

SUBJECT AREA: HISTORY

History is the study of written records. Professional historians investigate events by piecing bits of information together from written records. The examiner will look for you to be playing the role of an historian as you present your essay. Make sure your essay focuses on a an issue or event occurring at least 10 years ago!

You will be graded on your ability to show the following four things:

1. Critical analysis : (of historical sources).

The focus of your essay on history should be on your sources. These sources should be analyzed as a literature essay would analyse a book, poem or play.

You should be able to explain the **value** of a particular source, as well as its **limitations** according to its usefulness and reliability. (For example, Who are the authors? What was their purpose in writing their material. Could they have changed any of the details in some way? How could time have affected the material? How could time affect people's interpretation of this material now?)

2. Selection and application of historical information and evidence.

All major points (especially those that may be controversial) should be substantiated by some historical source. The IB manual suggests that to have a successful essay, you should include at least 20 or 30 citations (or quotes) from your historical sources.

3. Balanced historical judgment: (Presenting at least 2 points of view on your chosen event or issue; treating each point of view by suggesting ideas that support and question each position; and thoroughly substantiating your points.)

4. Understanding of historical knowledge: as shown by explaining your event or issue in context with the general historical background from which it comes. (Make sure you include all necessary information- that which needs to be known in order to understand the issue or question you are investigating.)

Choosing your topic:

The topic you choose should focus on written records of an event, issue or document from the human past. It should be worthy of formal study--(not a trivial event, more for the mass media.) It should allow you to present many points of view and analyze sources. It should be specific enough to fit within the 4000 word limit and should focus on an event that is at least 10 years old. The IB manual reminds us that choosing a broad topic which covers a long period of time, (i.e. starting with cave man and following a topic through to modern day), is unlikely to result in a successful essay. Instead, narrowing the scope of the essay will help ensure a clear focus. It should provide opportunities for you to demonstrate knowledge of the issue, but also it should enable you to spend your "words" strengthening your critical analysis, and expressing your historical judgment and understanding. The sources you select should yield a specific discussion of many points of view, rather than a general narrative report of the issue. Avoid emphasis on textbook type materials or encyclopedias.

Examples of topics which have been used for previous essays :

- * *Varying interpretations regarding explanations of the collapse of the Mayan civilization*
- * *Varying interpretations regarding theories on the Salem witch trials*
- * *How does what Mein Kampf tells us about Hitler compare with information found about Hitler's ideas in secondary sources?*
- * *Use of the visual arts in fascist propaganda as interpreted by secondary sources*
- * *Hamilton vs Jefferson: Conflicting attitudes toward government during Washington's presidency according to primary and secondary sources*
- * *Changing views of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis over time as seen through primary and secondary sources*
- * *The "Potlatch Law": A case study on the effect of the Indians of British Columbia and the Government's effort to enforce it*
- * *Canada- U.S. Reciprocity Agreements of 1854, 1935, and 1965
Do they show a change in this relationship over time?*
- * *Varying views on Lincoln's justification for waging war to preserve the Union as substantiated by the US Constitution*

Range and variety of Sources:

Use as many different types of sources as possible, such as:

Scholarly journals	Documents	Government records
Interviews	Films & T.V.	Speeches & lectures
Magazines	Newspapers	Photographs
Artifacts	Displays	Online sources
Books	Diaries	Music, Art, and Literature

Include both primary and secondary sources.

A primary source is like an eye-witness account.

A secondary source is like hearsay. It has information written by someone who did not actually participate in the event itself.

Make sure your sources substantiate information extending to both sides of your argument.

Regarding information found online:

IBO warns us to use online sources sparingly. Though the Internet may seem more convenient, IBO stresses the importance of being careful about the quality of information found there. Frequently this information lacks accuracy, authenticity and reliability. Also occasional piracy exists in some websites. This could put your diploma at risk for malpractice penalties. Unless you are prepared to question and evaluate ideas found on the web as you present them in your essay, it is wise to stick with printed materials which respect copyrights and which have been examined for accuracy.

