Pearson Edexcel

GCSE (9–1) History

Guidance on Paper 3

Modern depth study

Updated February 2025

Contents

Edexcel Paper 3 Guide

This updated Paper 3 Guide is the third in a series of three paper guides for the Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History specification. These guides are designed to complement the **Getting Started Guide**, by recapping on the content and assessment requirements before going on to consider approaches to teaching the respective paper. This support is aimed at teachers who are new to this paper, although the ideas are relevant to everyone teaching this course.

Please also refer to the **topic booklets** for the Paper 3 options: each booklet includes an overview of the topic, content guidance and exemplification, a student timeline and information on free and paid-for resources.

Specification Issue 5 (2025 exam series)

Issue 5 of the specification was released in June 2024. It is an update for students who are assessed in 2025. The changes in Issue 5 of the Specification are to the assessment model. There is more time overall for the exam papers, along with more accessible opening questions and optionality added to Paper 3. It also includes the changes to language use which were introduced in Issue 4 with the intention of using more accurate and sensitive language without changing the content. Due to the introduction of Specification Issue 6, Issue 5 will only affect students assessed in 2025. For more information on the amendments to the assessment model are, and specifically how they affect Paper 3, please refer to Mark Battye's **subject advisor update of 26 Feb 2024**, or to the relevant support materials detailed in the **GCSE History summary guidance on changes for 2025 and 2026**.

Specification Issue 6 (2026 exam series onwards)

Issue 6 of the specification was released in August 2024 and is for students who will be assessed in 2026. This Issue includes the changes made in the assessment model in Issue 5, as well as amendments to the content following a thorough review. The amendments have not added content; generally, they clarify content, with the aim of helping teachers to focus on what to teach or adjust the order of content to help with the flow of coverage. For more information on what the amendments to the content for Paper 3 are and why they were introduced, please refer to Mark Battye's **subject advisor update of 14 June 2024**, or to the relevant support materials detailed in the **GCSE History summary guidance on changes for 2025 and 2026**.

Students assessed in 2025	Issue 5 of the specification
Students assessed from 2026	Issue 6 of the specification

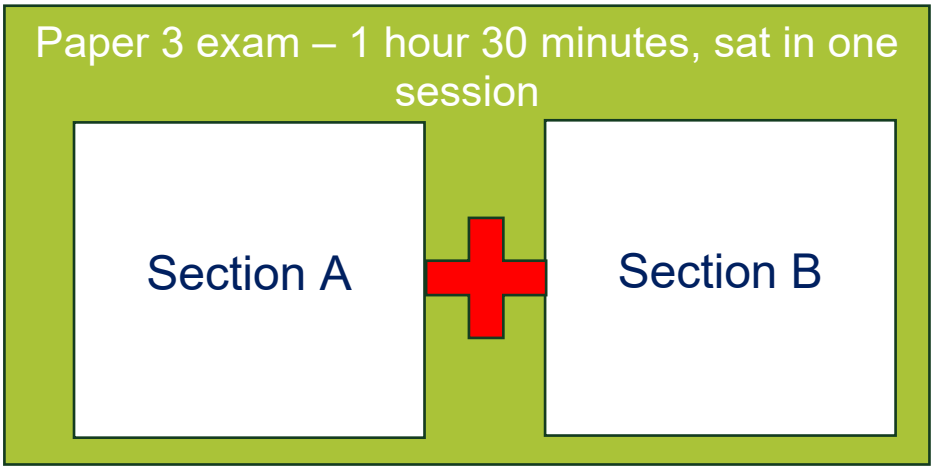
Section 1: Getting to know Paper 3

The current requirements for GCSE History specifications mean that all courses include a European or wider-world depth study that covers an era different to that covered by the British depth study. Since the options for the British depth study element of Paper 2 cover the medieval or early modern periods, the Paper 3 options are all taken from the modern period.

How is Paper 3 structured?

Paper 3 consists of one exam paper, with an additional sources and interpretations booklet that contains the two sources and the two historical interpretations that are used for the Section B (Question 3) enquiry.

The Paper 3 exam consists of two sections, Section A and Section B, and the whole exam lasts for 1 hour and 30 minutes.



The four options for Paper 3 are:

Option	Modern depth study
30	Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917–41
31	Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39
32	Mao's China, 1945–76
33	The USA, 1954–75: conflict at home and abroad

In each option, Section A carries 16 marks, whilst Section B carries 32 marks, with a further 4 marks for spelling, punctuation, grammar and use of specialist vocabulary.

What skills does this paper develop?

Paper 3 is the only one of the three GCSE papers in the specification which targets all four assessment objectives (AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4). Therefore, the paper allows students the opportunity to develop and demonstrate a range of historical skills.

Each of the options focuses on a substantial and coherent short time span, ranging between 21 and 31 years in length. Consequently, in the Modern depth study, students have the opportunity to make a deeper study of the complexity of a society or a historical situation. Depending on the option chosen, students will have the chance to engage with different aspects of the society, like social, economic, political, cultural and military aspects, including how these aspects interconnect.

Students will have the opportunity to develop their ability to learn and use historical knowledge of the period studied (AO1), in conjunction with secondary historical concepts, particularly causation (AO2). Additionally, students will be able to develop their skills in handling source material (AO3), as well as historical interpretations (AO4).

The four options for Paper 3 cover topics which are interesting to study, but which also continue to affect the modern world. As students cover the different parts of the specification content, they will be able to see how these events in the recent past continue to affect the attitudes, ideas and events of the world we live in.

Building your course

One feature of the Pearson Paper 3 topic options, as with the whole Edexcel GCSE History specification, is that there are no prohibited combinations. All four Paper 3 options can be combined with any of the Paper 1 and Paper 2 topics. This gives you flexibility to create a combination which suits you as a teacher as well as your students.

Having the flexibility to choose helps you to ensure that your students gain a broad historical awareness through their GCSE History course. Taken as a whole, the three papers of the GCSE specification cover a range of time periods, as well as different approaches to history (e.g. political, social, economic, etc.), and covering both British and world history. With the Paper 3 choices, you have the freedom to teach a topic which you know well and have taught before on other specifications, or a new topic which you have not taught before.

It is worth considering the combination that will work within your broader curriculum setting. One option is to choose subjects that give the widest variety to your students. For example, having chosen Early Elizabethan England and the American West, c1835–c1895 for Paper 2, you could choose to study Mao's China, 1945–76, for Paper 3. This gives your students the opportunity to study widely different periods of time, with contrasting cultures and societies. Alternatively, you might consider making a choice of topic for Paper 3 based on a conceptual link with Paper 1 and Paper 2. An example of this might be choosing to study Warfare and British Society, c1250–present in Paper 1 for an overview of warfare through time, Superpower Relations, 1941–91 in Paper 2 to consider the impact of the threat of nuclear war on international relations, and Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917–41 for Paper 3 to show the development of communism in the USSR which led to the Cold War. Of course, this is just one example of how you might look for conceptual links between the topics. Finding narrative or thematic links like the ones mentioned here or others can make for an interesting and effective combination of topics for your students. Appendix 2 of the **Specification** is helpful in suggesting other ideas for creating a coherent combination of units with a conceptual link.

Another consideration is how the choices fit with your wider curriculum at KS3 and KS5. Whilst choices should not be used to narrow down the curriculum, it can also be helpful to students if the choices they study at KS3 give them a relevant knowledge base and historical awareness that helps them to grasp the chronological and thematic content they will study at GCSE. Similarly, well-chosen GCSE units can provide a starting point for students who will continue their studies into GCE AS and A Level History.

The DfE requirements for the Modern depth study

The DfE GCSE Subject Content requirement for depth studies is given below:

> Depth studies should focus on a *substantial and coherent short time span* and require students to understand the *complexity of a society or historical situation and the interplay of different aspects within it*. Depending on the particular society or historical situation selected for study, these aspects may include (but are not restricted to) social, economic, political, religious, technological and military factors. [italics added]

This means that, during the Modern depth study, students should focus on understanding the society or historical situation. This requires considering the different, relevant aspects of the society, such as the economic and political aspects. Within the four options for the Modern depth study in Paper 3, the Specification content identifies the knowledge that students should learn to cover the different aspects of the society or historical situation.

More information about each of the options, including specific content coverage and guidance on teaching the topic, is available in the **Specification** and the **topic booklets**.

How does this work in practice?

Each Modern depth study is divided into four key topics. Each key topic addresses a specific area of the society or historical situation, with a clearly identified time frame. An example of this is given below:

Option 30: Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917–41

1. The revolutions of 1917
2. The Bolsheviks in power, 1917–24
3. Stalin's rise to power and dictatorship, 1924–41
4. Economic and social changes, 1924–41

The key topics provide a framework for teaching the option. Each one covers a distinct area of study. However, the key topics should not be taught in isolation from one another.

