



UPDATED GCSE Steps to Success in Higher Tier History

For first teaching from September 2014

Steps to Success in Higher Tier GCSE Updated History

Many students make the same mistakes each year in GCSE History. The steps below will help you to avoid making these common mistakes and give you the best chance of success.

- Always read the question **carefully**. You are marked on how well you answer the question asked (not what you **want** the question to be). This is why it is important to read the question slowly and take a moment to understand what it requires. Do not panic and begin immediately in an attempt to save time. If you answer the wrong question, the time you think you have saved will have been wasted anyway.
- Keep your answer **relevant**. Stick to the point of the question. Do not simply write down everything you know about the topic. Think carefully about the focus or theme of the question. Do not waste time writing details and facts that do not help to answer the question.
- Look at the **marks** allocated to each question as they are a good guide as to how many points you need to make and how much you should write.
- Remember to **choose** your questions carefully and **stick** with your choice. What often happens is that students decide they are doing the 'wrong question' and after they have answered a substantial proportion of it, start doing another one. This leaves them with very little time to develop their answers. To avoid this, briefly plan your response by jotting down a few points to see which question you can answer best before making your decision and then stick with your choice.
- Watch your **timing** in the papers.

Paper 1 is **2 hours** long. You have to answer **2** questions in Section A and **1 question with 5 parts** in Section B. Since both Sections are worth **equal** marks, you should spend **1 Hour** on Section A and **1 Hour** on Section B.

Paper 2 is **1 hour 15 minutes** long. There is **1** source question and **1** essay question.

Section A - You should spend **10 minutes** reading the sources before you begin and **45 minutes** answering the source questions.

Section B - You should spend **20 minutes** on the essay question.

Paper 1

Section A - This paper requires you to provide factual detail in your answers

Question (a)

You will be asked to describe two reasons for actions, causes of an event in the past and your answer requires some development. You need to make sure you understand the meaning of key terms in History such as cause, effect, reason, impact, and consequence. You should aim to **write one detailed** sentence on each of your points.

Questions (b)

You will be asked to explain **how** or **why** something happened. This means that you need to make your point and explain it using your own knowledge about the event. You need to focus on the events and explain the way something happened or the reasons something happened. The question is asking you to write a paragraph. Keep your answer focused on the exact question and try to provide specific detail in your answer.

Question (c)

In the Germany, Russia and USA options you will be asked to look at **how/why** or **how and why** something happened. Remember:

Why asks you to explain the **reasons**, for example, this happened because...

How asks you to explain the way it happened, for example, it took place on the 30th June 1934...

You need to provide a more detailed answer to this question. You will get **two** bullet points to help you with your answer. You need to make sure that all your answer is relevant to the question asked. **Do not simply write a paragraph on each bullet point without linking it back to the question.**

Not all bullet points require exactly the same length of writing. It depends on the topic asked and the extent of the part played by each bullet point. A consistent error in this question is that some students do not allocate their time correctly and concentrate so much on the first bullet point that they have no time for the second. Both bullet points must be covered to get a good **Level 3 mark**. Use the bullet points to structure your response; if you know more about the topic and it is relevant to the question make sure you include this in your answer. Do not simply write a story of all you know about what happened. Remember that the question is asking you to **explain** an event.

Section B - You have to answer 1 question with 5 parts and you should spend 1 hour on this section.

Question (a) (i)

In this question you have to use source material and your own knowledge to **describe** an event in the past. This answer should be a short paragraph of about 5–6 sentences using information from the source **and** your own knowledge to support your answer.

Question (a) (ii)

In this question you have to use source material and your own knowledge to **explain** an event in the past. This answer should be a more detailed and developed paragraph of about 7–8 sentences using information from the source **and** your own knowledge to support your answer.

Question (a) (iii)

In this question you will have to use source material and your own knowledge to reach a **judgement** about an event in the past. You will be asked 'How far do you agree' with the view given. You can agree/disagree or say that you agree in some ways but not in others.