Treatment of the topic: (Approach to the topic)

1. **A case study:** using journals, newspapers, magazines interviews, etc. investigating a **local** issue or problem as compared with the same on a **national** level.)
2. **Primary vs secondary sources:** An investigation involving use of these sources to determine resolutions for a research question.
3. **Interpreting documents** on important issues involving events laws, acts, or treaties to show at least two points of view.
4. **Focusing on changes over time:** to analyze examples changing views on a particular event or issue.
5. **Using two or more secondary sources :** to analyze information and to explain varying interpretations of an issue.

The following are some examples of titles, research questions, and approaches to a topic that have been used in the past:

Title: Varying interpretations of the Salem witch trials

Research question: Which theory best explains the reasons these trials took place?

Approach to topic: Background reading is done to enable identification and explanation of two dominant theories as to why the trials took place. The merits of these two theories are appraised using primary and secondary data obtained about the accused and the accusers.

Title: The influence of National Socialist ideology on the German school system in the late 1930s: A case study

Research question: To what extent were Hitler's educational aims fulfilled in the Uhland Gymnasium, 1937-1939?

Approach to topic: Reading is done to enable a summarization of the National Socialist ideology and curriculum proposals. Primary sources, (Teachers' records) are used to establish how far proposed changes were put into practice in one school during 1937-39. These are analyzed, compared and contrasted to data from background reading in secondary sources

Title: Changing views on the 1962 Cuban missile crisis

Research question: How and why have explanations of the Cuban missile crisis changed since 1962?

Approach to topic: Background reading is done to get an historical introduction. The views of a number of historians are summarized in order to understand, categorize and evaluate selected explanations of the 1962 missile crisis in the 1960s, 1970's and 1980s.

Reminder: The value and reliability of sources should be an integral part of the argument for an Historical essay, especially when the authenticity of some of the sources and/or data is questionable. (See general guide on analyzing sources.) Good critical analysis can be shown through a sound assessment of source materials and by offering explanations and interpretations of the data gathered. Students will gain credit for explaining why an historian reached the interpretation, not just stating what the historian said.

FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA RELATIVE TO THE HISTORY EXTENDED ESSAY:

CRITERIA A: The research question

The research question should focus clearly on written records of the human past. Reference to the role of written sources should be evident.

CRITERIA B: The introduction

The introduction should point out the reasons for considering the chosen topic worthy of study. It should also explain succinctly the significance and context of the historical issue or event. (By that we mean the explicit background information that is needed to show the candidate's understanding of the topic.) It should not be used for lengthy irrelevant background material. It should pinpoint how the research question relates to existing knowledge on the issue. The approach to the investigation should lay out clearly the procedure to be followed for investigating the chosen issue or event.

CRITERIA C: The investigation

Students should aim to make use of both primary and secondary sources appropriate to their chosen historical issue. The data gathered should present specific evidence found in sources which supports the argument and conclusion of the essay. Proper planning of the essay should be apparent by the order and sequence of information presented. It should involve a balance of views integrating source material with direct reference to the research question. This balance of views should include not only objective factual points expressed by a number of selected views of historians, but also ideas and opinions of the student as well. All cited material should be used to support the student's own argument and not to substitute for it. A statement made by an historian should be challenged wherever there is evidence to do so. All material used from sources must be acknowledged in references. If students make use of internet-based sources, they should do so critically demonstrating a full awareness of the source's potential unreliability.

CRITERIA D: Knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

The essay should have a solid foundation of specific relevant knowledge, whose meaning is shown to be understood by the student. This knowledge can then be analyzed and, on the basis of this analysis, an argument can be formed and a conclusion to the research question can be reached.

CRITERIA E: The reasoned argument

Students should use a sequence of well planned points relative to their chosen issue to build the backbone for a developing argument. Personal views should not be stated without the support of cited evidence that presents specific details to persuade the reader of their validity. Straightforward descriptive or narrative accounts that simply present facts summarizing the issue without analysis produce more of a "report" than an "investigation". These kinds of essays do not usually advance the argument and are to be avoided.

CRITERIA F: Application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject

Students should demonstrate clear consideration of the meaning and importance of the relevant factual evidence/data produced by their research. Sources used in the research process should be evaluated and their reliability and/or limitations should be assessed.

