



Welcome to the first issue of *Talking History*, your history update, providing useful and relevant information to our History centres and helping to support the OCR History community. It also highlights the developments that may be of interest to you in the teaching of our GCSE and A Level History courses.

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We recently sponsored the final of the Historical Association's (HA) *Great Debate* – a competition in which sixth formers from around the UK, each a regional winner, championed an individual in history from their region by delivering a talk on *Why My Local Hero Matters*.

The standard was exceptionally high, and the range of heroes diverse. Our interview in this newsletter with the Early Modern historian David Smith underlines why this topic for debate was so exciting. Dr Smith comments on the relationship between biography and history, and the opportunities for imagination and empathy – and for wider understanding – that can arise from immersing oneself in the life of an individual from the past.

The HA competitors certainly did that – and it was pleasing to see their attention turned to less well-known heroes such as Walter Tull, the footballer and First World War soldier, alongside more familiar names, such as Boadicea (see the close-up on Ancient History) and Aneurin Bevan.



The competitors showcased the skills of the historian, as well as impressive individual knowledge. They had to set up criteria, construct argument and analysis, and consider their sources; all of these of course are requirements of A Level History, with different elements featuring more strongly in different units.

We will focus on a different unit in each issue of this update. We start with coursework unit F965; and, with that in mind, anyone who visits the HA website to view the podcasts of the Great Debate (we urge you to do so! – click  to visit) and thinks that their learners may be similarly inspired could in future years consider encouraging them to look at the 'Individual in History' List B questions in Unit F965. And History B centres may well be interested in viewing the podcasts for examples of considerations of 'Historical Significance' (coursework unit F987).

We hope you enjoy this issue, but just as importantly that you find it useful. If you have a story to tell about your school or college and your History work, please let us know by emailing general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk







Spotlight on F965

F965 is the coursework unit for A Level History A. It comprises two pieces of work: an Interpretations piece and an Investigation. As it's coursework rather than controlled assessment, learners can complete it either at home or school, and other than the final deadline (for summer, entry marks must be submitted to us by 15 May) there's no specified time window in which it must be completed.

F965 support available

As F965 is a brand new unit, we're offering you a range of support resources to help you as you deliver it.

- The **Coursework Guidance** should contain answers to a lot of your queries. 
- A large **INSET** training programme has been running since September. (Our Principal Moderator has probably spent more time on the road than at home!) 
- We're offering a free **Coursework Consultancy Service** too: this new email-based service is available for our GCSE and A Level History specifications A and B.

The service is managed by our consultants, who are experienced Senior Assessors who can provide guidance on History coursework.

To access this service please complete a request form, forms are available by visiting the OCR website or by clicking one of the following links:

A Level



GCSE



Completed forms should be emailed as an attachment to:
courseworkconsultancy@ocr.org.uk

- Most centres are entering this unit in the summer, but some have entered learners in January. This means that the Principal Moderator has produced a report on the session. This should be useful not only if your centre had entries, but also if you're entering for the first time in the summer.

Report on the units taken January 2010



- In response to demand, we've published a list of FAQs for F965, which we'll continue to update based on the queries we receive.

You can download the most recent FAQs at:



If you've any further questions about the unit, please contact our Customer Contact Centre on **01223 553998** or email **general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk**. Anything that the Contact Centre can't answer will be forwarded to the History team and we'll do our best to get back to you as quickly as possible.

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Spotlight on F965



Marking your first coursework



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Marking your first coursework

We know from attending **INSET** and answering queries that many teachers feel daunted by the prospect of marking the coursework for the first time. However, we want to help as much as possible.

Pages 68–70 of the **Coursework Guidance** contain advice on how to apply the mark scheme. As part of the consultancy service, you can submit up to two pieces of marked work to a consultant, who will comment on the application of the mark scheme. Feedback from teachers who've taken advantage of this service has so far been very positive and we hope it'll be useful in ensuring that marking falls within the nationally agreed standards.



At moderation stage, if work is moderated up or down, your centre will receive a report from the Moderator to explain why; we hope that these reports will help you for future delivery of the unit.

Forms and documentation

You should by now have received mark sheets (MS1s) to record your marks. You need to keep one copy, send one copy to your allocated Moderator and return one copy to us. When the Moderator has processed your marks, they will send you an email requesting a specific sample of work. When sending your work you will also need to include the Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) and a Record of Programme of Study Form (page 115 of the specification) for each of the learners whose work is part of the sample. Each learner will also need to sign a Candidate Declaration Form, but this can be retained by the centre.