Students should understand that each area of study is developing their knowledge of one society, which in the case of Option 30, is Soviet Russia.

Key topic 1: The revolutions of 1917	
1 Russia in early 1917	• Threats to the tsarist regime: discontent among peasants and town workers and the growth of opposition. • The impact of the First World War: military defeats; economic, political and social effects; the Tsar as commander-in-chief.
2 The February Revolution	• Triggers for revolt – the immediate reasons for the February Revolution. • Events in Petrograd in February 1917, including strikes and the mutiny in the army. The Tsar's absence and abdication.
3 The Provisional Government	• The establishment of the Provisional Government and the problems it faced. The role of Kerensky. • The weaknesses and failures of the Provisional Government. • The significance of the Kornilov Revolt.
4 The Bolshevik Revolution	• Lenin's return and activities, including the April Theses and the growth in support for the Bolshevik Party. The 'July Days'. • The Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917. The reasons for their success. The roles of Trotsky and Lenin.

An example of one of the four key topics for this option.

Each key topic contains four subsidiary sections to structure the teaching of the unit.

The areas of knowledge that should be taught are identified.

Specific examples that should be taught as part of the content are identified.

How is it assessed?

The Paper 3 Modern depth study is made of up two sections, Section A and Section B. Taken as a whole, Paper 3 assesses all four of the assessment objectives that are part of GCSE History. The following table shows the breakdown of the assessment objectives; the percentage is the proportion of the marks available for each assessment objective. Additionally, there are 4 marks for spelling, punctuation and the use of specialist terminology (SPaG) available with Q3(d).

AO1 (12.5%)	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key features and characteristics of the periods studied. • Question 2 assesses knowledge and understanding of the features and characteristics of the period.
AO2 (12.5%)	Explain and analyse historical events and periods studied using second-order historical concepts. • Question 2 assesses the second-order historical concept of causation.
AO3 (25%)	Analyse, evaluate and use sources (contemporary to the period) to make substantiated judgements, in the context of historical events studied. • Question 1 assesses the skill of making inferences from a source. • Question 3(a) assesses the ability to evaluate source utility.
AO4 (50%)	Analyse, evaluate and make substantiated judgements about interpretations (including how and why interpretations may differ) in the context of historical events studied. • Question 3(b) assesses the ability to analyse the difference between two interpretations. • Question 3(c) assesses the ability to analyse the reason why two interpretations differ. • Question 3(d) assesses the ability to analyse and evaluate interpretations.

As the above table shows, AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed in Section A of Paper 3, whereas Section B focuses on AO3 and AO4.

Section A contains two questions. Question 1 relates to a source that is printed within the exam paper. Question 2 has two options (a) and (b), which allows students to choose the question that they would prefer to answer.

Q1 Give two things you can infer from source A about…

(4 marks)

- This question assesses the candidates' ability to make inferences from source material – one extract – that is contemporary to the period studied.
- The mark scheme awards one mark for each valid inference, with two further marks available for supporting each inference with a detail selected from the source.
- The exam paper has a printed framework that is designed to help students engage with what they need to include in the answer.

Q2(a) or (b)

Explain why…

You **may** use the following in your answer:

- stimulus point 1
- stimulus point 2

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

(12 marks)

- There is a choice of two options for this question, students choose either 2(a) or 2(b).
- This question targets causation. Answers will explain the reasons for a specified event or development.
- Two stimulus points are provided to help candidates recognise the context of the question. Students do not have to use them, but answers should cover three aspects of content.

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Section B contains one question (Q3), which has four parts (Q3a–d). Part 3(a) will focus on Sources B and C. Parts 3(b), 3(c) and 3(d) will focus on Interpretations 1 and 2. It is important to note that Question 3 is a package: all four parts of the question will address the same specified enquiry throughout. For example, with the Germany option (31), if 3(a) were to ask about the attitudes of young people towards the Hitler Youth movement, parts (b), (c) and (d) of the question would address the same enquiry.

Q3(a) How useful are Sources B and C for an enquiry into…

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

(8 marks)

- This question assesses the candidates' ability to evaluate the utility of a contemporary source in relation to a specified enquiry.
- The sources could be written or visual but at least one source will be written. They will include provenance information to aid candidates to assess utility.

Q3(b) Study Interpretations 1 and 2. They give different views about… What is the main difference between the views?

Explain your answer, using details from **both** interpretations.

(4 marks)

- This question assesses the candidates' ability to identify the different views in relation to the specified enquiry expressed in the contrasting interpretations.
- To gain full marks, candidates must use details from both interpretations.

Q3(c) Suggest **one** reason why Interpretations 1 and 2 give different views about…

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

(4 marks)

- Candidates are assessed on their ability to explain why the two interpretations offer different viewpoints of the specified enquiry.
- Candidates may choose to refer to the sources in the exam paper to explain the difference or may give a different reason.

Q3(d) How far do you agree with Interpretation 2 about…?

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

(16 marks, plus 4 marks for SPaG)

- Candidates are assessed on their ability to reach a substantiated judgement by reviewing the alternative views of the specified enquiry expressed in the interpretations, to create a coherent, sustained and logically structured argument.
- The question will always feature Interpretation 2, but students must make use of **both** interpretations.
- Strong answers will use precisely selected contextual knowledge to support the evaluation.
- Strong answers will indicate how different interpretations have been conveyed and use this to support the evaluation.

What is the difference between sources and interpretations?

In GCSE History, being able to use, analyse and evaluate sources and interpretations is an important skill. Paper 3 assesses both AO3 (contemporary sources) and AO4 (interpretations).

For the purposes of GCSE History, 'sources' are pieces of evidence which are contemporary to the period studied. Sources may be written or visual. They 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 directly witnesses to an event. They may also feature reminiscences and reflections constructed after the period but by those who were involved. Later secondary material, for example textbook extracts or historians' accounts, will not be used as source evidence.

In contrast, 'interpretations' are secondary extracts. These are labelled 'interpretations' to distinguish them clearly from the sources. Strictly speaking these are secondary extracts which could be said to offer an interpretation within them; at GCE the term 'extract' is used. The extracts may be interpretations of an aspect of the period taken from textbooks or from the writings of historians, suitably eased for accessibility. Where an extract is eased, the original meaning of the author will not be altered in the process.

It is important for teachers and students to grasp the difference between sources and interpretations, as well as the link between them. Sources are pieces of evidence contemporary to the period. As such, they can be used to support judgements about history. Interpretations, in contrast, are viewpoints that have been reached by historians who have considered the evidence. Interpretations are viewpoints which can be evaluated by using contextual knowledge of the period, rather than evidence which can be analysed for usefulness like a source.

One helpful way to think about sources and interpretations is with an illustration of bricks and houses. Just like bricks are used by a bricklayer to construct a house, sources are studied by a historian in order to construct an interpretation.

In Paper 3, the sources and interpretations will always be related to the same enquiry. Question 3(a), assessing the utility of Sources B and C, will introduce the enquiry that is addressed in the contrasting Interpretations 1 and 2. For this reason, students may choose to refer to Sources B and C when explaining the reason for the different views in Interpretations 1 and 2 (Question 3(c)).

The analysis and evaluation of the viewpoints of the two interpretations in Paper 3 can be done by using the relevant historical skills and using contextual knowledge and understanding of the features and characteristics of the period. It is important to remember that there is no specification requirement for students to learn historiographical debates, or to know the names of historians or key academic texts, and no marks are allocated for such comments.

Source evaluation: examiner feedback

The most frequent reason why answers do not reach Level 3 is that the student does not address all three strands of the mark scheme – source content, provenance and contextual knowledge. Many lengthy and thoughtful answers focus on the usefulness of the source content but fail to consider the other elements of source evaluation, or do so in generalised comments or assertions based on assumptions. Students should realise that this creates an unbalanced answer, which cannot score highly.

The source content may be useful in a variety of ways. It may provide details of an event, people's actions, their feelings or attitudes, or give an example of a policy. This information may be useful because it helps the historian to understand what happened, how people felt, or how the event fitted into the wider context.

Students often use the acronym NOP (nature, origin, purpose) to remind themselves to discuss a source's provenance. However, this needs to go beyond simplistic statements that assert the source is from the time in question and is therefore a primary source and reliable, or it is biased and must be unreliable. Similarly, comments such as a photograph is only a snapshot of a moment in time, or a diary is reliable but only one person's view, are valid but vague and generalised.

Students should recognise that every type of source has strengths and weaknesses. The nature of sources such as diaries and letters means they can provide personal details or an insight into motives or attitudes, but they may also be limited because they are only from one person's perspective or because the author only has limited knowledge of events. Photographs can vividly convey the scale of an event but they cannot provide information about the causes or consequences of the event.

