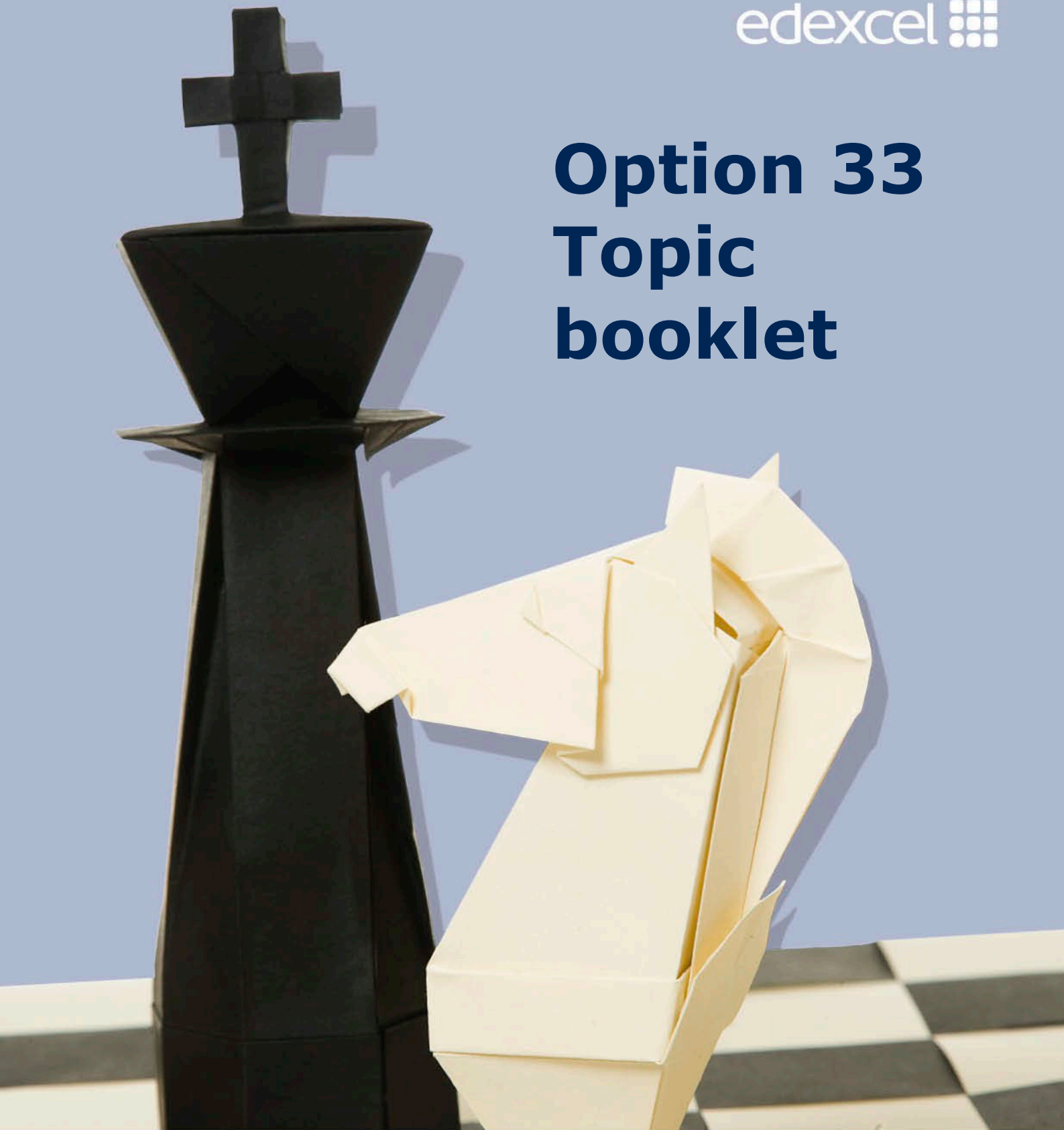


# Option 33

## Topic booklet



**The USA, 1954–75: conflict at home and abroad**

**GCSE (9–1) History**

**Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9–1) in History (1HI0)**

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## Version 4 (March 2025)

This topic booklet has been updated to include changes made to new issues of the specification and sample assessment materials.

- Issue 5: language and assessment changes, for first assessment June 2025.
- Issue 6: content changes, for first teaching September 2024 and first assessment June 2026.

Information on new resources has also been added.

Summary guidance on the changes can be found [here](#).

# 1. Overview

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The period of US history after the Second World War to the mid-1970s was a time of such significant social divisions and widespread protest that it is often referred to using the term 'the divided union'. Many African Americans, as well as white supporters, increasingly fought for their civil rights. The civil rights movement which began with peaceful, non-violent protest became much more divided, with more radical and violent Black rights groups emerging from the early 1960s onwards. Although federal legislation meant significant gains for African Americans by the end of this period, the actual extent of progress in civil rights by the mid-1970s, and even today, is fiercely debated.

