

GCSE (9–1)

History

How our assessments give every student
the chance to succeed



Introducing our new exams

History matters. That's why we've created a qualification that enables all your students to engage with the subject and show what they know.

Every student matters. With this in mind, our exams are designed to give them every chance to succeed – from accessing that first question to finishing the last.

This guide gives you a closer look at how we've shaped our assessments and how we'll support you every step of the way.

Our assessments

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An assessment model teachers prefer

We've designed our assessment to be **accessible** to the **full range** of your learners, while ensuring that they challenge your **most able** students. Our papers gradually build in demand and are designed to help your students approach the exams with confidence.

Our Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History will be assessed through three written exams. We chose this number of papers because you told us:

- 👉 It gives more students more opportunities to show what they can do.
- 👉 Three shorter papers mean students are less likely to suffer from exam fatigue.

Structure and features

Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3
British Thematic Study with Historic Environment	Period Study and British Depth Study	Modern Depth Study
🕒 1 hour 15 minutes	🕒 1 hour 45 minutes	🕒 1 hour 20 minutes
✓ 52 marks	✓ 64 marks	✓ 52 marks
⚖️ 30% weighting	⚖️ 40% weighting	⚖️ 30% weighting
AO1, AO2 and AO3 assessed	AO1 and AO2 assessed	AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4 assessed

Each Historic Environment site is linked to a thematic study, so students only have to study four distinct areas of content rather than five.

What students learn in Medicine, Crime, or Warfare will give a broad context for the detailed study of the associated site.

Only Paper 2 has two different topics and assesses two Assessment Objectives.

Allows for extra reading time for sources and interpretations.



Assessment objectives

AO1:	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key features and characteristics of the periods studied.
AO2:	Explain and analyse historical events and periods studied using second-order historical concepts.
AO3:	Analyse, evaluate and use sources (contemporary to the period) to make substantiated judgements, in the context of historical events studied.
AO4:	Analyse, evaluate and make substantiated judgements about interpretations (including how and why interpretations may differ) in the context of historical events studied.

Spotlight on AO2: Identifying second-order concepts

The new AO2 explicitly specifies the use of second-order concepts when assessing students' explanation and analysis of historical events. In order to support all your students, we have targeted particular second-order concepts in specific questions.

Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3
Question 3 similarity/difference	Period study Question 1 consequence	Question 2 causation
Question 4 change and continuity	Question 2 mix of concepts	
Question 5/6 any second-order concept	Question 3 consequence/significance	
	British depth study Question 1b causation	
	Question 1 ci/ii any second-order concept	



- Second-order concepts**
- similarity
 - difference
 - change
 - continuity
 - consequence
 - significance
 - causation

Spotlight on AO3 and AO4: Assessment of interpretations

Sources and interpretations are now assessed through separate assessment objectives. Paper 1 focuses purely on source skills whereas Paper 3 assesses both source and interpretation skills. Paper 3 Question 3 leads students through the analysis of linked sources and interpretations. Each part breaks down the process into a manageable chunk, embedding the idea that interpretations are grounded in evidence, the sources, and allowing students across the ability range to access a potentially tough aspect of history.

SECTION B

For this section, you will need to use the sources and interpretations in the Sources/Interpretations Booklet.

3 (a) Study Sources B and C.

How useful are Sources B and C for an enquiry into the attitudes of young people towards the Hitler Youth movement?

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

(8)

Part (a) outlines the enquiry and targets AO3.

(b) Study Interpretations 1 and 2. They give different views about the attitudes of young people towards the Hitler Youth movement.

What is the main difference between these views?

Explain your answer, using details from both interpretations.

(4)

Part (b) introduces the related interpretations, looking at what is the difference.

(c) Suggest one reason why Interpretations 1 and 2 give different views about the attitudes of young people towards the Hitler Youth movement.

You may use Sources B and C to help explain your answer.

(4)

Part (c) looks at a possible reason for that difference

Up to 4 marks of the total for part (d) will be awarded for spelling, punctuation, grammar and use of specialist terminology.

(d) How far do you agree with Interpretation 2 about the attitudes of young people towards the Hitler Youth movement?

Explain your answer, using both interpretations and your knowledge of the historical context.

