

**UNIT 2593 – OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION
GUIDANCE FOR 2009 EXAMINATION**

The Arts and history

Choose any television programme (or series of programmes) dealing with the past and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses as an historical interpretation.

The selected programme(s) has to be seen as an interpretation (or representation) of the past. Examples of representations might be *Blackadder*, a Dickens adaptation or *The Tudors*. The task will be twofold. First, the candidate should test the historical accuracy of the production (characterization, plot, costume or setting) against various kinds of evidence taken or inferred from primary or secondary sources. In *Blackadder Goes Forth*, for example, the candidate might ask whether the programme's portrayal of Haig and his staff as blundering fools stands up to historical scrutiny; or whether, in *'The Tudors'*, the role of Thomas Cromwell is given sufficient prominence in the Break with Rome. Second, candidates should note that they are looking for 'strengths' as well as 'weaknesses' and this might lead some into consideration of the medium itself – e.g. the implications of dramatizing (and so popularizing) complex historical subject matter. Critical use of source material will be evident in the testing process and quality of argument will be revealed by a balanced treatment of both strengths and weaknesses.

Economic history

To what extent was economic change the main cause of historical development in the period you have studied?

The phrase 'historical development' is left deliberately vague to increase the range of selection but it does suggest more than a single event. Good examples would be the Italian Renaissance, the 'Scramble for Africa', or Hitler's rise to power. The task is thereafter fairly straightforward. This will involve, first of all, a balanced assessment of the impact of economic change, negotiated through critical use of source material, followed by critical treatment of other causal factors – political, social or cultural; second the candidate needs to consider the relationship between causal factors, which should lead to the conclusion, either that economic change was more/less important than other factors, or that no single factor was more important than any other and the outcome depended upon a combination, or interaction of several causal factors – a 'sufficient' explanation. While some candidates may simply assert the primacy of one factor, others will go on to *demonstrate* why this was the case. (e.g. by showing a dominant/dependent relationship of factors or by counter-factual analysis).

The Individual in history

How far would you agree with the view that the significant achievements of any period you have studied owed more to groups than to individuals?

This is, effectively the obverse of the 2008 question about individuals being able to 'change the course of history'. The proposition here is that it is the group that matters; that individuals, no matter what fame or notoriety they may achieve in the eyes of contemporaries, are effectively carried along on a tide of opinion or by forces already set in motion, be it Luther in 1517,

Cromwell in 1649, Robespierre in 1793, Earl Grey in 1832, Lenin in 1917, Pankhurst in 1918, Hitler in 1933, or Attlee in 1945. The question calls, essentially, for an argument about the origin of political, social or cultural change. Is it generated from below as a result of collective responses to underlying conditions or developments, or is it capable of being orchestrated from above, to serve the needs of an individual or political oligarchy? Sources will be used critically to support one or other side of the argument. Some candidates, of course, may reach for a synthesis in the form of an argument that each was dependent on the other, but the dependent relationship needs to be demonstrated – not merely asserted.

Local history

Assess the usefulness of evidence from a local site for interpreting similar development on a regional or national scale.

Candidates are **not** being asked in this question to reconstruct an historical site using evidence from the visible remains – though this might well form part of the response. Instead, the question is inviting the candidate to consider the usefulness of local evidence to support or challenge a regional or national generalization. In other words, how representative is the local site of the national picture? Does it follow the rule, or is it the exception? The evidence is useful in either case, of course, but for different reasons. For example, the candidate may carry out fieldwork on a local castle or church; factory or workhouse, and use the evidence to test a general statement about castles etc. from a secondary source, or as a means of comparison with similar sites in other parts of the country. It may well be, for example, that a local workhouse does, or does not, fit in with the national template for reasons peculiar to that town or local area. Alternatively, the architectural detail of churches in one area may have survived longer than that of churches in another, again because of local conditions or the building material available. Notice in each case that the degree of similarity/difference between local and national trends needs to be **explained** by reference to the local and/or national context.

Military history

With reference to any battle or campaign you have studied, how far was the outcome attributable to the tactics and strategy employed by the winning side?

This question calls for a causal explanation of a battle or campaign, in which the tactic employed by the winning commander is weighed against other factors as the main cause of the victory. For example, some victories were entirely due to the tactics employed by the winning commander (Hastings, Austerlitz, Culloden, Sedan). On the other hand, it might be considered that the resources available to the winning side were so overwhelmingly superior that tactics played relatively little part in the victory (Grant in the American Civil War). Alternatively, the best laid plans might have been confounded by chance, such as a turn in the weather (Napoleon at Waterloo). Candidates can answer the question by recounting one example in detail (where an argument is made possible by choosing a battle whose outcome can be attributed to more than one factor and assessing the relative importance of tactics), or two contrasting examples (where an argument is made possible by comparing the causes of victory and assessing the relative importance of tactics in each case) No more than two examples should be used. There is no requirement for the candidate to be restricted to a study of land battles.

Political history

With reference to any regime you have studied, assess how far its effectiveness was dependent on the co-operation of a 'political elite'.