As well as the conflict arising out of domestic issues within the USA itself, this period also saw the USA involved in an extremely costly war in Vietnam – costly in terms of human lives on both sides, in financial terms, and in terms of the USA's reputation both at home and in the wider world. The nature of the conflict, with media images being broadcast around the world of Vietnamese civilians suffering from US use of chemical weapons, became indefensible for many both inside and outside the USA. This led to widespread protests throughout the USA and divisions between supporters and opponents of US involvement in Vietnam. Racial divisions were also fuelled by the government asking Black Americans to fight for democratic rights in Vietnam which they did not enjoy at home. In addition, the conflict took funding away from important welfare programmes such as Johnson's Great Society.

For students this depth study provides a fascinating analysis of how the civil rights movement used a variety of means to gain equality for African Americans in the supposed 'land of the free'. Students will see the inter-relationship of political, economic and social factors in both preventing and bringing about change. The study also shows how a nation with vastly superior technological and financial means was unable to impose its political will on a significantly poorer nation during the Vietnam conflict.

The specification content is divided into four key topics which provide a framework for the teaching and understanding of this option. Key topics 1 and 2 focus on the development of the civil rights movement (1954–60) and protest, progress and radicalism (1960–75), while key topics 3 and 4 cover US involvement in the Vietnam War (1954–75) and reactions to, and the end of, US involvement in Vietnam (1964–75).

The chronological overlap between key topics helps to show the complex issues simultaneously facing the US government and its people in this period, and highlights the interplay of domestic and foreign issues.

## 1.1 Assessment (from June 2025)

Students answer three questions for the modern depth study: Question 1, either Question 2(a) or Question 2(b). and Question 3 parts (a)–(d). Students are assessed on all four Assessment Objectives. The questions may be related to any content specified in the four Key topic areas.

- Question 1: targets AO3, and requires students to make inferences from one source.
- Question 2(a) or (b): students have a choice of two questions. These target AO1/AO2, and focus on explanation of causation.
- Question 3(a): targets AO3 and uses two contemporary sources. One of them may be visual, but at least one will be written. Students assess the usefulness of both sources for a specified enquiry, making use of their knowledge of the historical context.

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- Question 3(b): targets AO4 and uses two written interpretations taken from secondary material. Students explain how the two interpretations differ.
- Question 3(c): targets AO4 and uses the same interpretations as part (b). Students suggest why the two interpretations differ. They may use the contemporary sources provided for Question 3(a) to help them answer this question.
- Question 3(d): this targets AO4 and re-uses the interpretations. It requires students to evaluate one interpretation, making use of the other interpretation and their knowledge of the historical context.

Students should be aware that interpretations are based on evidence from their period of study and they should be aware of a range of evidence that can be used to reach conclusions. They should study examples of such evidence and consider ways in which it could give rise to and support different interpretations. Students should understand a range of reasons why interpretations may differ and should be aware that differences in view, based on conclusions drawn from evidence, are legitimate and can be explained. Students should be able to evaluate given interpretations using their own knowledge of the USA in the years 1954–75.

Detailed information and guidance on assessment can be found in the separate [Getting Started Guide](#).

For more information on sources and interpretations, please refer to the [Guidance on sources and interpretations](#) and [Paper 3 guide](#), which look at question types, common problems, and teaching approaches and ideas.

## 2. Content guidance

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### 2.1 Summary of content

#### **The development of the civil rights movement, 1954–60**

Key topic 1 focuses on the development of the civil rights movement from 1954 to 1960. It begins by examining the position of Black Americans living under segregation in the Southern states and other ways in which African Americans were discriminated against, such as methods used to prevent voting. Students should understand the various ways in which civil rights organisations such as the NAACP and CORE worked to improve civil rights for African Americans. In considering progress in education, students should cover the reasons for, key events and significance of the *Brown v. Topeka* (1954) case. For example, they should be able to explain the NAACP's decision to support Brown in his appeal to the Supreme Court, and the implications of the Supreme Court's decision that segregation was unconstitutional, but also understand the long-term significance of the lack of a time-scale given for the desegregation of schools. They should be aware of the events following the plan in Little Rock to desegregate schools and how these led to presidential intervention, showing that, despite *Brown v. Topeka*, segregation in schools remained widespread. Another aspect of segregation is examined in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Students should understand how Rosa Parks's arrest led to the boycott, how the boycott was organised and its importance in showing the effectiveness of non-violent protest. Students should be aware of the emergence of Martin Luther King and his role in leading the civil rights movement. They should cover too the key features of the Civil Rights Act 1957. Finally in this key topic, students explore opposition to the civil rights movement, including the activities of the Ku Klux Klan and the significance of Emmett Till's murder, and the growth of White Citizens' Councils.

