

for 2 years. At Haileybury, these young men — aged between 16 and 24 — had the opportunity to learn law, Oriental languages and history.

How much educational value they imbibed, however, is questionable. As David Gilmour has argued: 'The camaraderie of the river or the cricket pitch or even of the pipe and tankard of claret allowed men to get to know each other and measure their merits and defects.' Between 1808 and 1822, the college erupted into riots at least five times. The professionalism the EIC sought to instil in its young employees was patchy at best, and encouraged thuggish resistance at worst.

Wider society

Nor did the EIC limit itself to the education of its own employees. In 1813, it established a fund of 100,000 rupees per year to be dedicated to the Christian education of Indian subjects. In 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay, a senior lawyer in India, wrote:

'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern — a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.'

A desire to make Indians 'English' by education paid little heed to their indigenous traditions or culture.

This shift in emphasis from trade to education would define the EIC during the last 20 years of its existence. There was a turn away from economic justifications for colonisation towards evangelical, educational and racist arguments that would define British rule in India until independence in 1947.

Further reading

University of Warwick and University College London, 'The East India Company at Home'. Available at: <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah>.

Universities of Edinburgh and Leeds, 'Becoming Coolies', research website at www.coolitude.shca.ed.ac.uk.

Dalrymple, W. (4 March 2015) 'The East India Company: the original corporate raiders', the *Guardian*. Available at: www.tinyurl.com/og74u7u.

British Library, *Untold Lives*. Visit blog.bl.uk/untoldlives and search for 'East India Company'.

Conclusion

Confining the EIC to its economic impact alone means we narrow our understanding. By examining the corporate qualities of the EIC alongside its military, social, racial and educational features, we see the many ways in which it operated.

Given that it required regular bailouts from the British government and rarely ran a profit, the company cannot be regarded as particularly economically successful. By other measures, it fares even worse. The EIC emerges as a cultural and social failure: dangerous for the men it employed, institutionally racist, and controlling of its employees' sexual practices. If the EIC resembled a modern corporation, it was not an ethical one and this should give pause anyone who seeks to replicate or imitate it.

Ellen Filor is the Susan Manning postdoctoral fellow at the University of Edinburgh.

Using this article in your exam

How could this article be useful in your exam?

Students studying the rise, decline and fall of the British empire (a specification area offered by all the main awarding bodies), will inevitably look at the role of the East India Company. Ellen Filor's article raises some important issues about the impact of the institution, with a spotlight on the extent to which it was innovative, successful and beneficial. Also of note is the way in which a modern concept — 'multinational corporation' — is used as a measuring stick to assess the significance of the company. This ought to raise debate in class over the appropriateness of using an anachronism to make a judgement about the contribution of an organisation to Britain's past.

Reading effectively and efficiently

Try our strategy for making history reading stimulating, enjoyable and more effective

Instead, students often require assistance with the skills needed to analyse texts effectively.

General guidelines

Aim

Be clear in your mind about why you have been guided to read a particular text. It could be to get a general overview of a topic or to gain a sense of how historians disagree over certain issues. If you know what you are looking for in the text this will make reading more meaningful and you are more likely to stay on task.

In preparation for examinations students are expected to have read widely. Teachers often express their dismay that, despite issuing reading lists and providing general guidance about what to read, students still fail to take the reading of history texts seriously. However, it is apparent that this is not due to a lack of interest.

Table 1 A suggested table of reading speeds and their purpose

General reading standard	Speed (words per minute)	Description of speed	Projected understanding of text (%)	Purpose and challenge of text
Slow	Less than 50 up to 180	Crawling to coasting along	100	Careful focus and assimilation of very challenging text
Normal	Over 180 up to 350	Coasting to starting to race along	70–80	Gathering some key information and establishing meaning of moderately challenging to easy text
Fast	Over 350 up to 550	Racing along	Less than 50	Skimming to gain an overview and/or reviewing and recalling. Text might be very challenging or moderately easy.
Supersonic	Over 550	Something of a blur	Less than 10	Scanning to locate key words and terms and to get a quick feel for how text is organised. Text might be very challenging or moderately easy.

Source: adapted from Cloake, J. A., Crinnion, V. and Harrison, S. M. (1987) *The Modern History Manual*, Framework Press Limited.

