitechapel in 1888  ...  ... 
Source A – From an article in <i>The Times</i> newspaper, October 1888. <i>The Times</i> was a national newspaper mainly read by the upper classes. <p>Many critical comments have been made about police failures in connection with the Whitechapel murders. However, it should be remembered that this type of woman chooses to go alone to the place where she has agreed to meet a man.</p> <p>Some weeks ago, plain-clothes policemen were ordered to patrol this crime-ridden area of Whitechapel and to watch any man or woman seen together in suspicious circumstances.</p> <p>At about the time when the Mitre Square murder was being committed two of the extra men who had been put on duty were nearby. They would have seen any man and woman going together to Mitre Square. Therefore, the police suspect that the murderer had made an appointment with his female victim and they went to the place separately.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) What is the main information in the source?2) The provenance identifies that the source is from a national newspaper dated soon after the Ripper murders. How might this have affected the content of the source?3) In each of the enquiry topics in the boxes, make a judgement about how useful the source would be for investigating that topic by colouring the thermometer. A hotter thermometer means more useful, and colder means less useful.4) Next to each thermometer write one reason for your judgement.

Paper 1 and Paper 3 guides / Marking training

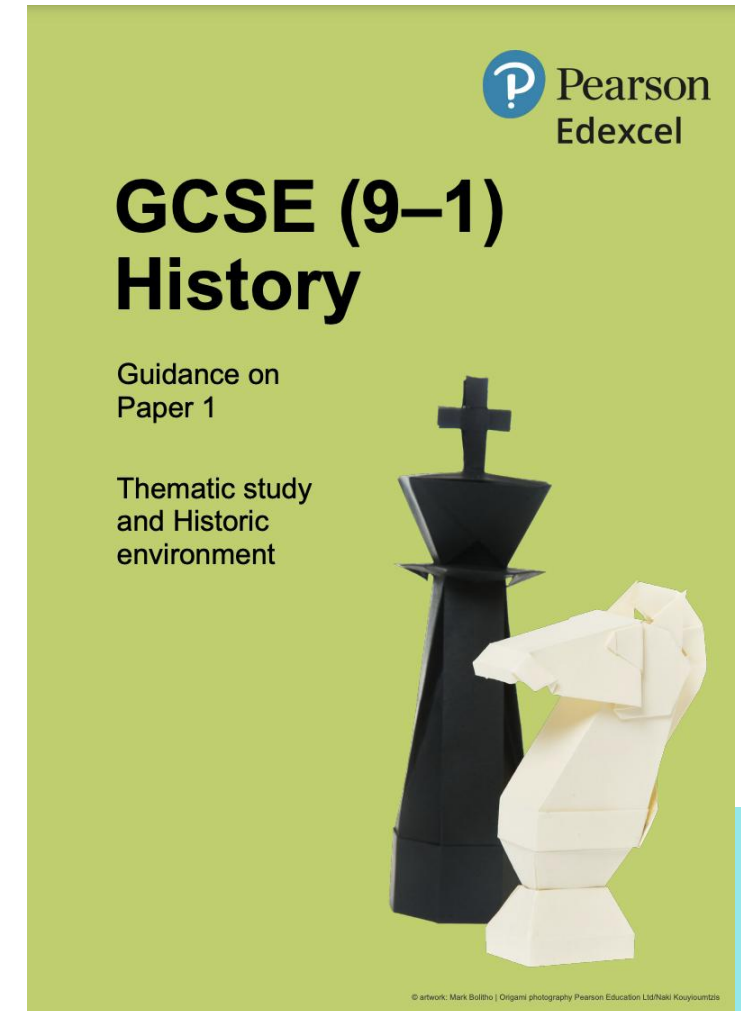
More ideas and activities in the [Paper 1](#) and [Paper 3](#) guides.

- Setting the scene
- Common barriers and pitfalls
- Teaching the content
- Teaching sources.

The three Paper guides have been updated to reflect the 2025–26 amends.