The difficult phrase in this question is 'political elite'. It can be taken to mean different things at different times and a few obvious examples will suffice to define the term. In the Middle Ages it can be used to describe the baronage – a rival source of power, with which successive kings had to find a means of collaboration (with more or less success). This continued, to an extent, in the Tudor period, in the form of threats posed by regional fiefdoms (Percies, Howards) but transformed itself into court factions and the challenging growth of Parliament – to reach a climax

in the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642. In more recent times, the essential relationship has been between cabinet government and party interests, complicated by the need to accommodate a highly politicized media industry. Having selected an appropriate period and set of relationships, the candidate will need to construct an argument about the extent to which monarchs, or, more recently, prime ministers, have been free to govern or constrained by the need to carry 'political elites' with them. In other words, this is a study of where, at any given time, political power resided. An obvious synthesis can be found in the proposal that the relationship varied depending on what one party needed from the other – but this will have to be explored and explained in some detail. One or more examples may be chosen and the argument, of course, needs to be built on critical use of source material.

Religious history

Assess the relative importance of religious factors as a cause of any historical event or conflict you have studied.

The success of responses to this question is likely to depend more than is usually the case on the example chosen. The first requirement is that it should be an *event* (or possibly a decisive action) – not a gradual development or state of affairs. The second is that it is capable of multi-causal explanation and that one of the causal strands has to be religious. The third, if possible, is that the role played by religion needs to have been disputed in some way by historians – giving access to the critical use of secondary sources. Given these criteria, possible choices might be suggested – The First Act of Supremacy (1534), The Second Act of Supremacy (1559), The St Bartholomew's Day Massacre 1572, The Gordon Riots (1780), The English Civil War (1642) The Spanish Civil War (1936) Bloody Sunday (1972). Having selected the topic, the candidate then needs to construct an explanation of the event, in which, first, the separate importance of various causal factors (including religion) is assessed through critical use of source material, and then their *relative* importance is determined. As a result of this process, it may be demonstrated, for example, that religion was the occasion (or pretext) rather than the true cause. Alternatively, the candidate may take the line that there was no outstanding or distinctive cause but that the occurrence of the event was due to the interaction of a number of factors (particularly in cases where religious motives cannot be separated from, say, political motives). In this case, the 'overlap' cannot simply be asserted – it has to be demonstrated.

Science, Technology and history

Assess the relative importance of science and technology in changing the lives of ordinary people in any period you have studied.

This is a question that is targeted most obviously on the social effects of any period of industrial revolution – the most obvious being the Industrial Revolution that began around 1760 in England, the consumer boom that occurred in the United States in the 1920s, or the computer and digital revolutions of the last 20 years or so. It calls for a critical assessment of factors that changed the lives of ordinary people. So it is *changes in the lives of ordinary people* that have to be explained – not the technological advances themselves. Competing influences might be, for example, education and popular culture, political engagement or religious revivalism. By first assessing the influence of each factor on the lives of ordinary people, based on critical use of primary and secondary source material, the candidate will then be in a position to make a judgment about the relative importance of each in changing the ideas, attitudes and beliefs of ordinary people. The candidate may find that the links between influencing factors are stronger than the distinctive pull of any one of them – in which case, this can be a valid conclusion, but only if the inter-dependency of factors is demonstrated.

Social history

To what extent did the growth of towns result in social progress in any period you have studied?

The choice of 'towns' in the question is deliberate, in order to facilitate answers set in the Middle Ages. Apart from this, no particular distinction is made between 'towns' and 'cities' – the issue is whether the growth of large urban concentrations has, on balance, brought more harm than good. 'Social progress' can include prosperity due to manufacture and trade facets of public health, sanitation and housing, improvements in transport, popular culture sport and leisure, education, social welfare and care for the poor, or law and order. And its obverse might include overcrowding and disease, drunkenness and crime, a widening gap between rich and poor. The task in the answer will be to produce a balanced argument built on the critical use of source material. This provides another opportunity to make use of local historical material relating to a period of growth in the candidate's locality, town or city.

World history

'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?

This question, effectively, presents candidates with an opportunity to assess the impact of western imperialism on other parts of the world. Taking a suitable example from any period they have studied, candidates need to present a balanced view, giving equal weight to benefits and drawbacks. They may also need to develop a sense of period when interpreting contemporary sources – since these may attempt to justify imperialist activities in terms that are no longer seen to be acceptable. Candidates will also need to be careful when making judgments – arguably, there were benefits and drawbacks for *both* sides (though not necessarily evenly balanced) and these will need to be carefully distinguished. Weaker candidates may settle for a narrative account of imperial activity in one or other part of the world. Most candidates will try to provide a careful, balanced assessment of the benefits and drawbacks of imperialist activity in their chosen country. In doing so, they will make critical use of primary and/or secondary source material, in order to reconstruct contemporary attitudes, ideas and beliefs, and to set these within the context of a wider historical debate. A few candidates may achieve a synthesis, for example to the effect that short-term exploitation eventually gave way to longer-term gains – on both sides. Again, this will need to be demonstrated by reference to appropriate evidence.