Close-up on Ancient History

An exciting change

One of the most interesting changes in the new specification has been the opening up of A Level History coursework to earlier historical topics.

It's already clear that many learners have a real interest in Ancient History, and some fascinating titles have been seen in both History A and History B, proposing to investigate debates arising from our understanding of the Classical world or (for History B) the significance of ancient sites or historical characters.

This is an encouraging development, broadening the scope of study and research that sixth formers can undertake as part of their History A Levels. In the light of this evident interest, we'd like to tell you about the opportunities to capitalise on enthusiasm for Ancient History.

GCSE Ancient History: an exciting new opportunity

This summer sees the first session of the new GCSE Ancient History. This is a subject that not only taps into recent Hollywood interest in the Classical world, but also bridges the gap between Classics and History.

History teachers, experienced in the evaluation of source material, now have the opportunity to teach a fascinating new period. We've produced extensive teaching materials to support you if you wish to explore this.

Larger than life

A number of History teachers have taken up the course and appreciated the chance to work with their learners on new topics, which revolve around inspiring characters with larger than life ambitions. For example, learners can study Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Cleopatra or Agrippina.

Inspiring

The specification also gives learners the opportunity to take further topics that may have inspired them at Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3: the Egyptians, the Mycenaeans and even the Celts are all options within the controlled assessment. Here, learners can choose from six areas for study, and find something that will really engage them in a voyage of discovery.

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Close-up on Ancient History ...continued

Fascinating insights

The course is designed to give learners the chance to study formative moments in European culture, such as the early East–West conflict between Greeks and Barbarians. The third unit on ‘Women in politics’ provides a fascinating insight into questions of Roman politics, and is designed to help learners think more carefully about how Roman politics operated, and the position of women in that society.

Interesting authors

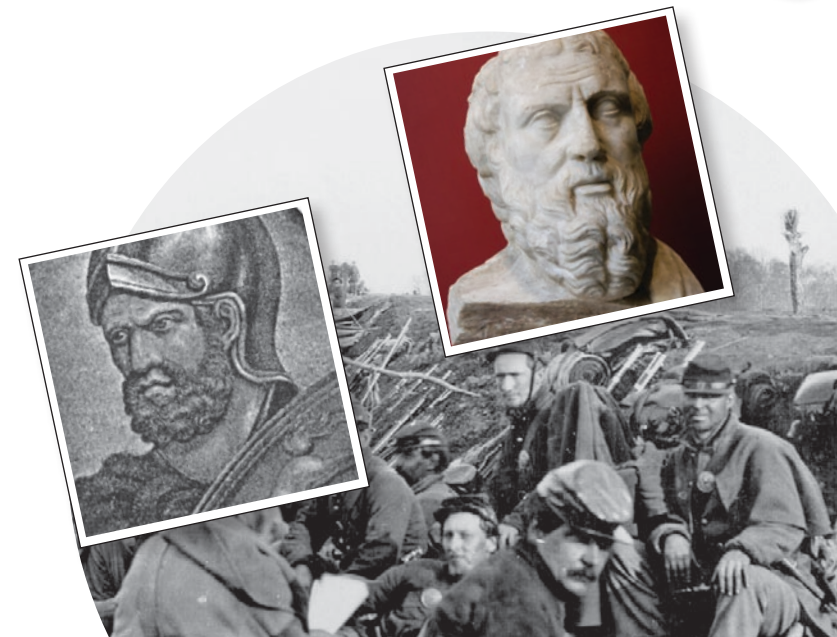
A key driving force in this specification is the idea of looking intelligently and critically at the ancient sources. Learners can study some of the most interesting ancient authors: Herodotus, Plutarch, Tacitus and even some Virgil and Horace.

They’ll also have to ask themselves what they can really learn about historical events from these writers. Could Herodotus have known what was going through Xerxes’ mind as he saw the disaster unfold at Salamis? What do Virgil and Horace tell us about the real Cleopatra – are they just political spin-doctors?

This is a subject that not only introduces learners to real characters, characters who can inspire people to think bigger, but also encourages them to evaluate what they learn. As a GCSE, it will develop in learners a deeper cultural awareness of our heritage and also an ability to see beneath the surface.