The key thing is to ensure that you give your own view, for example, I agree that Chamberlain may have thought that introducing conscription would have been a difficult issue in Northern Ireland during the Second World War as there were tensions around this issue. He says **in Source C that 'it will only be an embarrassment'**. He was afraid that that it would cause problems with De Valera and the Catholic Church so perhaps this is why he was afraid to push the issue. He also did not want to increase tensions further. Nationalists organised a protest rally at the City Hall and **I agree** that this could have led to more protests and problems in Northern Ireland if the Unionists had pushed for conscription **but I do not think** that it would have been an embarrassment. In fact, **I think** it was more likely to have increased tension, something which the British did not need during the Second World War.

Question (b)

You will be asked to explain events in the past. This means that you need to make your point and explain it using your own knowledge to support your answer. You should try to include relevant detail to show that you know the topic.

Question (c)

You will be asked to explain how far you agree with an interpretation of an event in the past. This is like a mini-essay. You need to provide a more detailed answer to this question. Try not to write a story of what happened. You have to show if you **agree** or **disagree** with the statement. Remember that you are trying to **explain** an event as fully as you can.

For example: How effective was internment in dealing with the political situation in Northern Ireland in the 1970s?

The best way to structure your answer is like a traditional essay - **introduction, main body and conclusion**. In this question briefly set the scene, explaining why internment was introduced. Then divide your main essay into the ways it could be judged to have been effective and then the ways it was seen to be ineffective. **In your conclusion make sure that you give your view or judgement as this is a key aspect of the question.** For example, **I would argue that internment** was not as effective as the British Government had hoped. Instead of easing the tension it actually made the situation worse. IRA membership grew and Loyalist violence increased. In fact, the Prime Minister himself stated that internment had been unsuccessful in stopping the Provisional IRA which **shows that it was not effective in dealing with the political situation in the 1970s.**

In **this** question **5 additional marks** are available for your use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Paper 2

There are **two** sections in this paper. **Section A** is **source work**. You have to answer **4** questions based on **4** sources. **Section B** is an **essay question**. You have to answer **1** question from a choice of **2**.

Section A - Source work

Question 1 (a)

This is a straightforward question in which you are asked to read and pick out information from Source A about a particular issue. In this question you should go through the source line by line; if you do this, you will not miss anything.

Write a paragraph using clips from the source to support what you are saying. **For example**, Poland and Romania had been used by the Germans as a way to attack the USSR when they invaded in 1941. The source tells us that this worried Stalin and made him determined to protect the USSR in case this happened again. Stalin believed that the best way to do this was to have governments which were 'friendly and loyal to the USSR'. This explains why he was keen to spread communism to the states of Eastern Europe after the Second World War.

Question 1 (b)

You will be asked to read **2** sources. You will be looking at the sources to see if they agree or disagree. You must mention specifically where there is agreement **and** disagreement. You can also show that one source mentions a particular point which the others fails to mention and you will be given credit for this. One source may support another completely, partially or not at all. Provide specific references to both sources. You need to cover points of agreement and disagreement to get into **Level 3**. You should Ping Pong, for example, **Source B** shows that Stalin had spread communism to some of the states of Eastern Europe, including Poland and Romania and this **agrees with Source A** which says that 'we must make sure these countries are ruled by governments loyal to the USSR.'

Question 1 (c)

This question will ask you to assess the reliability **and** usefulness of a source. You will need to cover both aspects to get into **Level 3**. **You should ensure that you give your judgement also to explain if you think the source is useful and/or reliable**. You need to look at the strengths **and** weaknesses of the source.

Reliability - To measure reliability you should think about the following:

Author - Who wrote the source? Was it an historian, an eyewitness, a reporter? Do you trust them?

Date - When was the source written? Was it written at the time or a long time after the event? How will this affect the reliability of the source?

