



B O A R D O F S T U D I E S
NEW SOUTH WALES

2001

**HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION**

History Extension

General Instructions

- Reading time – 5 minutes
- Working time – 2 hours
- Write using black or blue pen

Total marks – 50

Section I Pages 2–3

25 marks

- Attempt Question 1
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

Section II Page 4

25 marks

- Attempt Question 2
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

Section I

25 marks

Attempt Question 1

Allow about 1 hour for this section

Answer the question in a writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- present a detailed, logical and well-structured answer to the question
- use relevant issues of historiography
- use relevant sources to support your argument

Using the Source, answer the question that follows.

Source

What is History and Why?

History is an effort to reconstruct the past to discover what people thought and did and how their beliefs and actions continue to influence human life. In order to appreciate the past fully, we must put it into perspective so that we can understand the factors that have helped to shape us as individuals, the society in which we live, and the nature of other peoples' societies. Why else should we study societies so separated from ours through time, distance, and culture as classical Greece, medieval India, early Japan, and modern Russia and Africa?

The matter of perspective is important. In a perfect world all human experience would be equally valuable for its own sake, even if it had little or no impact on the mainstream of history. Yet the evidence on which historians depend for their understanding of the past is far from perfect. Some peoples have left so few traces of themselves that they cannot be understood even in their own right, much less in connection with others. Such peoples are historical enigmas, best left to specialists while other historians examine the principal currents of human development. Historical perspective demands that most attention be devoted to peoples who are best known in their own context.

Historians begin to reconstruct the past by posing questions about it. How and why did cities emerge? How did the political system of a particular society evolve? How did people create an economic system to sustain a complex society? What were a society's religious beliefs, and how did they influence daily life? Historians ask such questions to guide their research and focus their approach to the past.

To answer such questions, historians examine *primary sources*, firsthand accounts of people who lived through the events—men and women who were in the best position to know what happened. Thus historians most commonly rely on the written record of human experience because, no matter how extensive the physical remains of a civilisation may be, much of its history will remain a mystery if it has not left records that we can read. Until we are able to decipher the written texts left by the ancient civilisation of Minoan Crete, for example, we can draw only vague conclusions about its history.

Of course, the historian's responsibility is to examine all of the evidence, not only written texts but non-verbal evidence. Examined properly, non-verbal sources provide a glimpse of the world as contemporaries saw it.

Source continues on page 3

Source (continued)

Especially in conjunction with written documents, art can be a valuable and striking means of understanding the past. Similarly, archaeology has proved a valuable avenue to the past . . . Things as dissimilar as beautiful paintings and ordinary machines tell historians much about the ways in which people have lived and worked.

When studying written sources—the basic activity in historical research—historians assess the validity and perspective of each account. They try to determine whether sources are honest and accurate, generally by comparing and contrasting the testimony of several different observers. They criticise sources both externally, to attempt to uncover forgeries and errors, and internally to find an author’s motives for writing, inconsistencies within a document, biases, and even cases of outright lying . . . For the modern period historians have a vast supply of primary sources—contemporary accounts of events, memoirs, personal letters, economic statistics, and government reports—all of them useful for understanding the past.

Once historians have pieced together what happened and have determined the facts, they interpret what they have found. Understanding of the past does not necessarily come easily. Unlike the exact physical sciences, history cannot reproduce experiments under controlled conditions, because no two historical events are precisely alike

To complicate matters further, for many epochs only the broad outlines are known . . .

Another matter stands in the way of an accurate understanding of the past. Interpretations of the past sometimes change because people’s points of view change. The values and attitudes of one generation may not be shared by another. Despite such differences in interpretation, the effort to examine and understand the past can give historians a perspective that is valuable in the present. By analysing and interpreting evidence, historians come to understand not only the past but the relationship of the past to life today.

Social history is itself an example of historians’ reappraisal of the meaning of the past. For centuries historians took the basic facts, details, and activities of life for granted . . . These matters seemed so ordinary that few serious historians gave them much thought. Yet within our generation a growing number of scholars have demonstrated that the ways in which men, women, and children have lived are as worthy of study as the reigns of monarchs, the careers of great political figures, and the outcomes of big battles . . .

Extract from *A History Of World Societies*
by John P. McKay *et al* (1996)

Question 1 (25 marks)

With reference to the Source and other sources, discuss how historians use evidence to reconstruct the past.

Please turn over

Section II

25 marks

Attempt Question 2

Allow about 1 hour for this section

Answer the question in a SEPARATE writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- present a sustained, logical and well-structured response to the question
 - use an appropriate case study
 - present a balanced treatment of the historians and the areas of debate selected for discussion
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Question 2 (25 marks)

Discuss the way ONE historical interpretation of issues in your case study differs from at least ONE other interpretation.

Identify your case study at the beginning of your answer.

End of paper