David Hodgkinson,
Chief Examiner,
GCSE Ancient History

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Q and A's with David Smith

Dr David Smith, who specialises in seventeenth and early eighteenth century British and European History, here answers a selection of questions about A Level History and his own interests. Dr Smith's recent books include *A History of the Modern British Isles, 1603–1707*, *The Stuart Parliaments, 1603–1689*, two books on Stuart history aimed at sixth formers, and a book on Oliver Cromwell and Parliament.

Dr Smith has been a Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge since 1988. He has also served as a Director of Studies in History since 1992, and as a Graduate Tutor since 2004. In that year he also won the Royal Historical Society's Alexander Prize, and Cambridge University's Thirlwall Prize for historical research.

He became an Affiliated Lecturer in the Faculty of History at Cambridge in 1995, and he has served as Convenor of the Directors of Studies in History since 2006. He also teaches regularly for Cambridge's Institute of Continuing Education, and he has been Director of the Institute's annual History Summer School since 2005. He became a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 1992, and he has been President of the Cambridge History Forum since 1997. He is also a Governor of Eastbourne College and a Trustee of Oakham School.

Q: Many History A Level students will apply to read History at university. What do you hope that your new undergraduates will bring to their studies from their A Levels?

A: Above all I hope they will bring a strong enthusiasm for the subject and a deep commitment to studying it at university level. The key is really having a passionate curiosity about the past and to enjoy finding out about it and trying to understand it. We're looking for people who can spend a lot of time doing those things without getting bored!

Q: In your view, what skills do you think young historians should work on?

A: Particularly constructing essays in a clear and logical way, and developing a lucid and concise prose style. They should also work on reading both primary and secondary sources carefully and critically, to enable them to evaluate historical evidence as effectively as possible.

Q: What, from your school days, have you found useful to you in your current research?

My teachers placed a particular emphasis on developing a clear and direct prose style. They told me to 'aim for simplicity and clarity', and I have found that helpful advice ever since. I did cover some seventeenth-century British history at A Level, but the course was primarily focused on nineteenth and twentieth century history. However, one of my History teacher's heroes was Oliver Cromwell and I think this must have proved infectious!

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Q: When did your own interest in Cromwell develop? Was it a product of your interest in the period or the political issues, or both?

A: It had begun to develop at school, but then at university I was taught by John Morrill, one of the pre-eminent Cromwellian scholars in the world, and his teaching was crucial in inspiring me to specialise in seventeenth-century British history for my PhD and beyond. My interest in Cromwell developed out of my interest in the period as a whole. In terms of political values, I feel in some ways more in sympathy with Cromwell's Royalist opponents, but it is often interesting and rewarding to study people with whom one might not agree!

Q: Is there a particular historian or other writer whose work you have found especially inspiring in the context of your own work? How did you discover him or her?

John Morrill's work has been the most important influence and inspiration. I discovered him by applying (on my A Level History teacher's advice) to read History at Selwyn College, Cambridge, where John is a long-serving Fellow and was at that time Admissions Tutor and Director of Studies in History. His infectious enthusiasm and encyclopedic knowledge really opened up early modern Britain to me, and I have been working on it ever since.

Q: Your study of Cromwell and the English Revolution seems often to delve into Cromwell's thoughts and personality. Would you like to see more biographical approaches to explaining major events in world history?

Yes, I think the biographical approach is often very illuminating, and I regret the tendency in some quarters to look down a little on biography, as though it were the poor relation of history. Not only does biography have an immediate human appeal; it often opens up the mental world of a whole society at a particular historical moment, not simply the thoughts of one individual. I acted as an Associate Editor for the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and also contributed 23 articles to it, and found these some of the most

enjoyable and rewarding pieces I have written. Trying to reconstruct the mindset of an historical figure is very challenging, and it requires a real effort of imagination and empathy to think oneself back into their mental world. In the end, that is what history is all about!

You have the choice of studying the Cromwellian period in one of three units in History A:

- Cromwell's early years are covered in the AS Period Study (F961/01) The Early Stuarts and the Origins of the Civil War 1603–42.
- The English Civil War and the Interregnum can be taught as an AS Enquiry (F963/01).
- Alternatively, Oliver Cromwell 1599–1658 can be selected as an A2 coursework option (please see the *Spotlight on F965* article).