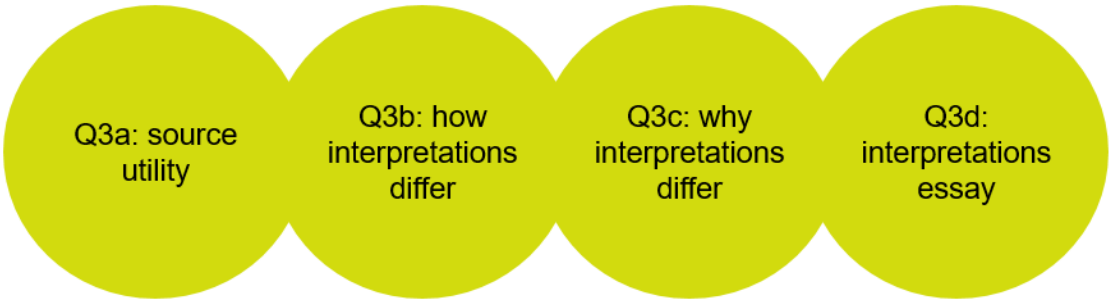
When considering the origin of a source, the author, date or location may be significant. The purpose of a source may be related to the intended audience or its effect, for example, a newspaper article may be intended to inform the public about a trial, the purpose of an official record may be to record the outcome of a new surgical technique, a speech before a battle may be intended to raise morale among the soldiers, or a letter may be intended to reassure family members after the writer has migrated to Britain.

The key point is that comments about the source's provenance should be specific to the individual source and used to show whether the provenance makes the source more, or less, useful to the historian. Does the source provide personal details, is it from a key person or a key date, was it intended to inform the public? Reliability is a factor affecting a source's usefulness but many answers assert that a source must be biased because the author is from a particular group, without providing any evidence of that bias.

Contextual knowledge is sometimes added in a separate paragraph but it should always be linked to the evaluation of the source. Students may use contextual knowledge to confirm or challenge details in the source content, to assess how representative the source content is, to comment on the author or the date of the source, or to place it in a wider context.

Many students understand that their answer should cover the three strands of the mark scheme, but approach it as a checklist, covering each strand in a separate paragraph. However, the best answers show that these strands are interlinked. Students should also make clear their judgement on the source's usefulness and explain the basis of that judgement, for example, the source's accuracy, reliability, insights, or typicality.

Interpretations: examiner feedback



The four parts of question 3 should be seen as a package, exploring the work of the historian. Students are asked to evaluate two sources for their usefulness; they are then given two different interpretations and asked to identify the main difference between the views expressed. The interpretations will not necessarily challenge each other but there will be a clear difference in their views.

In question 3c, when students are asked to explain how the historians have reached different views, the most common approach is to explain that the historians have based their research on different sources, using the sources from question 3a to support this explanation. Other explanations could be that the historians are focusing on different aspects, for example political and economic issues, or looking at different groups in society, or that the interpretations are written from different perspectives, for example assessing the success of a policy or taking a short term / long term view. The key point here is that historians can reach different, equally valid, conclusions as a result of the process of writing history.

The explanation given should be supported with details from the interpretations and should not be based on the provenance as this is not a historiographical question, where students are expected to know about the views of individual historians or schools of thought. Similarly, the difference between views cannot be explained by assumptions based on the author's nationality or the date the interpretation was produced.

Question 3d draws upon the previous parts of the package in question 3. Students are asked how far they agree with Interpretation 2. They should not treat the interpretations as sources or evaluate them for reliability or usefulness. Nor should they produce an answer explaining their own view on the enquiry question. The answer should focus on the interpretations, making references to specific details within Interpretation 2 and using contextual knowledge to confirm or challenge the view being offered.

Students should realise that details from the interpretation cannot be used as independent evidence to confirm that the interpretation is a valid one, but the way the details are used could be used to show how the interpretation conveys a view. They should also make use of Interpretation 1, either to support their comments about Interpretation 2 or to discuss the alternative view being offered. The 'best-fit' approach to marking means that answers that do not make use of both interpretations or include contextual knowledge are not necessarily limited to Level 1 but they are unlikely to score highly. There is no expectation that students will produce a third aspect of content, unrelated to the interpretations.

For the highest mark in Level 4, candidates need to meet every part of the mark scheme, including: 'Precise analysis of the interpretations is shown, indicating how the differences of view are conveyed and deploying this material to support the evaluation.' This may be done by looking at the language used, the tone or emphasis within the interpretation, or the way the interpretation is structured. However, it should not be assumed that this will automatically lead to full marks as all strands of the mark scheme need to be met.

Section 2: Teaching Paper 3

This section is intended to offer suggestions on how to approach teaching Paper 3. The suggestions made and examples given have been provided by an experienced former head of department to help address potential problems and are not intended to be definitive approaches as to how the topics should be taught. There is no one 'right way' to teach GCSE History; nor is there one 'right way' for students to answer exam questions. The author of this guide has not seen live materials, and any topics used for exemplification are based on questions taken from past papers, sample assessment materials or specimen papers.

Setting the Scene

For many students, a significant challenge in Paper 3 is being able to comprehend the societies which they will be studying. Although the four options are all from recent history, the values, ideas and social norms may be different to what students understand. For example, studying Mao's China, 1945–76, involves understanding a culture which has some differences in beliefs and social structures from Europe and the West, including a government which followed communist ideology. Similarly, whilst students may assume that the USA in the years 1954–75 was similar to what they see of modern USA in the media, or, for that matter, modern Britain, there were socially accepted norms and concepts such as legalised racial discrimination which contrast with commonly held social and legal expectations in modern Britain; students will need to understand these issues in order to grasp the key aspects of that society.

Therefore, it is a good idea to ensure that students have a grounding in the option before they have the chance to become lost in the specific parts of the content. Here are some practical suggestions of how you could do this when you start teaching the option.

Inferring the big ideas and concepts of the period	It can be a good idea to start by spending a little time on the overview of the topic. One way is to introduce the idea of inferences early. Students could be presented with a selection of sources from the topic, possibly more than they need. By choosing 5 sources that they think look interesting, students can make inferences about the society that they will be studying. For example, if the topic is the USA 1954–75, the sources could include issues of racial segregation, the Vietnam War, popular protests, etc. Then students could work in groups to compare inferences and make a list of conclusions that they have reached about the society. These could then be discussed as a class. **Differentiation:** For lower-attaining students, only visual sources could be given, such as posters and photographs. For higher-attaining students, the task could include categorising the inferences under headings like 'political', 'economic' and 'social'.

What do students already know, or assume	Many students will already either have ideas about the society that they are studying, or will know some names of events or political groups. For example, it is likely students have heard of communism, or are aware that China has a different culture to the West, or are aware of issues of antisemitism in twentieth-century Germany. The teacher can display a collection of pictures on the board in the classroom to act as a stimulus, and then invite students to identify ideas that they know. This could also identify misconceptions, which are addressed in the next suggestion.
Misconceptions	Some topics are associated with misconceptions. For example, many students could think that all Germans were Nazis, without realising that this was a political party. The teacher can start with some true/false statements which include these misconceptions and use these to address key ideas as a precursor to studying the content. **Differentiation:** Lower-attaining students could be given the chance to discuss the statements in pairs before choosing true or false. For more able students, they task could be restructured to offer three true statements with one fictional statement, with the challenge being to identify the false statement.

Teaching in practice:

Rachael Mustill, Assistant Principal at Ely College and CMAT History Curriculum Director.

I chose the Germany option because it is the most popular topic for our students, with good resources, and we had previous experience of teaching German history. We teach a three-year GCSE course, so we teach Paper 3 in the Spring of Year 10, after Paper 1 and Paper 2, Booklet B. We teach Paper 2, Booklet P, after Paper 3.

One of the challenges we find is in teaching student to answer Q3(a). We approach this by using a writing frame that helps students to understand how to meet the requirements of the mark scheme. Another challenge is in making sure students are prepared for all the content that could be on the exam. We encourage our students not to try to guess what might appear on the exam paper, but by using the range of sample and past papers, we show the variety so that they understand the importance of revising all the content areas. We make good use of knowledge organisers, thinking quilts and splurging to reinforce knowledge recall.

For teaching the specific source and interpretation skills which are addressed by Paper 3, we always make sure that students have their own copy of the source or interpretation so that they can highlight and annotate the key features. We encourage them to do this before they begin to answer the question, and we find it helps students to produce more developed answers.