#### **Protest, progress and radicalism, 1960–75**

Key topic 2 continues with a focus on civil rights and examines the increasing extent of civil rights protest, the progress made with legislation during the presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson, as well as the growing radicalism of the civil rights movement under Malcolm X and the Black Panther movement. In considering these developments, students should understand that the Greensboro sit-ins became an example for further widespread non-violent protest across the Southern states. They should also understand the reasons for, and methods used by the Freedom Riders to challenge segregation, their significance and the violent response to their protests. The key features of James Meredith's admission to the University of Mississippi provides the opportunity to examine the extent of progress for Black Americans in educational opportunities. Students should explore peaceful protests and their impact in the years 1963–65, with a focus on the role of King in the peace marches in Birmingham, Alabama and the March on Washington in 1963. They should also examine the key features of the Freedom Summer and the Mississippi murders in 1964. They should be aware of the link between protest and Kennedy's eventual commitment to a Civil Rights Act, the work of Johnson in passing the Act in 1964, as well as how the protests at Selma led to Johnson passing the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Students should explore the beliefs of Malcolm X, the ways in which he aimed to improve the lives of African Americans, his later change in beliefs and the events surrounding his assassination. They should understand the reasons for the emergence of more radical ideas with Black Power, the role of Stokely Carmichael and events surrounding the Black Power salute at the 1968 Olympics, and consider the aims and achievements of the Black Panthers as a radical movement aimed at improving the lives of the non-white working class. Finally, in this Key topic students should be aware of the situation for African Americans in the Northern US cities, explore the race riots in these cities

## 2. Content guidance

during the mid-1960s and the Kerner Report. They should cover the key features of King's campaign in the North, the events surrounding his assassination and its effects on race relations. Students should explore the extent to which civil rights movements and campaigns had led to improvements in the lives of African Americans by the mid-1970s.

### **US involvement in the Vietnam War, 1954–75**

Key topic 3 is a study of US involvement in Vietnam. It begins by looking at reasons for US involvement in Vietnam following the end of French rule and how this escalated under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Students should be aware that US foreign policy under Eisenhower based on, for example, containment and the domino theory, drew the US into involvement in Vietnam and understand that this was exacerbated by a commitment to Diem's increasingly weak government in South Vietnam. They should understand the reasons for greater US involvement under Kennedy, including the overthrow of Diem by the US and the significance of the Strategic Hamlet Program. Students should be aware of the increasing threat of the Vietcong during Johnson's presidency, for example their increasing support from the Vietnamese rural population and North Vietnam. They should cover the events surrounding the Gulf of Tonkin incident and how this led to support from the US Congress for Johnson's escalation of US involvement in the conflict. Students should explore the nature of the conflict in Vietnam (1964–68), including the Vietcong's guerrilla tactics and the USA's use of Search and Destroy, Operation Rolling Thunder and chemical weapons, and should appreciate the differences in methods and tactics of the two sides. The course of events of the Tet Offensive and its significance should be covered, for example the extent to which it was a military defeat for the USA and how it influenced US public opinion on the conflict. Finally, this Key topic looks at the changes under Nixon, including the key features of Vietnamisation and the reasons for its lack of success. Students should understand the shift in focus with the Nixon Doctrine, which continued US commitment to supply arms but not forces to Vietnam, and explore the US attacks on other areas in south-east Asia neighbouring Vietnam as a means to put pressure on North Vietnam.

### **Reactions to, and the end of, US involvement in Vietnam, 1964–75**

Key topic 4 looks at reactions in the USA to the conflict in Vietnam and the end of US involvement. It begins by looking at reasons for growing domestic opposition to the conflict, and students should consider the ways in which the student movement, the impact of the conflict becoming a 'media war' and the draft system combined to increase public opposition to US involvement in the conflict. They should be aware of the public reaction to the My Lai Massacre and its aftermath, as well as the events surrounding the Kent State University protests and the deaths of four students and the influence of this on public opinion. Students should explore the reasons why the conflict was supported by other sections of the US public, including the 'silent majority' not involved in protests. Students should examine the key features of the peace process by which the USA finally withdrew from Vietnam in 1973 and the various reasons for the failure of the USA in Vietnam, including weaknesses of the US military, the strengths of their opponents and the impact of opposition to the war.

### Key terms

It may be useful at the start of the course to provide students with a list of key terms and concepts that they will need to be familiar with for this option. Students should be familiar with the terminology found in the specification content.

Please note here that the SPaG mark scheme which is applied to Question 3(d) refers to the use of specialist terminology. This does not mean technical or military terms beyond those in the specification.

The list of terms below is not intended to be a comprehensive checklist, rather simply a useful starting point for teachers to produce their own list of terms that their students may not fully understand or have difficulty spelling.

Students should also be familiar with broad terms such as economic, political, religious, social and cultural.

- Black Power
- boycott
- communism
- containment
- desegregation
- discrimination
- Dixiecrat
- doctrine
- domino theory
- draft
- federal
- guerrilla
- integration
- legislation
- lynching
- morale
- negotiation
- napalm
- picket
- radical
- segregation
- 'silent majority'
- sit-in
- strategic
- Supreme Court
- tactics
- Vietcong
- warfare

## 2. Content guidance

### 2.2 Content exemplification

This section provides additional guidance on the specification content. It should be remembered that the official specification is the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance. Any examples provided here do not constitute additional specification content and other relevant material illustrating aspects of the specification can be used.