(20)

Part (d) requires students to evaluate one interpretation, using both of the interpretations as well as their own knowledge.

Four of these marks are awarded for SPAG.
16 marks plus 4 SPAG marks

Assessment style

- 1 Our exams begin with lower demand questions to ease students into the paper and build their confidence early on.
- 2 The level of demand gradually increases throughout the paper, finishing with a high-tariff extended-response question at the end.
- 3 There is also ramping within topics or sections of papers: a new section will begin with a low-tariff transition question to ease students into a different topic area.

Question styles

We also use a mixture of question types, demand levels and response structures throughout our exam papers, including:

- 1 short-, medium- and extended-response questions
- 2 answer spaces and tables for low-tariff questions
- 3 stimulus points as prompts on high-tariff questions.

These are designed to help all students engage with what they're being asked to do, but also understand the length and type of answer expected.

Use of language

Clear questions and accessible language are used throughout the exams, so each student can understand what they need to answer. This not only includes the command words, but also the sources and interpretations quoted in the paper.

To ensure accessibility and brevity, sources and interpretations may be edited, but the original meaning will not be altered. Where it is important to retain the use of an original term or concept that may be challenging then glosses will be used.

Question stems and command words

Question stems are fixed for all our questions, ensuring a consistency of approach that enables all students to understand the focus of the questions.

Paper 1 – British Thematic Study with Historic Environment

Section A: Historic environment 10%	AO1	Describe two features of...	4 marks
	AO3	How useful are Sources A and B for an enquiry into...?	8 marks
	AO3	How could you follow up Source [A/B] to find out more about...?	4 marks
Section B: Thematic study 20%	AO1/ AO2	Explain one way in which X was [similar/different] to Y.	4 marks
	AO1/ AO2	Explain why...	12 marks
	AO1/ AO2	'[Statement.]' How far do you agree? Explain your answer.	16 marks + 4 marks for SPaG

Describe questions target demonstration of knowledge only. This eases students into the paper.

Students should make an evaluative judgement on utility.

Paper 2 – Period Study and British Depth Study

Change to Paper 2 layout

From summer 2019 onwards, Paper 2 will be split into two physical question-and-answer booklets: the Period study (booklet P), and the British depth study (booklet B). Students will only be provided with questions for the topics they have studied.

On the day of the Paper 2 exam, candidates will also be provided with a separate sheet containing key information on how pupils should complete the two question-and-answer booklets.

There are no changes to the Paper 2 topics or questions themselves, the timing of the examination (1 hour 45 mins) or the application of the mark scheme.

Booklet P: Period Study 20%	AO1/ AO2	Explain two consequences of...	4 + 4 marks
	AO1/ AO2	Write a narrative account analysing...	8 marks
	AO1/ AO2	Explain two of the following: The importance of X for Y.	8 + 8 marks
Booklet B: British Depth Study 20%	AO1	Describe two features of...	4 marks
	AO1/ AO2	Explain why...	12 marks
	AO1/ AO2	'[Statement.]' How far do you agree? Explain your answer.	16 marks

Paper 2 Q2 targets analytical narrative, as required by the DfE. This is clearly signposted in the question stem to ensure students don't confuse it with questions requiring causal explanation.

'Describe two features of...' transitions students into a new topic using a familiar question format from Paper 1.

Paper 3 – Modern Depth Study

Section A	AO3	Give two things you can infer from Source A about...	4 marks
	AO1/AO2	Explain why....	12 marks
Section B	AO3	How useful are Sources B and C for an enquiry into...?	8 marks
	AO4	What is the main difference between the views?	4 marks
	AO4	Suggest one reason why Interpretations 1 and 2 give different views about...	4 marks
	AO4	How far do you agree with Interpretation [1/2] about...?	16 marks + 4 marks for SPaG

There is consistency and familiarity across papers.
 - 'Explain' is used in Papers 1, 2 and 3 as a stem for 12-mark questions targeting causation.
 - The AO3 question stem here is the same as in Paper 1.



A journey through a Pearson Edexcel History paper

Talking about the features that make papers accessible to students is one thing; it's better to see it in practice. So, here's a walk-through our Paper 1 exam.

