

Independent Investigations Unit 2592

past OCR-set Questions

Notes

In any year, candidates for Unit 2592 may select a question set for a previous examination. [NB past questions may never be used for Unit 2593.]

Some questions use phrases such as 'a given historical period' or 'any period you have studied'. It is difficult to offer an exact definition of 'period', but it should usually be taken to mean a span of 20 to 100 years (as appropriate to the question being investigated). Investigations require some breadth, if only to set their subject within historical context.

Investigations must not deal with anything before 768AD. The only restriction on a study in contemporary history is a practical one: the availability of a useful range of primary evidence and high quality secondary historical literature.

Candidates may confine their answers to one country or may draw examples from several. The choice is theirs. Questions on Topics 1 to 9 are not confined to Britain and/or Europe.

Topic 1: The Arts and History

How much can we learn about an historical period by studying its architecture? Use examples from any period you have studied to support your answer. [2002]

For any period you have studied, assess the extent to which the visual arts have been used to serve the interests of those in authority. [2003]

How useful is cinema as a means of helping us to interpret the past? Answer with reference to any period you have studied. [2004]

'The spirit of an age is defined more by its commonplace objects than by its "great works" of art and architecture.' Using examples, evaluate this view with reference to any period you have studied. [2005]

(note: 'commonplace objects' can be things such as fashion, interior design, engineering such as the Forth railway bridge or 'street architecture' such as Parisian art nouveau metro stations.)

To what extent have either the visual arts or the expressive arts been dictated by the nature of the society from which they originated? Answer with reference to any period you have studied. [2006]

How useful is the literature of a given historical period for assisting our understanding of the past? [2007]

Topic 2: Economic History

To what extent did economic factors account for major changes in society in any period you have studied? [2002]

Can economic history ever be more than 'history with the people taken out'? Answer with reference to any period you have studied. [2003]

Assess the strengths and limitations of economic evidence as a means of explaining historical events. Answer with reference to any period you have studied. [2004]

How significant have long-term economic factors been in explaining the occurrence of any major event chosen from your period of study? [2005]

Assess the link between economic factors and major changes in society in any period you have studied. [2006]

Assess the impact of factors that have caused inflation in a given historical period. [2007]

Topic 3: The Individual in History

'We manufacture heroes simply because they occupy great positions.' Evaluate this view using the example of an individual from any period you have studied. [2002]

'To be great is to be misunderstood.' How true is this of any individual you have studied? [2003]

'Individuals do not "shape" historical events; the best they can do is respond to opportunities.' With reference to one or more individuals you have studied, how far do you support this claim? [2004]

Assess the historical significance of any individual you have studied. [2005]

Evaluate at least two competing interpretations of any individual you have studied. [2006]

How far would you agree that history is no more than 'the biography of great men' (Thomas Carlyle)? [2007]

Topic 4: Local History

'Local history may be fascinating in itself, but it rarely makes any significant contribution to our understanding of national events.' Evaluate this view with reference to the history of any locality you have studied. [2002]

How far has the history of any locality you have studied been influenced by its geographical position? [2003]

With reference to any period you have studied, assess the strengths and limitations of using physical remains for local historical research. [2004]

How far did developments in any locality you have studied reflect national trends? [2005]

(note: 'locality' can be an individual building, a hamlet, a town or city, a county or a region.)

Using examples from any locality you have studied, assess the strengths and limitations of local history. [2006]

(note: 'locality' can be any hamlet, village, town, county or region in the world.)

To what extent have the artefacts **and/or** archives of a local museum helped you to understand the history of a locality? [2007]

Topic 5: Military History

'War has been the great engine of technological advance.' Evaluate this view with reference to any period you have studied. [2002]

'Wars seldom succeed in removing the causes of conflict.' Assess this view with reference to any period you have studied. [2003]

'The main causes of war are always long term.' With reference to one or more wars you have studied, how far do you support this claim? [2004]

With reference to any military conflict you have studied, assess the relative importance of chance as the main reason in explaining the outcome of that conflict. [2005]

'Military history has no purpose other than that of recounting the details of particular battles and wars.' With reference to any period you have studied, how far do you agree with this view? [2006]

Evaluate claims made by historians on behalf of any commander you have studied that he was a 'military genius'. [2007]

Topic 6: Political History

'What governments fear most are unexpected events.' Evaluate this judgement, using examples from any period you have studied. [2002]

With reference to any period you have studied, explain why popular protest has rarely made any significant impact on the exercise of political power. [2003]

'Political activity is driven by the desire to achieve practical goals rather than by principle.' Assess this view with reference to any period you have studied. [2004]

With reference to any major uprising against political authority, assess the relative importance of the reasons why it was either successful or unsuccessful. [2005]

Which caused the greater threat to established government: the powerful or the powerless? Discuss with reference to any period you have studied. [2006]

How far would you agree that a successful political regime always depends on a strong leader? [2007]

Topic 7: Religious History

'On the whole, religious beliefs have done more to stimulate change than to hold it back.' Evaluate this view with reference to any period you have studied. [2002]

Using examples from any period you have studied, explain why religion has often been the cause of particularly bitter conflict. [2003]

'Religious conflicts are caused purely by religious factors.' Assess this view with reference to any period you have studied. [2004]

With reference to any period you have studied, assess the extent to which religion has been used as a pretext for political action. [2005]

With reference to any period you have studied, assess the view that internal divisions do more to weaken religious movements than external threats. [2006]

Compare the immediate and longer-term impact of any religious change you have studied, and explain your findings. [2007]

Topic 8: Science, Technology and History

How far can technological change be explained by a study of the society in which it takes place? Discuss this with reference to any period you have studied. [2002]

Assess the relative importance of the factors that tended to advance scientific and technological progress in any period you have studied. [2003]

Select **one** scientific **or one** technological advance and evaluate its impact **either** on events **or** on developments in any period you have studied. [2004]

With reference to any period you have studied, assess the relative importance of the factors that tended to advance **and/or** impede scientific and technological progress. [2005 & 2006]

Assess the relative importance of factors that have tended to advance **and/or** impede technological progress in any period you have studied. [2007]

Topic 9: Social History

'Civilisation has been the product of cities.' Assess this view using examples from any period you have studied. [2002]

'Differences of class rather than of gender have provided the main obstacle to the development of women's rights.' How far is this true of any period you have studied? [2003]

'The growth of towns and cities has caused more social problems than it has solved.' Assess this view using examples from any period you have studied. [2004]

'Differences of class or rank rather than of gender provided the **main** obstacle to the development of women's rights.' Evaluate this view with reference to any period you have studied. [2005]

With reference to any period you have studied, assess the effectiveness of attempts to resolve the problem of poverty. [2006]

Assess the impact of factors acting for and/or against social cohesion in any period you have studied. [2007]

Topic 10: World History

Assess the advantages of studying history from a non-European perspective, using examples from any period you have studied. [2002]

'There is really no such thing as world history. We can study the histories of different countries in the world and how they related to each other, but beyond that there are no unifying ideas.' With reference to any period you have studied, how far do you agree with this view? [2004]

'On the whole, the influence of European civilization on other parts of the world has been beneficial.' How far is this true of any period you have studied? [2003, 2005 & 2006]

[note: answers may focus on one state (e.g. Kenya), region (e.g. East Africa), larger area (e.g. Sub-Saharan Africa) or continent.]

Assess the claim to greatness of any Asian ruler or leader you have studied. [2007]