Key topic 1: The development of the civil rights movement, 1954–60		Exemplification
1 <b>The position of Black Americans in the early 1950s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Segregation, discrimination and voting rights in the Southern states.</li><li>• The work of civil rights organisations, including the NAACP and CORE.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The use of segregation between white people and African Americans in Southern states in facilities such as schools and cafes. Other ways in which African Americans were discriminated against, such as the difference in quality of resources available in education and methods used to prevent voting.</li><li>• Organisations campaigning to improve Black civil rights, including the NAACP and CORE and their activities such as peaceful protest and legal cases.</li></ul>
2 <b>Developments in education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reasons for, key features and significance of the Brown v. Topeka case (1954).</li><li>• Reasons for, key events, and significance of the events at Little Rock High School (1957).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The key features of the case, in the context of education, for example the challenge to the principle of 'separate but equal'. The Supreme Court decision in 1954. The significance of the decision, for example that segregation in education was unconstitutional, the lack of time-scale given to desegregate schools contributing to slow progress, the refusal of some states to comply.</li><li>• The city of Little Rock's plans to desegregate schools and the significance of opposition to those plans, for example the experience of the 'Little Rock nine', media coverage and presidential intervention, the closing of Little Rock school the following year to avoid desegregation, continued widespread segregation in schools.</li></ul>



Key topic 1: The development of the civil rights movement, 1954–60	Exemplification
<p>3 <b>The Montgomery Bus Boycott and its impact, 1955–60</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Causes and events of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The significance of Rosa Parks.</li> <li>• Reasons for the success and importance of the boycott. The Supreme Court ruling. The Civil Rights Act (1957).</li> <li>• The significance of the leadership of Martin Luther King. The setting up of the SCLC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her seat on the bus, her arrest and the impact of her actions. The boycott of buses led by the Montgomery Improvement Association.</li> <li>• Reasons for success, for example the contribution of Rosa Parks, the support of the NAACP, organisation of the boycott and carpools, the length of the boycott and the economic impact for the bus company; support for the boycott and negative publicity for Montgomery. The importance of the boycott in showing the effectiveness of non-violent protest. The Supreme Court ruling that segregation on buses was unconstitutional. Features of the Civil Rights Act (1957), for example terms against discrimination interfering with voting rights, and its limitations.</li> <li>• Martin Luther King's belief in peaceful protest, his influence, including, for example, his role as chairman of the Montgomery Improvement Association and leadership of the Montgomery bus boycott, the development of his role into the leading spokesperson for the civil rights movement and his role in setting up the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.</li> </ul>
<p>4 <b>Opposition to the civil rights movement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ku Klux Klan and violence, including the murder of Emmett Till in 1955.</li> <li>• Opposition to desegregation in the South, including the 'Dixiecrats' and the setting up of White Citizens' Councils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities of the Ku Klux Klan in opposing civil rights for African Americans and its use of violence such as lynching, and the murder of Emmett Till.</li> <li>• Opposition in the South to the civil rights movement and resistance to desegregation. The 'Dixiecrat' splinter group from the Democratic Party in the South which opposed the furthering of civil rights. The setting up of White Citizens' Councils in response to the Brown verdict by those who supported segregation and their spread across the South in the mid-1950s; their use of violence as well as protest.</li> </ul>

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Key topic 2: Protest, progress and radicalism, 1960–75	Exemplification
<p>1 <b>Developments, 1960–62</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The significance of Greensboro and the sit-in movement.</li> <li>• Reasons for, key events and significance of the Freedom Riders, including Ku Klux Klan violence and the Anniston bomb (1961).</li> <li>• The James Meredith case (1962).</li> </ul>
<p>2 <b>Peaceful protests and their impact, 1963–65</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of sit-ins to protest against segregation, and impact of Greensboro following which use of sit-ins spread, particularly among students, as a method of non-violent protest across Southern states.</li> <li>• Desegregation of bus station facilities in December 1960. CORE and SNCC organisation of freedom rides to test adherence to desegregation. The violent response to their protests, including firebombing at Anniston.</li> <li>• James Meredith's admission as the first Black student to the University of Mississippi; the subsequent riots and use of federal troops.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King and the peace marches of 1963 in Birmingham and Washington.</li> <li>• Freedom Summer and the Mississippi murders.</li> <li>• The impact of peaceful protest and roles of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson in the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964). Selma and the Voting Rights Act (1965).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King's role in deciding to focus on a peace march in Birmingham to challenge the lack of desegregation and the violence towards Black people. The significance of the march, including the response from Bull Connor and the police, the arrest of King, worldwide media attention on events in Birmingham and the use of federal troops. The significance of the March on Washington, including, for example, its size, King's 'I have a dream' speech, media attention and live broadcasts of events.</li> <li>• Key features of Freedom Summer, including, for example, ways in which Black people were prevented from voting in Mississippi and the campaign by SNCC and CORE to increase the number of Black voters using student volunteers, the violent response and murder of three of those involved.</li> <li>• Kennedy's response to events such as in Birmingham and his commitment in June 1963 to a Civil Rights Act. The work of Johnson in pushing it through after Kennedy's assassination and its passage in July 1964.</li> <li>• The problems of enforcing the Act and attempts to deal with them, for example the drive for voter registration at Selma, the response of state troops and Johnson's use of federal troops, Johnson's passing of the Voting Rights Act in August 1965 to prevent discrimination in voter registration.</li> </ul>