If you offer History B, you have the option to teach The Debate over Britain's 17th Century Crises 1629–89. This should appeal to you if you want to develop your learners' understanding of the very rich historiography of the period. (Opting for this would build nicely, in a chronological sense, on the History B AS Explanations unit, Tudor Finale.)

We'll be looking to provide specialist INSET (along the lines of the 'Lead the way' events - see *Key dates* article on Cromwell and the seventeenth century in the near future, and these will be detailed in future editions of Talking History.

If you've any queries about this, or would like to get involved, please contact general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk our History team.





History at CATS College, Cambridge

In this newsletter, we'll aim to focus each time on some of the wide range of centres delivering our History A Levels and, where possible, we'd like to encourage links, correspondence and mutual support between centres. In this issue, we're looking at CATS College, Cambridge.

CATS College, Cambridge is an international sixth form, keen to promote links with other schools and colleges that teach A Level History and to share expertise in their particular areas of specialism, which focus on Medieval and American topics. Their Head of Humanities, Eric Boston, writes:

At CATS we always have a small but dedicated band of A Level History students, on average around 20 in number. They are international, mainly European, occasionally Asian. Given their linguistic needs, and cultural backgrounds, they acquit themselves well at AS and A2.

Challenges

Firstly there are many students who choose to study A Level History whose first language is not English. That said, progress is made and achievements there are. Work is done in pairs or small groups, with frequent input from the ESL (English as a Second Language) Department. There is an active input from and good interaction with the latter, which provides guideline documents. Many ESL Tutors are keen to help with reading tasks and written preparation. Work tasks are kept simple to start with but there is always an eye for growing proficiency in English leading to differentiation according to ability levels. The greatest challenge for students lies with handling both historical sources in English and the more technical language of some History books and articles. We support students in other ways; for example key words are listed, the use of a dictionary is encouraged (dictionaries are available in lessons) and students are prompted to look up words. Pleasingly, those with stronger English

help those whose English is weaker. Results reflect the success of this approach and students from Thailand, Albania, Germany and Russia have achieved good grades.

Secondly there is a need to build confidence. This is done in a number of ways. Apart from pair and group work which is much encouraged, confidence is built up by regular discussions and presentations. Some students, especially those who come to us with experience of European education, readily appreciate the needs of analysis and know how to structure work as required in A Level. In addition, wherever possible, A2 students are available to mentor AS in the development of key study skills. Regular weekly 'surgeries' reinforce progress and offer the chance for one-to-one advice and guidance.

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Opportunities to share the benefits of being in Cambridge
We are fortunate to have made good links with the History Faculty in Cambridge (and indeed beyond). As a result, in 2009, our Principal and Chief Executive agreed that CATS would become a centre to help schools and colleges specifically with Medieval and American History Studies. Our links with the University of Cambridge have resulted in a number of historians of these areas agreeing to support this venture, and thus the help we can give would focus on resources, reading ideas, some of the latest thinking, and providing updates on topic areas. Any colleague from another school or college is most welcome to make contact, or indeed to visit, and we can organise seminars (or similar) for students. Indeed, ahead, we would like to make these a regular feature.

We hope that it would be beneficial to all to make use of both our location and our contacts.

Dr Eric Boston completed a PhD on aspects of the Norman Conquest and has gone on to teach and talk about most periods of History: British, European and American.

At present, he is Head of History, Head of Academic Support and Head of the Oxbridge Programme at CATS. He regularly reviews for HISTORY and has delivered talks to branches of the Historical Association. In 2009, The Historical Association awarded him an Honorary Fellowship in recognition of services to History. He chairs and speaks at a variety of Sixth Form History Conferences, and is an experienced A Level Examiner.

You can contact Dr Eric Boston on **01223 314431** or email **eboston@catscambridge.com**

All enquiries, requests for advice and help, are most welcome.





History exhibitions

Further to the ongoing success of our 'Lead the way' INSETs held at topic-specific locations (we've so far been to the Churchill Archives and the British Museum), we've been keeping an eye out for exhibitions that may tie in with some of the topics in both History A and History B.

History B Unit F984: The Vikings in Europe 790s–1066

If your centre is in the North and you're teaching this unit, you may have already visited York for the Jorvik Viking Centre or the Yorkshire Museum.