Common barriers and pitfalls

General issues

Issue	Suggestions for addressing
Not using relevant examples Relevant examples are important. Some students use examples that fall outside of the period. For example, on the USA 1954–75 option, students might use examples of the Civil Rights movement that predate 1954, or in the Russia, 1917–41 paper, students might refer to the damage to the economy during the Second World War. Similarly, students may not grasp the chronology of the period, for example, in not appreciating that the Nazi Party was not a major political force in the earlier years of the topic, or not differentiating between Nazi policies before and after they came to power.	• When adapting old teaching resources or materials for teaching this unit, be careful to avoid using examples beyond the scope of the course. • As a lesson starter, challenge pupils to think of an example that they could use to prove a statement. As a means of differentiation, you could suggest four alternatives and ask students to select the most relevant example; you could make this more challenging by including examples from beyond the relevant date range. • Make use of timelines regularly to help students have a chronological awareness of the period.
Making generalised comments Some students make very generalised statements, such as 'people supported the Nazi Party' or 'life in Soviet Russia was bad'.	• When marking, highlight generalised sentences in a specific colour and ask students to re-write those lines to make them more specific. • Have a list of alternatives available to help students whilst they are learning to write analytically. For example, instead of the word 'people', you could suggest communists, Nazis, men, women, youths, professionals, etc.
Poor time management Some students do not balance their time well across the paper. A common example is spending too long on Question 2 (Explain why…), or on parts (b) and (c) of Question 3 (identifying and explaining the differences in the two interpretations), resulting in insufficient time for Question 3(d) which carries a large proportion of the marks on the paper. In addition, when students use extra paper for Question 3(a), there are few instances where the extra comments result in additional marks.	• Encourage students to use the answer space and number of marks as an indication of whether a longer answer is needed or not. Where the question has a structured answer space (Q1) this can help students to avoid spending too much time. • Although there are no set structures for answering the questions effectively, ensure that the methods you teach to your students are manageable. For example, the mark schemes for Q2 and Q3(a) do not require the inclusion of a comparative judgement.

Section A

Issue	Suggestions for addressing
Quoting or describing the source, rather than drawing inferences Question 1 is about the skill of drawing inferences. This is beyond simply quoting or describing the source material. Students need to learn to draw inferences from the material.	• As a teaching method, reverse the structure of the exam question. Ask students to pick a short quote, and to make an inference based upon the quote. • Use non-historical examples. Get a person the students will not immediately recognise to voice record a short message, for example "I own three sports cars and a motorbike. I go out driving them for several hours a day for fun." Play the message to the class and ask students to draw inferences about the imaginary person that 'recorded' the statement. • Remind students there are no marks available on this question for using own knowledge.
Not supporting the inferences with a valid detail from the source In Question 1, to gain full marks, students need to support each valid inference with a relevant detail from the source.	• Make an inference for the class and ask them to find a supporting detail from the source. You could start with a non-topic source and then repeat with a source from the topic. • Make three inferences and select three supporting details. Students should match the supporting detail to the inference. To increase the challenge, you could add additional details that are not relevant. • Provide several inferences and several details from the source and ask students to match them. At least one inference should be unsupported, and one detail should be from own knowledge not the source.
Not addressing the question focus On Question 1, the inferences are made in relation to a focus. To be valid, students need to make inferences that are relevant to the focus of the question.	• Present students with a source, and a question. Have two possible inferences, one of which is relevant for the question focus and one which is not. Students should choose the inference that is relevant. • Ask students to find one inference and supporting detail from a source for the focus in the question. Then change the focus of the enquiry, and students should find a new inference that is relevant.

Lacking a sufficient range of supporting knowledge Students may not approach Question 2 with a sufficient range of knowledge. Accessing the top mark in Level 3 and all the marks in Level 4 requires three aspects of content to be deployed.	• Whilst teaching topics, create lists or spider diagrams of factors and consequences of key events. • Spend some time with exam questions making lists of possible content, to instil the idea that there are many points of content that could be used. • Give students a part-written answer, with both of the stimulus points covered. Ask students to improve the answer by adding a further aspect of content that goes beyond the stimulus points.
Describing instead of analysing Some students describe, rather than explain the events in Question 2. The question requires an analytical focus on the second order concept of causation, rather than a simple narrative or description of events.	• Watch a clip from a television show and use it as the basis for a discussion focused round the concept of 'explain why'. A good choice could be a televised talent show. Discuss, for example, why the judges accepted or rejected the entry. Highlight how this is different to describing the entry. The intention is to help students engage with the idea of explaining causation without simply describing. • Whilst students are learning to write analytically, have a simple phrase to encourage them to develop the reason, such as 'This caused X because…' Once students are more confident in analysing events, encourage them to use a wider range of phrases to enrich their analysis. • Have key words visible on the wall with analytical phrases like 'increased tension between…', 'affected public attitudes towards…', persuaded X to…', 'led to…', 'resulted in…' and other examples of analytical language.

Listing rather than developing factors Some students identify factors in Question 2 without analytical development. The answer reads more like a list than an analysis or explanation.	• Practise making plans for questions Q2 which go beyond naming factors, but also include developmental points. • Although there is no specific structure to use for questions on Paper 3, ensure that the structure that you are teaching lends to developing each relevant point. For example, a common approach to Q2 is to use PEEL paragraphs (point, example, explain, link), which is one way of encouraging development. • With model paragraphs that develop a point or factor well, have students highlight and annotate the main point, development, analytical language, etc. You could even use the Edexcel post-results services to get exam papers from your past cohorts of students for free to use as examples. Click here to see an example of how Oasis Academy South Bank make good use of the Access to Scripts service to support teaching and learning.

Section B

Issue	Suggestions for addressing
Not using contextual knowledge Question 3(a) assesses AO3 and Question 3(d) assesses AO4. These Assessment Objectives both include the words 'in the context of historical events studied', and therefore the use of contextual knowledge is essential in the analysis of the sources or interpretations.	• When covering key examples in the specification content, develop the habit of getting students to identify key features in discussion. This acts as a recap but also helps students to address Q3(a) and Q3(d). • When addressing sources, you could use guide questions: 'what was happening at this period in time?', 'was this the same everywhere?' and 'were there any groups of people who would have a different opinion?' These can help students to think critically about source content and origins. • A further guide question, 'does the author have relevant or special knowledge?', can help show that contextual knowledge can be applied to the provenance as well. • When reading interpretations, have supporting questions like 'what examples could you use to support this?', or 'do you know any examples which do not fit this interpretation?'
Using contextual knowledge without relating it to the evaluation Students sometimes address Question 3(a) by writing their contextual knowledge as a stand-alone paragraph, rather than using it to validate the evaluation. Similarly, with Question 3(d), students sometimes include contextual knowledge without linking it to the analysis and evaluation of the viewpoint expressed in the interpretation. Since the four parts of Question 3 are either assessed on AO3 or AO4, not AO1, contextual knowledge is only relevant if it is related to the evaluation of the sources or the interpretations.	• In class discussion, use questions to link knowledge to evaluation, such as 'does this fact support or challenge the viewpoint in the interpretation?' or 'does this piece of information make the source seem more or less accurate?' This is a simple way of helping students to see contextual knowledge as being more than just describing the topic mentioned in the source or interpretation. • Instead of asking the students to provide the contextual knowledge, give students 10 cards with knowledge statements. Stick the source or interpretation to a page, and then sort the knowledge to the left or right, depending on if it strengthens or weakens the validity of the argument or content. To make this more challenging for more able students, include some irrelevant information for them to distinguish which contextual knowledge is helpful and which is not.

	• After answering an exam-style question, use two coloured highlighters. The first is to highlight the contextual knowledge, the second is to highlight where the contextual knowledge has been linked to the evaluation.
Failing to focus on the enquiry in the question Question 3(a) asks about usefulness in relation to an enquiry about a specific aspect of the specification content. Sometimes students can attempt to discuss utility in a more abstract sense, rather than evaluating usefulness for the named enquiry.	• When analysing sources, keep the enquiry in focus rather than simply making generic analysis of routine features like nature, origin and purpose. • Divide a page in two, stick the source in the middle. One each half of the page, analyse the same source with two different enquiry foci, and compare the conclusions that are reached about how useful the source is.
Making generic evaluations of the source utility There are some generic conclusions that students sometimes rely upon instead of evaluating the specific source they are handling. Common, generalised assumptions include: • eyewitness accounts are more useful than non-eyewitness accounts; • photographs are accurate because the scene happened; • newspapers always sensationalise events.	• Present students with three sources of the same type, for example three newspaper articles. To evaluate them individually will require seeing beyond the basic reliability issues of that source type. • Show students the provenance for a source, but not the source. Discuss what you might expect to see in the source, such as the viewpoint it might be expected to take. Then show the source and discuss where it agrees or disagrees with what they expected to see based upon the provenance.
Confusing reliability and utility The focus of Question 3(a) is utility. Whilst reliability can be an indication of utility, it does not automatically follow that a less reliable source is less useful in relation to the enquiry being addressed. Students often assume that a source must be biased because of its origin, for example a source from the Nazi Party or from Stalin. This is not necessarily true, as it may be a private source, or an entirely factual one, with no need to exaggerate. However, a biased source can be extremely useful for showing what the Party or leader wanted people to think.	• If using reliability as a criterion for utility, encourage students to make a judgement about how far this affects the usefulness, rather than seeing the assessment of reliability as the last step. • Use non-history examples where an unreliable source could be considered useful, such as analysing an exaggerated quote by a student on social media complaining about a detention for an enquiry into reasons why some students do not enjoy school. • Ensure that if you teach your students to answer Q3(a) using a structure or plan that includes concepts like NOP (nature, origin, purpose) or equivalent ways of approaching source evaluation, there is a step added to link the evaluation to usefulness.