Motive - Why did the author produce this source? Was it to influence or to inform?

Intended audience - Who was reading or hearing this source?

Tone and content - Is the source exaggerated, critical, angry, emotional?

Type of source - Is it a newspaper article, extract from a History textbook, diary etc.?

All the above factors will affect the reliability of a source. **Avoid saying** that ‘the source is reliable’ or ‘the source is unreliable’ **without** giving reasons why you have reached this conclusion. Remember, although you must reach a conclusion as to the source’s reliability, it is the process you go through in order to reach this conclusion that is important. Discuss the source’s author/date/intended audience/tone and content, **and then** make your judgement as to its reliability.

In order to judge how **useful** a source is for a purpose, you must assess its limitations. You will be asked to assess the usefulness of a source in relation to an event in the past. It is very important that you remember to comment on how useful this source is in relation to this particular event. You can say that a source is useful because it shows a point of view and gives information; maybe the date is significant. Sometimes a source will not tell you very much and you can say that it leaves out some points and then give examples. Remember that all sources are useful. **Even if a source is biased, it can still be of use as long as the historian is aware that what it is saying or showing may be biased. Remember that no one source can tell you everything about the topic.**

For example: This source is useful in telling me why Khrushchev changed his policy in Eastern Europe. The **content** tells me that he did this because he ‘wanted to keep control’ and he did it for the safety of the USSR. He also said that he did it ‘to keep the support of the people of Eastern Europe’. The **date** makes the source useful as it is from the time when Khrushchev became leader of the USSR. The **author** also makes this source useful because it is the leader of the USSR speaking and he would know why he was trying to keep control over Eastern Europe. However, the **usefulness of the source is reduced** because it does not mention that after Stalin died some countries wanted to break free from the USSR. It does not tell us about the events in Poland or Hungary in 1956 or that Khrushchev sent troops into Hungary to force it to remain part of the USSR. **We can raise questions about the reliability of this source.**

This source may not be very reliable because Khrushchev may not be telling the full truth to his government and this can affect usefulness of this source. Khrushchev was leader of the USSR in 1956, having taken over following the death of Stalin. In this source he may be trying to convince the people of Eastern Europe that they have nothing to fear. He is speaking to his new government and he may want it to see him as different from Stalin. He is trying to justify the reasons for his policy. In 1956, he condemned the actions of Stalin in his Secret Speech and in this source he says ‘Stalin treated people cruelly’; but he was a member of Stalin’s government during this time and he may be trying to make himself look good and shift all the blame onto Stalin. This may well be propaganda so that the people in Eastern Europe think that life will be better, but the truth was that nothing much changed under Khrushchev, as events in Hungary showed in 1956. **I think this source is useful but is not very reliable in explaining Khrushchev’s change in policy.**

Question 1 (d)

The final question asks you to use the **sources and your own knowledge** to make a judgement about an interpretation of an event in the past. An **interpretation** is someone's view of what happened, or why something happened or the consequences of it. Your task is to analyse and evaluate the sources provided in order to justify if you accept the interpretation. **A judgement is essential in this answer.** You must include **all** the sources in your answer otherwise you will lose marks. You must not forget to **use your own knowledge**. Try to structure your answer in an essay format. Do not go through the sources one by one just repeating what they say, as you will gain few marks with this approach. You need to bring in your own knowledge throughout your answer. Try to include issues which are relevant but are not mentioned in the sources.

A sample answer is written below:

There is no doubt that security and protecting the USSR from a future attack was one reason for the actions and policies of the USSR towards Eastern Europe after the Second World War. However, it could be argued that there were other reasons for the policy of the USSR and the takeover of Eastern Europe after 1945.