Jorvik Viking Centre



Yorkshire Museum



However, if your centre is based closer to London, you may be interested in the forthcoming *'Treasures from Medieval York'* exhibition at the British Museum, run in partnership with the Yorkshire Museum:

British Museum



History A Unit F962/01: Exploration and Discovery c.1445–c.1545

An exhibition currently running in Bath looks as if it may be of interest to learners who are studying this topic and wish to learn more about exploration in this period.

'Treasure and Terror: Discovering the Americas in the Age of Exploration' is on at the American Museum in Britain, Greater Bath until 31 October 2010.

Bath Tourism



History A Unit F961/01: Henry VIII to Mary I, 1509–58

The British Library recently ran an exhibition on Henry VIII. It's now finished, but they have an online exhibition that also includes video extracts from David Starkey's Channel 4 series.

British Library



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If you hear about any exhibitions that could be relevant to any of the units in either the History A or B specifications, then please post details of them to our e-community.

For History A, you can subscribe here




For History B, you can subscribe here






Key dates for your calendar

INSET: 'Lead the way' events. We recently introduced a 'Lead the way' INSET programme for History to cover as many Study Topic areas as we can. Events so far have focused on Churchill (see OCR News ) , the French Revolution (at the British Museum) and Germany 1919–63 (at the Imperial War Museum).

Forthcoming events include the AS Crusades units (on 10 June at the V&A) and the A2 US Civil Rights theme (on 2 July at The American Museum in Bath). These events are designed to combine elements of exam feedback and advice, historical topic-specific workshops, and an expert lecture. Professor Jonathan Philips will speak at our Crusades day. We aim to set the events in relevant venues and where possible incorporate the expertise of museum staff (etc) into the programme.

To book your place on the Crusades events click  Look out for future 'Lead the way' events on the Tudors, Gladstone and Disraeli and other areas of the specification in 2010/11. Further details on the US Civil Rights events will be available soon.

INSET: Standard programme. The 2010/11 program of scheduled INSET sessions will be published in May. We will follow our 2009/10 pattern of offering full day events on AS (including both Period Studies and Enquiries Units), on A2 Themes and on A2 coursework.

As always, if you are not able to attend these please contact our Training division to enquire about getting a pack (available free of charge after the last scheduled session) or setting up an in-house version. This latter option can be quite costly, so we will be happy to help pool together other centres to share the costs where possible.

June 2010 examinations

History A AS Units F963–4 generic mark scheme. The new version of the mark scheme for these units has now been approved by QCDA. A draft has been on the website since December and its final version is essentially unchanged. AO1a is combined with AO1b, and similarly AO2a with AO2b.

The fully delineated version used in 2009 and in January this year was an effective assessment tool; however, some Examiners and teachers felt that its application was overly time-consuming. Trials and feedback on the new version have been positive in terms of increasing the efficiency of assessment and we hope its introduction will be welcomed. While we acknowledge that the precise identification of skills demanded by the 2009 mark scheme was welcomed by many centres (and Examiners), the ethos and demands of the question paper remain unchanged with this streamlined version. No change to learners' preparation for the examination is required therefore.

History A A2 Themes Unit F966: INSERT. We are still receiving occasional queries from centres asking whether the timeline insert will be included in this summer's Historical Themes question paper. The decision was made by the Chief Examiner not to include this insert in the new specification. He and his examining team felt that the timeline did not always work in the best interests of learners, particularly of weaker learners, for whom it could serve as a distraction. There was a larger candidature for this unit than expected in January this year, and the absence of the timeline was felt by Examiners to have had a positive influence on the overall standard.

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History B A2 question papers for controlled assessment units F985–6. All centres with summer entries for these units should recently have received a letter regarding the publication of the question paper, which can be viewed on the OCR website. The question papers will be available on the History B pages from 9am on 3 May.

January 2010 assessment materials. All this year's January question papers, mark schemes and Principal Examiners' reports are now available and can be accessed from Interchange.

Interchange 

Forthcoming textbooks. We are pleased that new textbooks published by Heinemann on mid-Tudor Crises, Churchill, the USA and the Cold War in Asia (for History A AS Enquiries Units F963–4) and British Imperialism (History B Unit F985) have been endorsed by OCR and will be printed shortly. For further information and details of forthcoming titles, click:

History A 

History B 

Customer Services contact number **0845 630 3333**.





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Telephone 01223 553998

Facsimile 01223 552627

Email general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

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