Treating interpretations as sources It is easy for students to make the mistake of thinking that interpretations are simply a different type of source. But handling interpretations as a source can lead to students making unjustified or invalid claims based upon the provenance.	• In class, be careful to distinguish between sources and interpretations. Do not use the words interchangeably or use source analysis words like utility or reliability for interpretations. • Show the interpretation with the attribution, but then take the attribution away when discussing an interpretation, to help students focus on the content rather than trying to make judgements based upon details like the date of publication or title of the book, which GCSE students are unlikely to be able to support. • Get students to write their own 'interpretations' as historians at the end of a topic, to help them to see how interpretations are a viewpoint. • When using textbooks in class, ask students to decide if they agree with how a textbook presents a topic. Discuss how the textbook could have better presented the topic. • This textbook extract can be analysed further. What is the heading? And the subheading? Where are visual sources placed? Are any words in bold? Find a sentence that indicates the opinion of the author (a positive or negative view, expressing sympathy or condemnation). How is the paragraph created – what details has the author chosen to include / omit? Does the paragraph build up a single viewpoint or acknowledge different viewpoints?
Not using both interpretations when making a comparison With Question 3(b) and Question 3(c), candidates may focus on one interpretation without referring to the other interpretation.	• Whilst students are learning to write analytically, they could have simple phrases to encourage them to compare the interpretations, such as 'Interpretation 1 supports the viewpoint by saying… whereas Interpretation 2 says…', or 'An example of this difference is that Interpretation 1 says… whereas Interpretation 2 says…'. Once students are more confident in analysing and comparing interpretations, encourage them to use a wider range of phrases to enrich their analysis.

Not referring to Interpretation 1 in the answer to Question 3(d) Some students attempt to answer Question 3(d) by only using Interpretation 2, which is the named focus in the question. However, the question states that students should use both interpretations, and the mark scheme also refers to the use of both interpretations, so it is important to refer to both interpretations in the answer.	• When preparing to answer a Q3(d), start by answering the earlier parts of Q3, especially Q3(b) and Q3(c). Even if they are not being answered in written form, it is a good idea to discuss the issues relevant to these questions before your students attempt Q3(d), since the difference identified and explained in parts (b) and (c) will help students use both interpretations in Q3(d). • When reading the interpretations, consider putting a clipart face on the board for each interpretation to represent the historian, to help weaker students think of the interpretations as the different viewpoints of two historians. This may help them conceptually to think about using Interpretation 1 to contrast with Interpretation 2.
Not reaching a logical, justified judgement about viewpoint in Interpretation 2 In Question 3(d) candidates should reach an overall judgement expressing how far they agree with the viewpoint in Interpretation 2. Some students do not reach a judgement, but instead describe and exemplify the interpretation, or write an essay based upon the topic of the enquiry. Other students make an asserted judgement, which is not supported or justified.	• Although there is no set way of approaching the question, make sure that any method that you teach to your students focuses on evaluating the interpretation, rather than leading to an essay on the topic addressed in the interpretations. • As an early step into the thought process involved in reaching a judgement, present students with three options for overall judgements about the interpretation. Students can choose the one they most agree with, and then justify their choice. • Whilst students are learning to write analytically, they could have helpful sentence starters to help in writing an analytical judgment. These could include simple starters like 'In conclusion, the argument in Interpretation 2 is…', and 'This is because…'. Once students are more confident in reaching a judgement, encourage them to use a wider range of phrases to enrich their analysis.
Not indicating how differences of opinion are conveyed in the interpretations Students do not always appreciate that interpretations are viewpoints based upon a consideration of the evidence,	• With stronger candidates, look for examples of how the view in the interpretation has been conveyed. Use highlighters to pick out words or phrases which show the tone or overall sense of the argument. For example, words like

and so the author's perspective is presented within the interpretation. The mark scheme for Question 3(d) at Level 4 includes the statement that answers will indicate "how the differences of view are conveyed" in supporting the evaluation.	'success', 'achievement' or 'progress' convey a very different tone to words like 'challenge', 'tension' or 'struggle'. This can be developed with a longer textbook extract. • With stronger students, complete a table like the one on page 54 of the **Getting Started Guide** to consider the different ways in which differences of view can be conveyed, such as the language and tone, selection of material and points of emphasis.

Teaching in practice:

Samantha Slater, Subject Leader for History at Chatham Grammar.

We teach the Germany option for Paper 3 because of the importance of teaching about the rise of right-wing extremist parties and dictators in the modern world. In addition, there are a plethora of resources available to support this unit. We teach Paper 3 as the last unit at GCSE. We made this decision because by the time we teach the topic, some of the question stems which are common across the papers are already familiar to our students. This allows us to focus on addressing source inferences and interpretation skills for the paper.

A key challenge is helping students to feel confident working with historical interpretations. To address this, we introduce historical scholarship at Key Stage 3. This allows students to develop their comprehension skills and increases their confidence to work with the views of historians. We encourage students to select examples to support and to challenge the interpretations. At KS4, we introduce a historian's view at the beginning of each topic or key event. By then teaching the historical narrative, we ask students to find evidence that supports and challenges this view. To support this, when planning our teaching we identify the key 'takeaway' knowledge prior to teaching each bullet point within the specification content. This helps our teachers to repeat and emphasise this knowledge using lots of knowledge retrieval and reinforcement activities.

Source skills are also important for this paper. By using a range of sources at Key Stage 3, we find students are more prepared for different types of sources at Key Stage 4. We encourage students to understand a source by giving it to them and then asking questions to direct their thinking about relevant aspects including the content, utility, motive, nature and historical context. We do not teach any acronym or prescribed structure for handling sources. We just encourage the students to unpick as much as they can from the content and from the provenance and then develop these observations by using their own knowledge.

Teaching the content

Visual displays

Use coloured posters and notes around the classroom to help students to work. The display could include images and key concepts from the unit. One idea is to organise the displays into different themes or ideas, to help students to connect and contrast ideas. For example, for the Soviet Russia, 1917–41 topic, ideas could be grouped into the economy, government control and social issues, or similar groups.

Key word banks on the wall will also help students to move beyond writing descriptively and start writing analytically.

Evaluating interpretations

History is all about interpretations, and with Paper 3, this is important. Therefore, make interpretations a key part of your lesson. For a lesson plenary or starter, have a single sentence which expresses an interpretation and get students to discuss and vote on whether or not they agree with the viewpoint. By making interpretations and the viewpoints expressed in them a key part of teaching this topic, students will be more confident in analysing and evaluating interpretations in an exam question.

If you have the option, invite another history or humanities teacher into the class to express their opinion on a topic in 60 seconds or less. Then, possibly when that teacher has left if it will give students more confidence, students should decide how far they agree with the viewpoint. For weaker students, you could provide a score system (e.g. 1–5) or a multiple-choice option of phrases. Challenge students to justify their judgement verbally. This could be followed up by holding a debate with this second teacher, where two contrasting views can be explored further; this could be a stepping stone towards a student debate (see below).

You could introduce interpretations on other topics, for example find an article about a well-known current affairs event, and ask students if they agree with the viewpoint or not.

Make a documentary

Using a free app like Adobe Flash video, students can insert images and provide a news/documentary-style voice over. They should explain the reason for an event. For the most able students, the documentary or news report could include interviews with a student acting as an ‘expert’ who will express an interpretation, or two ‘experts’ who will express contrasting interpretations.

A debate

To further embed the concept of interpretations, students could prepare for and host a debate. Issues of success and failure are the most obvious, but equally, topics could be about the significance of the actions of a political leader in comparison to other factors, or the extent of progress that was achieved. This can embed knowledge, develop analytical thinking and also help students to better understand the concept of interpretations.

Card sorts

This paper lends itself to card sorts which can be used in different ways. It is possible to make one set of cards with many of the events in the topic, and use it in different ways.

