



Understanding command words: Summer 2025 onwards

Command words are key words and phrases used in exam papers that tell you how to answer each question to ensure you are demonstrating the correct historical skills, knowledge and understanding.

In Edexcel GCSE History the question stems are fixed, so you know what each question is asking you to do. These tables provide a summary of the command words with a brief explanation.

Paper 1: Thematic study with historic environment		Command word	What the question is asking you to do
Section A: Historic environment	Q1a	Describe one feature of... X	Demonstrate your knowledge by saying what you know about a topic using specific detail to support your answer.
	Q1b	Describe one feature of... Y	
	Q2a	How useful are Sources A and B for an enquiry into...?	Make a judgement about how useful two sources are for a specific enquiry. For each source you should consider what is useful about the source content and how that is affected by its provenance (Nature, Origin Purpose), and your knowledge of the historical context.
	Q2b	How could you follow up Source A/B to find out more about...?	Identify a detail in a source that prompts a question, in order to find out more about the wider enquiry in the question and suggest a source which might have relevant information.
Section B: Thematic study	Q3	Explain one way in which X was similar/different to Y	Identify one similarity or difference between two time periods, and support this with specific details from each period.
	Q4	Explain why...	Make clear why something happened [try to identify any reason/cause/factor] supporting your answer with relevant information.
	Q5/6	[Statement.] How far do you agree? Explain your answer. <i>[Choice of Q5 or Q6]</i>	Reach a judgement about a statement by saying how much you agree and disagree with something. You should consider both sides of the argument and give detailed reasons for your judgement to make sure it is supported by an explanation.



Paper 2: British depth study and period study		Command word	What the question is asking you to do
Booklet B: British depth study	Q1a	Describe one feature of... X	Demonstrate your knowledge by saying what you know about a topic using specific detail to support your answer.
	Q1b	Describe one feature of... Y	
	Q2	Explain why...	Make clear why something happened [try to identify any reason/cause/factor] supporting your answer with relevant information.
	Q3/4	[Statement.] How far do you agree? Explain your answer. <i>[Choice of Q3 or Q4]</i>	Reach a judgement about a statement by saying how much you agree and disagree with something. You should consider both sides of the argument and give detailed reasons for your judgement to make sure it is supported by an explanation.
Booklet P: Period study	Q1a	Explain one consequence of... X	Make clear how something happened as a result of an event or development, supporting your answer with detailed knowledge.
	Q1b	Explain one consequence of... Y	
	Q2	Write a narrative account analysing...	Write an account which explains how events led to an outcome by making clear how one event links to another.
	Q3	Explain two of the following: • The importance of X for Y... <i>[Choice of two from three questions]</i>	Examine the impact of an event or development [X] on something else [Y].



Paper 3: Modern depth study		Command word	What the question is asking you to do
Section A	Q1	Give two things you can infer...	Work something out from the source which helps to answer an enquiry by making sensible suggestions based on specific details in the source.
	Q2a/2b	Explain why... <i>[Choice of Q2a or Q2b]</i>	Make clear why something happened [try to identify any reason/cause/factor] supporting your answer with relevant information.
Section B	Q3a	How useful are Sources A and B for an enquiry into...?	Make a judgement about how useful two sources are for a specific enquiry. For each source you should consider what is useful about the source content and how that is affected by its provenance (Nature, Origin Purpose) and your knowledge of the historical context.
	Q3b	What is the main difference between these views?	Identify the main difference between two views about the past and pick out some detail from both interpretations to support your answer.
	Q3c	Suggest one reason why Interpretations 1 and 2 give different views about...	Give one possible reason why the two views may be different. You must use details from the interpretations, and you can explain the difference between them by using details from the two sources that are provided. Another way you could explain the difference is to use details from the interpretations to show that the authors have a different focus or are covering different aspects of the topic or different timescales.
	Q3d	How far do you agree with interpretation 2 about...? Explain your answer, using both interpretations and your knowledge of the historical context.	Reach a judgement about how far you agree with Interpretation 2 [how convincing]. You should use Interpretation 1, and your knowledge of the period, to support your analysis and judgement on how far you agree with Interpretation 2. If you find Interpretation 2 is less convincing than Interpretation 1, you should make clear the basis for your judgement.