Key topic 2: Protest, progress and radicalism, 1960–75	Exemplification
<b>3 Malcolm X and Black Power, 1963–70</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malcolm X, his beliefs, methods and involvement with the Black Muslims. His later change of attitude and assassination.</li> <li>• Reasons for the emergence of Black Power. The significance of Stokely Carmichael and the 1968 Mexico Olympics.</li> <li>• The methods and achievements of the Black Panther movement.</li> </ul>
<b>4 The civil rights movement, 1965–75</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The riots of 1965–67 and the Kerner Report (1968).</li> <li>• King's campaign in the North. The assassination of Martin Luther King and its impact.</li> <li>• The extent of progress in civil rights by 1975.</li> </ul>

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Key topic 3: US involvement in the Vietnam War, 1954–75		Exemplification
1 <b>Reasons for US involvement in the conflict in Vietnam, 1954–63</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for greater US involvement under Eisenhower, including the domino theory and weaknesses of the Diem government.</li> <li>Greater involvement under Kennedy, including the overthrow of Diem and the Strategic Hamlet Program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>US policy under Eisenhower, for example the domino theory and concerns about the potential spread of communism in Asia. The outcome of the battle of Dien Bien Phu, French withdrawal from Vietnam, and the division of Vietnam into North and South Vietnam. Weaknesses in Diem's government, for example corruption, his lack of respect for Buddhists and for lower classes.</li> <li>Kennedy's policy, for example support for anti-communist counter-insurgency measures but not direct military intervention. Concerns about Diem's effectiveness which led to the US-backed overthrow of Diem. The Strategic Hamlet Program relocating villagers to fortified camps to prevent them being influenced by the Vietcong; the problems of the Program.</li> </ul>
2 <b>Escalation of the conflict under Johnson</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for the escalation of the conflict and increased US involvement in Vietnam, including the increasing threat of the Vietcong and the Gulf of Tonkin incident (1964).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nature of the increased threat, for example numbers of Vietcong, the ways in which the Vietcong gained increasing support from the Vietnamese rural population, the use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.</li> <li>Reports of attacks on US ships by North Vietnamese torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. The resulting US Congress resolution supporting Johnson's escalation of US involvement in the conflict.</li> </ul>

Key topic 3: US involvement in the Vietnam War, 1954–75		Exemplification
3 <b>The nature of the conflict in Vietnam, 1964–68</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The guerrilla tactics used by the Vietcong.</li> <li>• The methods used by the USA, including Search and Destroy, Operation Rolling Thunder and chemical weapons.</li> <li>• The key features and significance of the Tet Offensive, 1968.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The key features of guerrilla warfare, such as ambushes, traps, lack of uniforms and integration with peasants, avoiding open battles.</li> <li>• The main military methods used by US armed forces including tactics of Search and Destroy against the Vietcong, the escalation in bombardment under Operation Rolling Thunder, and the use of chemical weapons such as napalm and Agent Orange.</li> <li>• Key features, for example the widespread attack by the Vietcong in over 100 cities on Tet (New Year) and its outcome, the extent to which it was a military defeat for the USA, its influence on US public opinion about the conflict.</li> </ul>
4 <b>Changes under Nixon, 1969–73</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The key features of Vietnamisation. Reasons for its failure.</li> <li>• The Nixon Doctrine and the withdrawal of US troops.</li> <li>• Attacks on Cambodia (1970) and Laos (1971) and the bombing of North Vietnam (1972).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nixon's policy of Vietnamisation, strengthening the South Vietnamese forces to enable withdrawal of US troops, and its failure.</li> <li>• Nixon's decision to attack Cambodia and Laos to target the Vietcong there. Attacks on North Vietnam and the impact of these on the North Vietnamese.</li> </ul>

## 2. Content guidance

Key topic 4: Reactions to, and the end of, US involvement in Vietnam, 1964–75		Exemplification
1 <b>Opposition to the war</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for the growth of opposition, including the student movement, TV and media coverage of the war and the draft system.</li> <li>Public reaction to the My Lai Massacre (1968). The trial of Lt. Calley.</li> <li>The Kent State University shootings (1970).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for the growth of opposition, for example the spread of student anti-war organisations as a part of the changing youth culture, the conflict as a 'media war' and the impact of images and footage on public opinion, the impact of increased conscription, draft dodging and draft burning.</li> <li>The impact of the actions of US troops at My Lai on US public opinion. The conviction of Lt. Calley for murder and divided US public opinion about it.</li> <li>The shootings and their significance: anti-war protest at Kent State, the killing of four students by the National Guard, media coverage and public response in the USA and worldwide.</li> </ul>
2 <b>Support for the war</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for support for the war, including the fear of communism.</li> <li>The 'hard hats' and the 'silent majority'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reasons for support, for example why some in the USA regarded the US involvement in the Vietnam conflict as necessary to prevent the spread of communism, role of patriotism and resistance to 'losing face'.</li> <li>The 'hard hats' and 'silent majority' as representatives of a patriotic and largely working-class section of US society that were supporters of the US involvement in Vietnam.</li> </ul>