- Sequencing: some events, e.g. Stalin or Hitler's rise to power, the events of the Civil Rights Movement, etc. lend themselves to a sequencing task to get the main steps in order.
- Grouping: group the events by theme (military, religious, economic, political, etc.), success/failure, etc.
- Picking relevant examples: set an exam question with a date frame, and select the events that are both relevant to the issue *and* within the date frame.
- Supporting or challenging: cards can be selected from a range of possible examples to create a set of evidence that supports an interpretation, and a set of evidence that challenges it.

Visual notes

Make notes visual. Use spider-diagrams, coloured notes, flow charts and labelled illustrations to help organise the notes. This is especially important when reaching the end of one of the key topics within an option, to ensure that students have a good grasp of the topic before moving on.

Key words

There are many key words in the content of Paper 3, and additionally students need to learn analytical language to explain their points. Words in the specification could be used as stimulus points in the exam. As with all GCSE topics, there is other subject-specific language related to the course content which may not be stated in the specification, but which students will find useful for explaining the topic and expressing subject knowledge. One practical suggestion, mentioned above, is to have word banks on the wall. However, students could also have a glossary page in their exercise book where they can record key terms. Another useful technique is to flag up especially important key words at the start of the lesson before covering the content.

Another practical example is to ask students to use two highlighters to go through a model answer, or their own answer to a practice exam question, identifying firstly technical historical terms, like names of events or subject specific terminology, and secondly analytical language. You could use an example of a strong answer from a recent examiner report for this. Alternatively, you could use the free Access to Scripts service to obtain copies of answers written by your past students in exam conditions. *Remember – you need a student's permission to access their scripts, before they sit their exams.*

Teaching in practice:

Kirsty Connor, Head of History at Aylsham High School.

We find that our students consistently enjoy studying Paper 3. One issue that comes up is getting students to understand the interpretations and how they differ from sources. Many students assume that the interpretations are just another source. This assumption can make it harder for students to then explain, for example, why the interpretations differ. To counter this, I tend to do a lot of modelling of how to answer questions so that they do not become flustered when handling an interpretation.

I find my weakest students can struggle due to having a low reading level. This can mean that when they come across a word they don't know, they might give up. We have worked hard at building our students' confidence by looking at the words they do know in the interpretations and picking out quotes with a highlighter pen. This helps them to identify what the interpretation is about so they can start to form an answer to the question. Another way that we have helped our weaker students is through regular core knowledge testing. We suggest to our students that they tackle the source and interpretation questions first (Q1 and Q3). We also suggest that they write something for each question rather than leaving blanks on the exam paper.

Developing historical skills for Paper 3

The questions on Paper 3 address all four Assessment Objectives. By understanding the historical skills and concepts that are part of these Assessment Objectives, students will be better able to meet the requirements of the exam paper.

On the following pages, you will find a selection of example tasks that could be used to help students to develop relevant skills. Each one is a simple task which could be developed as part of a lesson, or differentiated to suit the needs of students. Although each task is based upon one of the four Paper 3 options, the principle behind the task applies to all the options.

Some of the tasks address the second-order historical concept of causation. In simple terms, this means being able to explain analytically the reasons for an event, change or development happening. Other tasks are aimed at addressing the skills students can use when handling sources and interpretations.

The tasks on the subsequent pages are not designed to address answering specific exam-style questions, though the concepts involved relate to those used in exam questions. Therefore, they should not be used as models for planning or answering exam questions. The examples of topics used are for exemplification of the historical concept and, since the author of this guide has not seen live materials, should not be considered to indicate future exam papers. All example topics used are based on questions taken from past papers, sample assessment materials or specimen papers.

Teaching in practice:

Kate Gibson, Head of History at St Cuthbert's Catholic High School.

We choose to teach the Germany option for Paper 3. Students seem to engage well with this topic. Also, we study the Russian Revolution at A Level and we like to keep variety in the topics we teach, plus the topic connects nicely with our Key Stage 3 schemes of work.

One challenge that we find is where the content addresses politics. For example, some students get confused between Hitler becoming Chancellor and his creation of a dictatorship. To address this, we do comparison tasks on similar sounding topics to help students to understand how they are different as well as similar.

To help students to grasp the demands of the questions, we spend time focusing on how they are different. For sources, we also focus on the word 'provenance' and what it means so that students do not forget to use this as well as the source content. For the 16-mark question, we provide our students with a guided structure when they are learning how to address the question effectively. We also get our students to write their own interpretations as historians, which helps them to understand how an interpretation is a viewpoint by a historian.

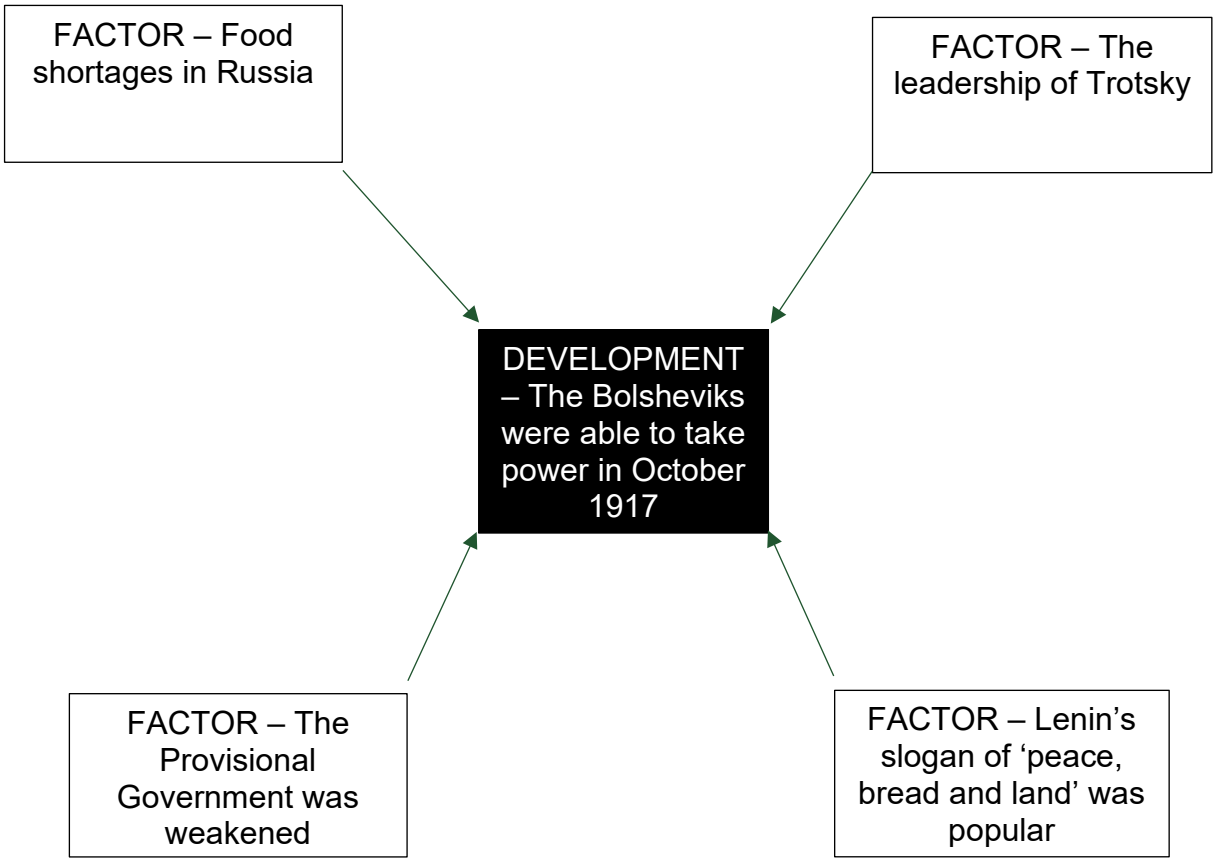
As a general principle for the questions on Paper 3, we help students to deconstruct the wording of the question, which then helps them to understand how to respond to the question. Another useful method we use is to get students to make their own, simplified mark schemes and colour code their own answers using these, so that they can see how to improve. We further support our students by clearly teaching the topics by focusing on clear themes such as causation, change and continuity and other secondary historical concepts.

Causation

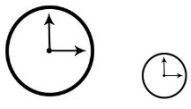
Whilst students usually grasp simple cause and consequence, they can struggle to explain that an event or development can be the result of a range of causes acting in combination. Few, if any, significant events in history have only one cause. It can also be hard to grasp that the causes may operate on different time scales. This task exemplifies a simple way of thinking about the interconnection of factors in causing an event or development.