CRITERIA G: Use of language appropriate to the subject

Students writing essays in history need to take three factors into consideration for this criterion: the language must be clear and unambiguous; historical terminology should be used; and statements should be specific and precise avoiding sweeping generalizations and unsupported assertions. This criteria is not meant to disadvantage students who are not writing in their first language-- as long as the meaning is clear, the historical content will be rewarded.

CRITERIA H: The conclusion

The most important aspect of the conclusion of a history essay is that it must reflect the evidence and the argument presented. It should also answer the research question, and if the data and analysis failed to do so, the conclusion must state this clearly, as well as describe any other problems encountered during the research process.

CRITERIA I: The formal presentation

This criterion relates to the extent to which the essay conforms to academic standards for research papers. The presentation of essays that omit a bibliography or that do not give references for quotations is deemed unacceptable (level 0). Essays that omit one of the required elements - title page, table of contents, page numbers- are deemed no better than satisfactory, (maximum level 2), while essays that omit two of these elements are deemed poor at best (maximum level 1).

Precise recording of the relevant details of all evidence significant to the research question is necessary so that complete references can be provided, including page numbers. Any particular accepted form of referencing can be used (but not more than one). References should include: Full details of the author, title of publication, publisher and date of publication must be provided in the bibliography, which should list all sources used in the essay in alphabetical order (by the author's family name). Tables, charts and photographic illustrations should appear in the body of the essay, as close as possible to their first reference. Any material that is not original must be acknowledged. If an appendix is included, it should be cross-referenced with the essay, otherwise it has little value.

CRITERIA J: The abstract

The abstract must consist of three elements: the research question (or hypothesis); the scope of the essay (that is, the main points to be investigated and the sources used to research these points); and the findings or conclusion. Students should be reminded that the abstract is not a summary or precis of the topic.

CRITERIA K: Holistic judgement

Qualities that are rewarded under this criterion:

Intellectual initiative: Ways of demonstrating this in history essays include the choice of topic and research question, locating and using sources that have been little used previously or generated for the study, (for instance, transcripts of oral interviews), and new approaches to popular topics (possibly achieved through evaluation of varying historical explanations.)

Incite and depth of understanding: These are most likely to be demonstrated as a consequence of detailed research, reflection that is thorough and well informed, and reasoned argument that consistently and effectively addresses the research question.

Problems demonstrated by students in past essays:

Following are problems reported by examiners relative to several important areas with respect to the history extended essay--Specifically, tasks regarding the use of historical sources; the display of historical knowledge and understanding; the selection and application of historical information & evidence in support of the argument and conclusion; and lastly, the demonstration of critical analysis and historical judgement:

Historical sources:

Task: Demonstrate a good awareness of the value and limitations of sources used, with detailed reference to particular sources, their usefulness and reliability.

Problems in the past: Many did not use scholarly journals which provide varying interpretations on their topics... as opposed to books or online sources which often provide only one point of view, and may or may not be reliable or accurate.

Historical knowledge and understanding:

Task: Demonstrate a very good level of historical knowledge and understanding by describing an issue, question, or event from the human past.

Problems in the past: There were good accounts with lots of relevant information, but many did not relate it to the "context" in which the event took place. Therefore the students did not show the examiner that they had a thorough understanding of their topic. (Your introduction is an appropriate place for doing this.)

Selection and application of historical information/evidence:

Task: Produce a thorough argument including at least two points of view that are fully substantiated by relevant information/evidence.

Problems in the past: Generally the amount of citations did not sufficiently substantiate the arguments presented. **20 to 30** quotes from sources would have supported claims being made and would have boosted the candidate's achievement level on this criterion.

Critical analysis and historical judgment:

Task: The essay demonstrates very good critical analysis and balanced historical judgment mentioning and interpreting data that conflicts with your case.

Problems in the Past: More successful candidates weighed their evidence and gave a balanced response to each point they made. Unsuccessful candidates tended to present a one-sided point of view.

*Remember to **cite, explain, interpret, and argue** with data from all sources. (Also 10 to 12 sources = an in depth study.)