Source A agrees with the interpretation as Stalin, writing in 1946 is explaining his plans for Eastern Europe. **He will be keen to show only the soviet perspective.** He is saying that the reasons for his actions in Eastern Europe are because the USSR had been invaded by Germany and he needs to make sure this did not happen again. He said that to stop this from happening he needed to **“make sure these countries are ruled by governments loyal to the USSR”**. **Stalin had his own reasons for wanting a buffer zone and he is saying that security was the main reason for taking over Eastern Europe. He does not mention wanting to spread communism or keeping Germany weak. This may have been a key reason for Stalin as twice in the twentieth century Russia had been invaded by the Germans and they passed through Eastern Europe on their way to attack the USSR.**

Source B disagrees with the interpretation. **It is a cartoon published in a British paper and will be biased against the USSR.** It is showing Stalin's actions in Eastern Europe as an attempt to spread communism into countries in Western Europe. It shows that some countries are already under Soviet control and others like Sweden and France have a question mark over them, showing that they might be Stalin's next target. **Some countries like Greece and Turkey were already seeing communist parties increasing in influence and Britain and France were very worried that Stalin was spreading communism further into Western Europe. The presence of the Red Army in Eastern Europe after the war helped Stalin to pursue his policy of security, as well as spread communism.**

Source C gives a very different view but also stresses the importance of security and so **partially agrees with the interpretation.** **The author of this is Khrushchev, who became leader of the USSR after Stalin,** and he is criticising Stalin here for his treatment of the people in Eastern Europe. **He wants to make himself look good and Stalin look bad.** Khrushchev explains that 'we have to keep control of Eastern Europe for our own safety' and he also says that the USSR had to 'keep the support of the people of Eastern Europe'. **I know that Khrushchev was prepared to allow some changes in Eastern Europe, as was seen by the protests in Poland. However, when Hungary threatened to leave the Warsaw Pact, Khrushchev reacted very strongly and sent in tanks and stopped the people rebelling against Communist rule.** He wanted to show the people a different style of communism through his policy of de-Stalinization, but his goal was to keep control for reasons of security.

Source D also agrees with the interpretation. The historian is giving a factual account and this source is explaining that the USSR was 'worried that the changes taking place in Czechoslovakia might spread to other countries' and was concerned that 'Czechoslovakia would try to replace communism with democracy'. This was why Brezhnev decided to invade Czechoslovakia to prevent the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. **I know that Brezhnev went on to introduce the Brezhnev Doctrine to try to keep control over Eastern Europe.**

I would agree with the view given but I would suggest that it was only one reason to explain the policy of the USSR after the Second World War. **In my opinion** it was a determination to keep a buffer zone for security, a desire to spread communism and finally the need to challenge the USA's determination to spread capitalism and destroy communism which all explain the policies and actions of the various Soviet leaders after the Second World War.

Colour Code:

Explaining the view

Using the Source

Using my own knowledge

Section B - Essay Writing

You have to answer **1** question out of a choice of **2**. In this section you will get a question asking you to look at the change in relations between the USA and USSR over a period of time.

Remember, when writing an essay it is not just a matter of telling the story of what happened. If the question is on causes, you must make connections and construct an explanation of why something happened. This usually involves more than one reason; most events take place as a result of several different factors acting together at the same time. If a question is on consequences or effects, you must consider what happened because of these factors/reasons; usually more than one group is affected and in different ways.

In **this** question **5 additional marks** are available for your use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

- Good grammar, spelling and punctuation are important. Examiners know that you are writing your answers under pressure and occasional mistakes in grammar and spelling are understandable. However, frequent grammatical errors and simple spelling mistakes are seen by examiners as a sign of carelessness.
- Take care with your handwriting - an examiner must be able to read it.
- Keep calm. Examiners are not out to trick you. You will have prepared well for the examination, so use it as your opportunity to show the examiner all you know. Remember, **'practice makes perfect'**. You can find past papers and other support materials at www.ccea.org.uk/history. Try some past papers as this is a good way to test your knowledge and for you to get used to the timings and layout of the examinations.