Option in this example	Option 30: Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917–1941

Historical events often have more than one cause. Sometimes the causes can be events, or decisions, but other times they might be the result of a gradual change or popular attitude. Some causes can run for a long-time period before leading to the consequence, whilst others could be short-term and have an immediate impact.



1) Label the lines connecting each factor (the white boxes) with the consequence (the black box) by saying how the factor led to the development.
2) Can you link any of the factors (the white boxes) together? Draw lines and label them.
3) Next to each factor draw a clock face. Draw a larger clock face for factors that were long-term issues, and a smaller clock face next to factors that were short term.



Causation

It is important for students to be able to think about the reasons for an event or development, and then to be able to identify reasons that they can write about in detail. It is important for students to bring in enough of a range of knowledge, whilst not writing so much that they cannot manage the time on the exam paper.

Option in this example	31: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39

Why was there opposition in Germany to the Treaty of Versailles (1919)?

Reasons that explain this:

- The military terms of the treaty
-
-
-
-

Reason 1:

Why this led to opposition:

Reason 2:

Why this led to opposition:

Reason 3:

Why this led to opposition:

1) Read the question carefully.
   a) What does 'opposition' mean?
   b) What was the Treaty of Versailles?
2) In the box on the left side of the page, make a list of as many possible reasons as you can think of to answer the question. The first one has been done for you.
3) Look at your list of reasons. Pick the three reasons that you think are the best for explaining why there was opposition to the Treaty of Versailles.
   a) Write the three reasons in the spaces for reasons 1, 2 and 3 in the table on the right.
   b) Under each reason, add one or more pieces of supporting information to explain why that reason caused opposition to the Treaty of Versailles.

Using sources – inferences

Sometimes students can struggle to make inferences from sources. This means more than just repeating the source, but actually drawing a conclusion by using what the evidence says or shows. This task is a simple way of thinking about inferences.

Option for this example	Option 33: The USA, 1954–75: conflict at home and abroad

A source is a piece of evidence from the period of history. By looking at what is written or shown in a source, historians reach conclusions about what was happening at the time. These conclusions are called 'inferences'.

Source A: A poster published by the Women's Political Council in 1955. The WPC was a civil rights organisation in Montgomery. The poster was distributed in Montgomery on the first day of the bus boycott.

Inference 1: Many Black Americans in the USA wanted to achieve equal civil rights.

Evidence: The poster, written by a civil rights group supporting equality for Black Americans, states "we deserve equality".

Inference 2:

Evidence:

Inference 3:

Evidence:

1) Look carefully at Source A. Read the provenance – it will help you – but remember to draw your inferences from the source content, not the provenance.
2) Historians can make inferences about the civil rights movement in the 1950s from this source.
   a) The first inference has been done for you. It has one sentence with an inference, and it also has a second sentence identifying how the source supports the inference.
   b) Pick another detail on the poster and circle it. Connect the circle to the box for the second inference.
   c) In the box, write one sentence for your inference, and underneath, write a second sentence to identify how the source supports your inference.
   d) Now repeat tasks 2b and 2c to add a third inference.

Using sources – focusing on the enquiry

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 them to break free from generalisations about source reliability. In the example task below, one enquiry focus has been provided; the teacher could identify alternative enquiry foci for the two empty boxes.

Option for this example	Option 32: Mao's China, c1945–1976

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.

Source A – From a speech made by Mao Zedong on 1 October 1949. Here he is announcing the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

The people supported our People's Liberation Army in defending the Chinese motherland. The People's Liberation Army fought like heroes to protect people's rights and property and to stop the suffering of the people. Together the People's Liberation Army and the people have eliminated the Guomindang troops and overthrown the reactionary rule of the Guomindang government. Now the war of the people's liberation has been won and the majority of the people have been freed.

How useful is Source A for an enquiry into…

… the reasons for the success of the CCP in the Civil War?

Not very useful — Very useful

…

Not very useful — Very useful

…

Not very useful — Very useful

1) What is the main information in the source?
2) The provenance identifies that the source is from a speech by Mao Zedong in 1949. How might this have affected the content of the source?
3) For each of the three enquiry topics in the boxes, make a judgement about how useful the source would be for investigating that topic by marking the continuum line. The more to the right your mark, the more useful you are judging the source for that enquiry focus.
4) Below each continuum line write one reason for your judgement.

Interpretations – how do historians make them? *Sometimes students confuse sources and interpretations. One method of helping students to understand the difference is by getting the student to act as the historian and create an interpretation.*	**Challenging task** This is an example of a task that could be used to challenge.
Option for this example	31: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39

When historians study history, they look at the sources of evidence from the time period. By looking at these, they form opinions about the history. These opinions are 'interpretations'.

Source A: From a private letter, written by a Hitler Youth member to a friend in Germany in 1936.
What is life like in this camp, which is supposed to be the best example of all the Hitler Youth camps? There is little enthusiasm. We don't have a minute of the day to ourselves. This isn't camp life, no sir! It's army life. Drill starts right after a very small breakfast. We would like to have athletics but there isn't any. Instead we have military exercises, down in the mud, till our tongues hang out of our mouths. We have only one wish: sleep, sleep and more sleep.

Source B: From a book published in 1954. A Hitler Youth leader is remembering what the Hitler Youth was like in the mid-1930s.
What I liked about the Hitler Youth was the comradeship. I was full of enthusiasm when I joined the *Jungvolk** at the age of ten. I can still remember how deeply moved I was when I heard the club mottoes: '*Jungvolk* are hard. They can keep a secret. They are loyal. They are comrades.' And then there were the trips, especially camping! Is anything nicer than enjoying the beauty of the homeland in the company of one's comrades?
**Jungvolk* – this was a section of the Hitler Youth for boys between the ages of 10 and 14.

Interpretation 1:

Interpretation 2:
The movement became less popular towards the late 1930s as the activities became increasingly focused on preparations for war and the discipline became more strict when membership became compulsory. There was a growing resentment at the way Hitler Youth leaders acted as if they were better than members who were barely younger than they were. Some youngsters began to kick against the restrictions of the Hitler Youth.

1) Read back over your class notes on the Hitler Youth, then read sources A and B.
2) You are now going to write Interpretation 1, by acting as a historian. What is your view of the attitudes of young people to the Hitler Youth in the 1930s?
   (These questions might help you to get started – Were the Hitler Youth activities fun or boring, enjoyable or hard? Did members like being involved? Did all young people have the same experience?)
3) Now read Interpretation 2.
   a) In what ways does Interpretation 2 agree with your interpretation?
   b) How does Interpretation 2 disagree with your interpretation?
   c) Why do you think that Interpretation 2 is different to your interpretation?

Interpretations – Identifying and explaining different viewpoints (part 1)

Students need to be confident identifying and contrasting the arguments in two different interpretations.

Option for this example	Option 30: Soviet Russia, 1917–41

These two interpretations are both about the problems facing the Provisional Government. Each one presents a different viewpoint.

Interpretation 1: From *The Russian Revolution* by Anthony Wood, published 1979

The Provisional Government could not take effective action without the agreement of the Petrograd Soviet, which controlled the railways and the postal and telegraph services. The Soviet's most devastating action was the issuing of Order Number 1, as it placed the Soviet in control of all military action and put the soldiers' councils in control of discipline. Soon after, local Soviets appeared all over the country. It would, therefore, seem surprising that the Provisional Government survived at all, especially as it had not even been elected to take over the running of the country.

Interpretation 2: From *Russia 1894–1941* by Michael Lynch, published 2008.

The most persistent problem was the war against Germany. The Provisional Government had to keep Russia fighting in the war so that it could get money and supplies from its allies. Russia would have collapsed without this money. However, continuing with the war stopped the Provisional Government from dealing with Russia's severe social and economic problems. So, the Provisional Government had to keep Russia in the war, but continuing to fight ruined the Provisional Government's chances of survival.

1

The main viewpoint in Interpretation 1 is…

2

The main viewpoint in Interpretation 2 is…

3

The main difference between the two interpretations is…

1) Read interpretation 1 very carefully. In Box 1, summarise the main argument in one sentence.
2) Now read interpretation 2 very carefully. In Box 2, summarise the main argument in one sentence.
3) Compare the two main arguments. In Box 3, complete the sentence to identify the main difference between the two viewpoints.

Interpretations – Identifying and explaining different viewpoints (part 2)

Having identified the difference in the interpretations, students need to develop the skill of explaining valid reasons for the differing interpretations. This task could help students to think critically about why interpretations can differ, and help them to avoid making unsupported assertions about the provenance.

Option for this example	Option 30: Soviet Russia, 1917–41

You have identified what the difference is between the two interpretations, but why are the two interpretations different? These questions may help you identify possible reasons.