Paper 1 and Paper 3 marking training was run at the end of 2024. Recordings of the sessions are available:

- [Paper 1 marking training recording](#)
- [Paper 3 marking training recording](#)



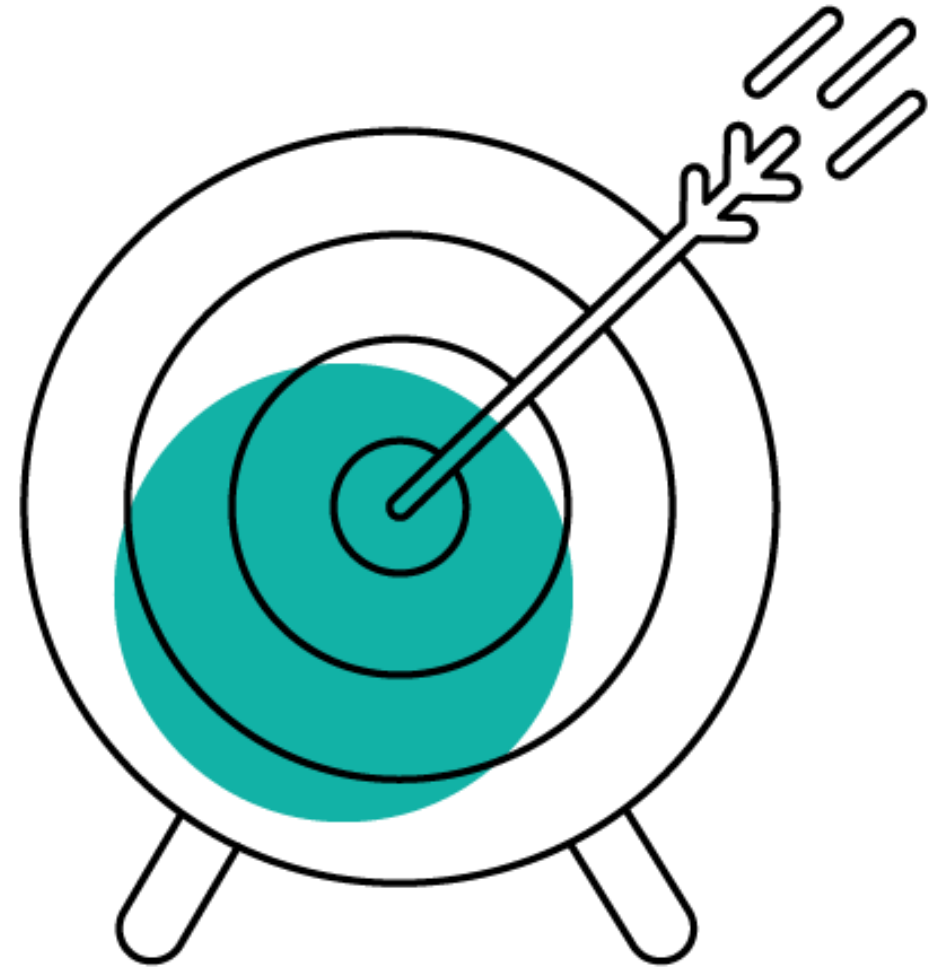


Questions?

Summary: GCSE History – sources

In this session we looked at the following objectives:

- how sources are assessed across Papers 1 and 3
- what students have done well and where there is room for improvement
- strategies for teaching sources
- common issues and FAQs.



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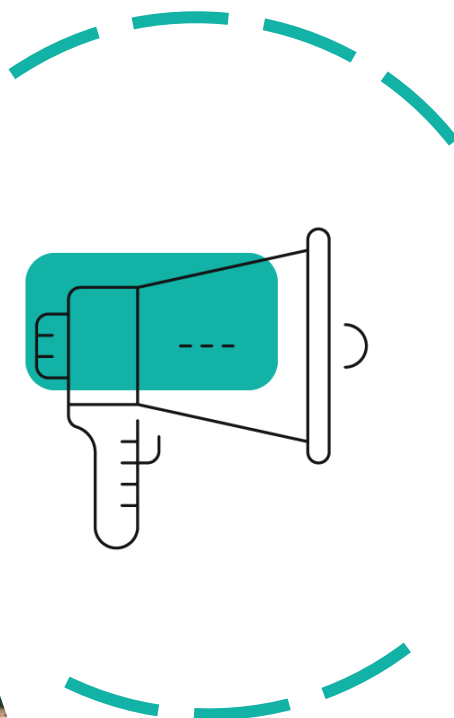
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