Key topic 4: Reactions to, and the end of, US involvement in Vietnam, 1964–75		Exemplification
3 <b>The peace process and end of the war</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for, and key features of, the peace negotiations (1972–73).</li> <li>The significance of the Paris Peace Agreement (1973).</li> <li>The economic and human costs of the war for the USA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for negotiations, for example the consequences of Tet, the problems at home and in Vietnam of pursuing the conflict, and the appeal of a role of peacemaker leading to Nixon's decision for peace negotiations. The key features of the peace negotiations, for example, the secret and official negotiations and the US bombing of North Vietnam.</li> <li>The significance of the Paris Peace Agreement 1973, for example agreement to end the war and the withdrawal of US troops, failure to secure the future of a democratic South Vietnam and subsequent ability of North Vietnam to achieve its goal of a unified Vietnam.</li> <li>The economic effects of the Vietnam War for the USA such as cutbacks in federal spending and inflation, and the human costs such as the number of lives lost and the returning traumatised soldiers.</li> </ul>
4 <b>Reasons for the failure of the USA in Vietnam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The strengths of North Vietnam, including the significance of Russian and Chinese support, Vietcong tactics and the Ho Chi Minh Trail.</li> <li>The weaknesses of the US armed forces. The failure of US tactics.</li> <li>The impact of opposition to the war in the USA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The strengths of North Vietnam including external support from other communist states, the guerrilla tactics used by the Vietcong and the use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail as an effective supply route.</li> <li>US weaknesses, for example the lack of effectiveness of the USA's superior technology against the Vietcong's guerrilla tactics, morale, the failure to win the 'hearts and minds' of the Vietnamese.</li> <li>The impact of opposition, for example deep divisions in US society and the pressure put on the US government by the anti-war movement and publicity for it.</li> </ul>

## 3. Student timeline

The timeline below could be given to students, and could be further edited and added to by them. Inclusion of dates and events in this timeline should not be taken as an indication that these are prescribed: the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.

1954	Brown v. Topeka case First White Citizens' Council	Battle of Dien Bien Phu, French withdrawal, and division of Vietnam into North and South Vietnam
1955	Murder of Emmett Till The Montgomery Bus Boycott	
1957	Crisis at Little Rock High School Civil Rights Act Setting up of the SCLC	
1961	The 'Freedom Rides'	
1962	James Meredith case	
1963	Peace marches in Birmingham and Washington (Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream speech')	Overthrow of Diem
1964	Civil Rights Act	Gulf of Tonkin incident
1965	Selma Voting Rights Act Assassination of Malcolm X	Operation Rolling Thunder
1966	Setting up of the Black Panthers	
1968	Assassination of Martin Luther King Mexico Olympics Kerner Report	Tet Offensive My Lai Massacre Nixon introduces policy of 'Vietnamisation'
1970		US attack on Cambodia Kent State University protest Trial of Lt. Calley
1971		US attack on Laos
1972		US bombing of North Vietnam
1972-73		Peace negotiations with USA and Vietnam
1973		Paris Peace Agreement



## 4. Resources

The sections below list a range of resources that could be used by students and teachers for this topic.

The first section lists information on free support materials available on the Edexcel website. On the [GCSE History \(9–1\) from 2016](#) page:

- select the [Teaching support](#) tab, where resources are separated out by Plan, Teach, and Track and Assess;
- or select the [Course materials](#) tab, and then select the appropriate tab for [Specification and sample assessments](#), [Exam materials](#), or [Teaching and learning materials](#).

The table below provides a selection of the free support materials available on the Edexcel website. Details and links for all the free support available can be found in [this document](#). It is updated regularly, so worth bookmarking.

The second section lists publishers who have been endorsed for GCSE (9–1) History. 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.

The remaining sections list both endorsed resources and those that have not been endorsed. 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.

There has been a rapid growth in podcasts in recent years, and we have added below links to a few well-known ones. Some may not be suitable for younger listeners, so please check carefully before sharing with students. Similarly, there are plenty of useful videos for History students on online sharing platforms, and any links below have been checked, but please exercise care before sharing social media links with students.

### 4.1 Free support materials

Resource	Details
<a href="#">Specification</a> and <a href="#">sample assessment materials</a>	The starting point for information on content and assessment in GCSE (9–1) History.
<a href="#">Past papers, mark schemes and examiner reports</a>	An <a href="#">Edexcel Online</a> login is required to access files with a silver padlock – check with your exams officer if you can't open them.
<a href="#">Getting Started Guide</a>	An overview of the specification, to help you get to grips with the content and assessment requirements of the specification. Updated for Issues 5 and 6.