1

Are the two interpretations talking about the same time period?		Yes	No
Are the two interpretations emphasising the same issues, problems or events?		Yes	No
Are the two interpretations focused on the same groups of people?		Yes	No
What perspective has interpretation 1 focused on?	Social	Economic	Political
What perspective has interpretation 2 focused on?	Social	Economic	Political
Are the two interpretations focused on the same perspective?		Yes	No

Source B – From *Ten Days that Shook the World* by John Reed, published in America in 1919. Reed was a member of the American Communist Party and a journalist, who was living in Russia in 1917. Here he is writing about what he saw in Petrograd after the Provisional Government had been established.

A soldier speaking at a meeting cried 'The people at the top are always calling on us to sacrifice more, while they sacrifice nothing.' In the barracks, the factories and on the street corners there were endless numbers of soldiers speaking. They were all demanding an end to the war. They declared that if the government did not try to end the war then the army would leave the trenches and go home.

Source C – From Order Number 1 published by the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on 1 March 1917. The Order was a list of instructions from the Soviet

1. Committees should be chosen from the lower ranks of soldiers and sailors. This must apply to all companies, battalions, squadrons and separate branches of military service, and on warships.

2. The orders of the Provisional Government shall be carried out only when they do not contradict the orders and decisions of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

3. All kinds of weapons, such as rifles and machine guns, must be under the control of the military committees. Weapons must, under no circumstances, be handed over to officers even if the officers demand them.

2

Read Sources B and C above

How might historians have used these sources to develop their interpretations?

Complete the sentences on the next page.

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Interpretation 1 appears to have used sources like Source _____
I can tell this because the source mentions _____
and the interpretation says _____

Interpretation 2 appears to have used sources like Source _____
I can tell this because the source mentions _____
and the interpretation says _____

1) Using Interpretations 1 and 2, complete Table 1 by circling the correct answer for each question.
2) Read Sources B and C carefully. Match them to the Interpretations by completing the sentences in the box above.
3) Using what you have discovered from answering steps 1 and 2, choose and explain **one** reason why Interpretations 1 and 2 have different views about the problems faced by the Provisional Government.

Interpretations – evaluating a viewpoint

Students will need help in learning how to approach the evaluation of an interpretation. Although there is no set way to answer Q3(d) on Paper 3, this task can help to teach some of the analytical thought processes. This interpretation is Interpretation 2 from the 2018 paper.

Note to teachers – On Paper 3, Q3(d) stipulates that students should answer "using both interpretations and your knowledge of the historical context." This task is focused on helping students to evaluate one interpretation to develop the skills needed for AO4.

Option for this example	Option 33: The USA, 1954–75: conflict at home and abroad

Interpretation 2 is a historian's view of the effects of the Tet Offensive on American attempts to win the Vietnam War.

Interpretation 2: From Vietnam: Conflict and Change in Indochina by A. Pollock, published in 1991.

After the Tet Offensive, the US public turned even more strongly against the war. With the Vietcong attacking across the country, and even in the grounds of the US embassy in Saigon, it seemed clear to the American public that the Vietnam war was not being won. It was time to begin the withdrawal of Americans from Vietnam. President Johnson gave in to public pressure and announced that America was ready to negotiate peace.

1 The main viewpoint of Interpretation 2 is:

2 How is this view conveyed in Interpretation 2?

3 What do you know about the topic that agrees with the view in this interpretation?

4 What do you know about the topic that disagrees with the view in this interpretation?

5 Overall, how accurate do you consider the view in Interpretation 2?

1) Read Interpretation 2 carefully. In Box 1, write a short summary of the main view about the effects of the Tet Offensive on American attempts to win the Vietnam War.
2) Complete Box 2, by identifying how the interpretation conveys the viewpoint. (Hint – what language, selection of information or tone have been used to express the view?)
3) Complete Boxes 3 and 4 to identify contextual knowledge that you can use to agree with and disagree with the viewpoint in Interpretation 2.
4) Sum up your view in Box 5.

Extension – Find Interpretation 1 on the 2018 exam paper. Which viewpoint do you agree with more, Interpretation 1 or Interpretation 2? Why?

Section 3: Useful resources

Subject advisor

You can get expert advice and support from out dedicated Subject Advisor, Mark Battye. Email teachinghistory@pearson.com.
Sign up to receive monthly subject advisor updates here.

Training events

Pearson offers a changing range of support via training, including free and paid-for events, primarily online, as well as recordings of past training. Visit the Pearson Professional Development Academy: https://pdacademy.pearson.com/.

Results Plus

A free service provided by Pearson for analysing the results of individuals and cohorts of students: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/Services/ResultsPlus.html.

Access to Scripts

Providing visibility and transparency of marking, as well as supporting the development of subsequent teaching by identifying areas where your students have struggled, the self-service portal available via this link will allow you to view actual exam scripts of your students. Case studies on how to make the most of Access to Scripts can be found here, including one from Oasis South Bank specifically about GCSE History.

Free support materials

This document provides links and details on the free support materials available on the Edexcel website:
https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/History/2016/Teaching-and-learning-materials/gcse-history-support-materials-details-and-links.pdf.
It is updated regularly, so it is worth bookmarking rather than downloading a copy.

The table below pulls out some of the materials that are listed in this document.

Resource	Details
Specification and sample assessment materials	The starting point for information on content and assessment in GCSE (9–1) History. The current versions are Issue 5 (for 2025) and Issue 6 (for 2026).
Past papers, mark schemes and examiner reports	For every series since 2018. The examiner reports include exemplar student answers with examiner comments. An Edexcel Online login is required to access files with a silver padlock – check with your exams officer if you can't open them.
Mock papers (2024)	A set of secure mock papers created by adapting the summer 2024 papers to reflect the amended assessment model that comes into effect in summer 2025. An Edexcel Online login is required. Also available via the Mocks Service.
Getting Started Guide	An overview of the specification, to help you get to grips with the content and assessment requirements. *Updated in June 2024 up to Issue 6 of the specification.*
Summary guidance on changes for 2025 and 2026	Overview guidance on the changes being made for 2025 and 2026, including a table summarising the content changes for 2026.
Topic booklets	Topic booklets for every option on the specification. These include content guidance and exemplification, student timelines, and suggested resources for teachers and students. *Updates for 2025–26 changes to be released in February 2025.*
Schemes of work	Sample outline schemes of work for each topic in the specification, in editable Word files. Updated December 2024. A digital interactive scheme of work is also available for both KS3 and GCSE.

Resource	Details
Exemplar student answers	Exemplar student answers, including from the summer 2018, 2019 and 2022 series, with examiner commentaries and mark schemes.
Knowledge boosters	Sets of quizzes to support AO1 knowledge and understanding, including for Paper 3: • 31 Weimar and Nazi Germany An Edexcel Online login is required. *All KBs updated for 2025–26 changes.*
Student walkthroughs • Paper 3 playlist	A series of pre-recorded student walkthroughs, created in collaboration with Harris Federation. *Updated for Summer 2025*.
Revision tips	Some useful revision tips for students. *Updated for Summer 2025*.
Command words	A series of student-friendly files exploring each command word in turn, plus a summary document paper-by-paper. *Updated for Summer 2025*.
Paper 3 Germany practice question 3	A practice question 3 enquiry package, which can be used in mocks alongside the June 2023 paper questions 1 and 2.
Pearson Professional Development Academy	Book a place on upcoming events, and access recordings of recent past training sessions (on YouTube).
Past training content	Packs from past training events, such as new to Edexcel, marking training, and supporting higher and lower attainers.

Endorsed resources*

Endorsement means that a resource has been through our quality assurance process to confirm that it meets the teaching and learning requirements a specification is aimed at. Endorsement of a resource doesn't mean it's the only suitable material available, or that it is required to achieve the qualification.

We have also worked with publishers to ensure that there are published resources available for every topic.

- **Pearson** – Designed to help develop confident, articulate and successful historians.
- **Hodder Education** – The Hodder GCSE History for Edexcel students' book helps students achieve their full potential while ensuring pace, enjoyment and motivation.
- **Oxford University Press** – Oxford's Edexcel GCSE History student books help to develop young historians who have the confidence to succeed, with the most up-to-date exam practice and a tried-and-trusted, accessible approach.
- **Zigzag Education** – Photocopiable resources for learning, revision and exam practice.
- **Anglia Tours** – A range of fully-guided History tours which enhance both teaching and learning for the related Pearson qualification.
- **NST Tours** – Guided History tours to support teachers and students with GCSE History.

* You don't have to purchase any resources, including those from Pearson, to deliver our qualifications.

Other, non-endorsed resources are also available, and the topic booklets suggest resources suitable for both teachers and students for each topic. While these resources – and others – may be used to support teaching and learning, the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.