SECTION A
Whitechapel, c1870–c1900: crime, policing and the inner city
Answer Questions 1 and 2.

1 Describe **two** features of accommodation for the poorer people in the Whitechapel area. (4)

Feature 1

2 (a) Study Sources A and B in the Sources Booklet.
 How useful are Sources A and B for an enquiry into the effectiveness of the police in Whitechapel in 1888? (8)
 Explain your answer, using Sources A and B and your knowledge of the historical context.

(b) Study Source A.
 How could you follow up Source A to find out more about the effectiveness of the police in Whitechapel in 1888? (4)
 In your answer, you must give the question you would ask and the type of source you could use.
 Complete the table below.

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:	

Number of features signposted in the answer area.

Low demand, low tariff question to build confidence at the start of the exam.

Medium demand question

Q2b targets students' ability to frame valid historical questions, as required by the DfE. Although it carries a lower tariff than the previous source utility question, it is most logical for it to come afterwards because it is a follow-up task.

Structured response to ensure students focus their answer appropriately.

Low demand, low tariff question to transition students to this section.

Medium to high demand question

Students have a choice of 16-mark questions, allowing them to better demonstrate their understanding of historical concepts and course content.

The question supports your higher attaining students to demonstrate the substantive range of their knowledge.

SECTION B
Crime and punishment in Britain, c1000–present
Answer Questions 3 and 4. Then answer EITHER Question 5 OR Question 6.

3 Explain **one** way in which smuggling in Britain during the eighteenth century was similar to smuggling during the twentieth century. (4)

Explain why there were changes in the prison system in the period c1700–c1900.

You may use the following in your answer:

- John Howard
- hard labour

You **must** also use information of your own. (12)

5 'The role of local communities was the most important factor affecting law enforcement during the Middle Ages.'

How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

You may use the following in your answer:

- tithings
- trial by ordeal

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

Stimulus points enable your students to associate what they have learnt with the question being asked and to demonstrate positive achievement. It reduces the risk of extensive, knowledgeable but misdirected responses.

(Total for spelling, punctuation, grammar and use of specialist terminology = 4 marks)
(Total for Question 5 = 20 marks)

OR

6 'The main purpose of punishment during the period c1000–c1700 was to deter people from committing crimes.'

How far do you agree? Explain your answer. (16)

You may use the following in your answer:

- corporal punishment
- the introduction of transportation

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

(Total for spelling, punctuation, grammar and use of specialist terminology = 4 marks)
(Total for Question 6 = 20 marks)

You'll find much more detailed guidance on our assessments in the Getting Started Guide with our Teacher and learning materials at:
quals.pearson.com/gcsehistorymaterials

Teaching approaches for all abilities

When designing our papers, we worked with hundreds of teachers and the history education community to make sure our qualifications would work for you and your students.

Over the next few pages, you'll find ideas and approaches practising teachers have used, and will use, to help their students succeed in their GCSE History studies.

Approaching Paper 1 Section A Question 2(b) – The follow-up enquiry

The key to the enquiry is to expose students to as many contemporary sources as possible and let them know where they can find out more.

Source log

During the study of the historical environment have students keep a log of any contemporary source they come across, either in class or through independent study. Higher attaining students could also divide these into types.

Step by step

Establish a step-by-step process for students to follow. Start by modelling the process with the class and then have them work in small groups or pairs. Each group can have a different source. Use an enlarged image.

- 1) Identify:** Have students circle three to five elements on the source depending on attainment level.
- 2) Question:** Each student should write three questions they would like to ask about each element in the source. The group then selects the best question for each element, basing their decision on where they could get an answer.
- 3) Research:** Students research appropriate sources to help them answer the questions they have proposed. They could search relevant web pages or use teacher-created source packs.
- 4) Report:** The group reports to the class what they have discovered and how the source they have chosen helped answer their question.

Selecting good questions

Provide students with a series of questions relating to a selection of sources and have them identify which would lead to better enquiries.

Moving from inference to enquiry

Using visual reminders should help students progress through the steps of an enquiry. Start with an image in the centre of a page, with three boxes around it.

Box 1: Students write what they see/read.

Box 2: Prompted by what they have seen/read, students say what else they want to know.