## 4. Resources

<a href="#">Summary guidance on changes for 2025 and 2026</a>	Summary guidance with links on the changes being made for Issue 5 (first assessment 2025) and Issue 6 (2026).
Content changes for 2026: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Topic guidance</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">FAQs</a></li> </ul>	Guidance for each option on the changes being made to the content for Issue 6 of the specification (first assessment June 2026), and FAQs.
Assessment changes for 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">FAQs</a></li> </ul>	Guidance on the changes being made to the assessment model for Issue 5 of the specification (first assessment June 2025), and FAQs.
Specification language changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Track changes on</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rationale</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">FAQs</a></li> </ul>	Guidance on the language changes made for Issue 4 of the specification (first teaching September 2023, first assessment June 2025).
<a href="#">Guidance on sources and interpretations</a>	Guidance on AO3 sources and AO4 interpretations, looking at question types, common problems, and teaching approaches and ideas.
<a href="#">Paper 3 Guide</a>	Teaching approaches and ideas for the modern depth study, with case studies from practising teachers.
<a href="#">Schemes of work</a>	Sample outline schemes of work for each topic in the specification, in editable Word files.  A digital <a href="#">interactive scheme of work</a> is also available for both KS3 and GCSE.
<a href="#">Mapping documents</a>	Mapping documents to help support teachers in moving to Edexcel GCSE History.
<a href="#">Exemplar student answers</a>	Exemplar student answers, including from the summer 2018, 2019 and 2022 series, with examiner commentaries and mark schemes.
<a href="#">Student walkthroughs</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Paper 3 playlist</a></li> </ul>	A series of pre-recorded student walkthroughs, created in collaboration with Harris Federation. <i>Updated for Summer 2025.</i>
<a href="#">Revision tips</a>	Some useful revision tips for students. <i>Updated for Summer 2025.</i>
<a href="#">Command words</a>	A series of student-friendly files exploring each command word in turn, plus a summary document paper-by-paper. <i>Updated for 2025.</i>

## 4.2 Endorsed resources\*

[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.

## 4.3 Resources for students

Resource	Details
<i>Edexcel GCSE History (9–1) The USA, 1954–75: conflict at home and abroad</i> (Pearson, 2016)	Student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: The USA, 1954–75 Revision Guide and Workbook</i> (Pearson, 2017)	A combined revision guide and workbook written for this option in the specification.
<i>Hodder GCSE History for Edexcel: The USA, 1945–75: conflict at home and abroad</i> (Hodder, 2016)	Student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>My Revision Notes: Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History The USA, 1945–75: conflict at home and abroad</i> (Hodder, 2017)	A revision guide featuring key content coverage, exam-style questions, revision tasks, activities and practical tips.
PG Online, <i>Clear Revise: Edexcel GCSE History 1H10 The USA, 1945–75: conflict at home and abroad</i> (PG Online, 2023)	Illustrated revision guide matched to the specification with exam-style practice questions and practical tips.
J. Shuter, <i>A Divided Union? The USA 1945–70</i> (Pearson, 2009)	Student book for the 'Divided Union' option in the 2009 Edexcel GCSE History A (Modern World) specification, relevant for Key topics 1 and 2.
S. Waugh and J. Wright, <i>The Divided Union: USA 1945–70</i> (Hodder, 2010)	Student book for the 'Divided Union' option in the 2009 Edexcel GCSE History A (Modern World) specification, relevant for Key topics 1 and 2.
Steve May and Rob Bircher, <i>CA5 Vietnam 1960–75</i> (Pearson, 2010)	Student book for the Vietnam controlled assessment option in the 2009 Edexcel GCSE History A (Modern World) specification, relevant for Key topics 3 and 4.

## 4. Resources

Resource	Details
Steve Waugh and John Wright, <i>Vietnam 1950–75</i> (Hodder, 2010)	Student book for the Vietnam controlled assessment option in the 2009 Edexcel GCSE History A (Modern World) specification, relevant for Key topics 3 and 4.
R. Bunce and L. Gallagher, <i>Pursuing Life &amp; Liberty: Equality in USA 1945–68</i> (Pearson, 2009)	Written for an option in the 2008 Edexcel AS History on civil rights, extracts from which may be useful for higher-attaining students.
National Archives <a href="http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/civil-rights-in-america/">www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/civil-rights-in-america/</a>	Documents and notes.
History Learning Site <a href="http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/the-civil-rights-movement-in-america-1945-to-1968/">www.historylearningsite.co.uk/the-civil-rights-movement-in-america-1945-to-1968/</a>	Website with useful articles.
Spartacus Educational <a href="http://spartacus-educational.com/USA.htm">http://spartacus-educational.com/USA.htm</a>	Website with useful articles and sources.
BBC Bitesize <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/mwh/vietnam/">www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/mwh/vietnam/</a>	Summaries and videos.
The Rosa Parks story <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iQVMWGE3_s&amp;t=5s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iQVMWGE3_s&amp;t=5s</a>	BBC Teach dramatisation aimed at primary school pupils but still useful.
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9a3hT8f6Kkk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9a3hT8f6Kkk</a>	Mini bio on Malcolm X

### 4.4 Resources for teachers

Resource	Details
H. Brogan, <i>The Penguin History of the USA</i> , 2nd edition (Penguin, 2001)	A detailed coverage of the history of the USA which teachers may find useful as background reading.
B. Dierenfield, <i>The Civil Rights Movement</i> (Longman, 2008)	Detailed coverage of the civil rights movement which teachers may find useful for background information.
M.A. Jones, <i>The Limits of Liberty</i> , 2nd edition (OUP, 1995)	A detailed coverage of the history of the USA which teachers may find useful as background reading.
V. Sanders, <i>Race Relations in the USA since 1900</i> (Hodder and Stoughton, 2000)	A popular AS/A2 textbook which teachers may find useful for additional information or for extracts for use with higher ability students.

Resource	Details
V. Sanders, <i>Civil Rights in the USA, 1945–68</i> (Access to History, Hodder Education, 2008)	A popular AS/A2 textbook which teachers may find useful for additional information or for extracts for use with higher ability students.
M.K. Hall, <i>The Vietnam War</i> , Second Edition (Longman, 2008)	Detailed coverage of the Vietnam War which teachers may find useful for background information.
V. Sanders, <i>The USA and Vietnam 1945–1975</i> (Access to History, Hodder and Stoughton, 1998)	A popular AS/A2 textbook which teachers may find useful for additional information or for extracts for use with higher ability students.
Juan Williams, <i>Eyes On the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954–65</i> (Penguin, 2013, first pub 1987)	This book accompanied the excellent documentary series of the same name (unfortunately not currently available). It has detailed analysis of events, personal accounts and photographs.
Dan Peel, <i>The History of the Civil Rights Movement: The Story of the African American Fight for Justice and Equality</i> (Sona Books, 2020)	A detailed account of the civil rights movement, covering the periods both before and after the specification.
<i>The Vietnam War</i> (PBS, 2017)	In-depth, 10-part documentary by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, including interviews with witnesses from all sides of the conflict.
<i>Selma</i> (2014)	A film chronicling of Dr Martin Luther King Jr's campaign to secure equal voting rights via an epic march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965.
The National Archives <a href="https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/leaders-and-controversies/g6/">https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/leaders-and-controversies/g6/</a>	Sources related to Martin Luther King.
Alpha History <a href="https://alphahistory.com/vietnamwar/">https://alphahistory.com/vietnamwar/</a>	Website with topics, documents, timeline, glossary etc.
Schoolhistory website <a href="http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk">http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk</a>	A very comprehensive website with resources for teaching history. GCSE resources are arranged by exam board and cover most modules. Some resources are free but to get the full range available there is a subscription payment.
<a href="https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/hub/secondary">https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/hub/secondary</a>	A comprehensive bank of resources for teachers, some free, some paid-for.
Teachithistory website <a href="https://www.teachithistory.co.uk/depth-studies/20th-century-america/tags/3724">https://www.teachithistory.co.uk/depth-studies/20th-century-america/tags/3724</a>	A collection of resources on twentieth-century America.

#### 4. Resources

Resource	Details
<a href="https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments">https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments</a>	Official documentary historical record of major US foreign policy decisions and significant diplomatic activity.
United States Civil Rights Trail <a href="https://civilrightstrail.com/stories/">https://civilrightstrail.com/stories/</a>	A range of resources, including videos and podcasts, to support teaching of the civil rights movement.
Podcast series <a href="#">Historical Association</a> , free to members <a href="#">The Rest Is History</a> <a href="#">Dan Snow's History Hit</a> <a href="#">History Extra</a> <a href="#">You're Dead to Me</a>	There are lots of History podcast series available these days through various platforms. We have listed here a few well-known ones, and you can search for relevant episodes. There are also revision podcasts available. Please check they are suitable before sharing with students.

### Educational Recording Agency

#### Transform History Teaching with Multimedia Resources from the Educational Recording Agency (ERA)

[The ERA Licence](#) provides seamless access to television and radio recordings, offering a single point of clearance for the rights needed to create and use authentic media resources in your classroom. With [ERA's free video streaming platform](#), licensed institutions can explore a rich library of curriculum-mapped TV and radio clips tailored to GCSE, AS, and A-level teaching.

Engage your learners with curated clips, full-length documentaries, and programmes that bring historical contexts to life. The platform also includes exclusive access to the **BBC Shakespeare** and **Literary Archives**, offering unique cross-curricular opportunities to enrich your lessons with impactful media—perfect for both homework and classroom activities.

To access this free resource [registration is required](#) - but is quick and simple. State schools in England are licensed under a central agreement with the DfE and the vast majority of independent schools also hold a current ERA Licence.