Box 3: Students write ideas about how to find the information in which they are interested.

3. Ideas about ways to get hold of information

2. What do you want to learn more about?

1. What do you see?



Paper 3 Section A Question 1 - Source Inference

Everyday inferences

In everyday life we make inferences on a daily basis. Making students aware of this will really help them. Using commonplace examples is a good starting point for students. Provide them with a student's report card and have them say what the teacher really means.

Matching inferences

Have a set of sources for students to work with, then provide a set of statements which consist of inferences and have the students match the correct source to the inference. For higher attaining students have some statements that are inferences but not related to what we want to know. Students should identify which ones to ignore.

Paper 3 Section B - Interpretations

When dealing with interpretations it is best to start with explaining the difference between an interpretation and a source. Students should recognise that a source is contemporary and is deemed a piece of evidence, whereas an interpretation is what a historian does with that evidence.

Different points of view

Using a set of eight sources on the same theme (e.g. the Reichstag Fire), have students sort them into those which could display different versions of what happened (e.g. Nazi conspiracy, Van Der Lubbe acted alone, Communist conspiracy). Then have the students write what a historian would say for each version using the relevant evidence.

Put an event on trial

By making comparisons with evidence in a courtroom, students should be able to see that people can reach different conclusions based on the evidence presented. Have groups prepare prosecution and defence cases. Students should ask the following questions at the conclusion to decide why the prosecution and defence chose to present their case the way they did.

- What have they chosen to focus on as the main piece of evidence?
- What evidence is there to back up their version of events?
- What evidence have they chosen to ignore/downplay?
- Is any of their evidence affected by what time period it is related to?

They should then be able to relate this to historical interpretations by asking similar questions when looking at opposing views.

Supporting SPAG

Writing Historically spreads in the Pearson Student Books* focus on the writing skills most important to historical success. This literacy support uses the proven Grammar for Writing approach used in many English departments to support all abilities with extended writing.

Extended Responses

Practice planning

Model with students various methods of planning. They should look at examples, such as mind maps, listing, tables, and learn to indicate when they have used the points in their responses to avoid repetition.

Explanation rather than description

To avoid the problem of students merely writing everything they know in the form of description they need to practise explanatory sentences. Start with a series of statements that are purely factual and then have the students add to each saying why they are important. Get them to use language, such as 'this means that', 'as a result', 'this meant', 'which shows', to link the descriptive part with the explanation.

Start with the conclusion

Have higher attaining students write their conclusions to their extended responses first. This creates a more structured response and helps avoid wandering off the topic as they know where they have to end up.

Find out more about our published resources* at:

www.pearsonschools.co.uk/gcsehistoryresources



*Pearson's paid-for resources, as well as other endorsed resources, are not a prerequisite for the delivery of Pearson Edexcel specifications.



Track and assess

Tools to help you measure progress

A wide range of free support and materials are available to help you track and assess your students' progress over time.

Key Stage 3 and GCSE baseline tests

We provide free formative assessments to help you understand your new Year 7 students and the progress they have made by the end of Key Stage 3. You can assess their learning needs before you start teaching the GCSE.

Practice papers and exemplar responses

Past Papers, Sample Assessment Materials, specimen papers, secure mocks, a bank of new practice papers with performance data, and selected exemplar student answers with examiner comments are provided.

ActiveLearn Progress and Assess

To help you track your students' progress from Year 7 to Year 11, Pearson have created a 12-step progression scale.

Find out more at:

www.pearsonschools.co.uk/historyprogression

Free support

ResultsPlus

ResultsPlus gives the most detailed analysis available of your students' exam exams. Widely used by teachers across the country, this free online service helps you identify topics and skills where your students could benefit from further learning, helping them gain a deeper understanding of history.

quals.pearson.com/gcsehistoryrp

examWizard

examWizard is a free exam preparation tool containing a back on past paper questions and support materials to help you create your own mock exams and tests. quals.pearson.com/gcsehistoryew

Supporting great history teaching

Our published materials* on ActiveLearn Digital Service also include end-of-unit tests and exams skills powerpoints.

ActiveLearn
Digital Service

Find out more at www.pearsonschools.co.uk/gcsehistoryresources

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