Flexibility

Adopt a flexible approach to reading. Different types of text require different reading skills. Some texts only need skimming, while others demand slower, more meticulous attention. It is helpful, in this respect, to be aware of your present, 'normal' reading speed. This speed might then need to vary according to the nature of the reading that you are expected to complete (see Table 1). To calculate your reading speed use the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{number of pages read} \times \text{number of words per 'average' page}}{\text{number of minutes spent reading}}$$

Activity

From the article on page 24 of this issue, consider how useful it is to view the East India Company as the 'first multinational company'.

Sampling

Always start reading by getting a general perspective of the text. Quickly look at the title, subtitles, the contents list, chapter headings, section headings, the index, any publisher's blurb and any information about the provenance of the text (especially the author's background). This will help you decide how much of the text is relevant and fit for purpose.

Depth

Read as much as you can about any one topic. To gain in-depth knowledge and understanding always start with basic, general pieces of writing before moving on to more challenging material. To gain a breadth in knowledge and understanding, read texts written by a range of historians (at least two that are said to have opposing views about a topic).

Bring it to life

Use your imagination when reading. Use your sensory perception to bring text alive. For example, it can be helpful to visualise a place, event or person to add meaning to what you are reading.

Active reading

Finally, develop an active approach to reading. Be prepared to highlight/underline key points in a text, to write summary notes or questions in the margins of text and to think critically about what you are looking at. A fair bit of what you read is unlikely to be true; give consideration to how you can check on the validity and reliability of written matter even if it appears to be convincing. Be wary of factual material that is full but unreferenced and presented in such a way as to mislead.

A strategy for reading history texts

Being an effective reader means looking at a range of text to fulfil a particular purpose. Being an efficient reader means analysing and evaluating text in a flexible manner within sensible time boundaries. To be both, developing a reading strategy based on stages can be very useful.

Stage 1

Know what you want from the text that has been recommended and/or given to you. If you are not sure about this then ask your teacher or lecturer about the purpose of the reading exercise.

Activity

Why might a student who is studying the civil-rights movement in the USA be guided to read the article, on page 2 of this issue, on the Black Panthers? What kind of added dimension might this article provide?



Stage 2

Move on to finding, in general, the information you need. Do this by:

- Using prior knowledge of a topic, however basic, to make connections with the text.

- Skim the text in a few minutes: identify key words and phrases in the text (they are often repeated). Using a finger, pen/pencil or ruler as a guide/pointer can be effective when doing this. Use the sampling suggestion above to gain a general perspective of the text.

Activity

Read the article on Russia in 1917 on page 8 of this issue. Identify and list key words and phrases to gain an overview of what is discussed. Write a list of key points that you think summarises the thrust of the article.

Stage 3

Once you have gained an overview move on to interpreting, selecting, analysing and evaluating the text.

- Identify key points. Most historians will make a key point per paragraph and this is usually stated at the beginning. The point will then be explained and supported with evidence in the form of examples. Invariably, this is followed by some balanced analysis and evaluation of the point and evidence and finished with a link sentence to the next paragraph.
- Separate key points from subsidiary points.
- Extract and store (mentally and/or in note form) only information which is directly relevant to Stage 1.
- Make connections between what you think you already know and what you are reading. Identify any similarities and differences that emerge.
- Use a question framework to analyse and evaluate the validity and reliability of the text. This should focus on questions such as 'what...?', 'who...?', 'when...?', 'where?', 'why...?' and 'with what consequences...?' (the 'w' questions).
- Be wary of how language is used. Some historians use words rather loosely (for example, 'fascism' to describe 'Nazism'). Others use a large amount of technical terminology which you will need to reflect

on and define for yourself (for example, economic, class, autocracy, constitution, liberal democracy). Be especially aware of how labels and metaphors can mislead or prove difficult to interpret (for example, what does the label 'Industrial Revolution' mean with respect to time and place? What did Trotsky mean when he said that 'war is a great locomotive of history'?).

Activity

Interpret, analyse and evaluate the article on the Western Rebellion, 1549 on page 18 of this issue, by using the guidelines set out above. How useful is the article to students studying Tudor rebellions? It is focused on only one rebellion so does that mean it is of very limited use?

Stage 4

Finally, you need to test whether Stages 1 to 3 have been effectively completed by reviewing what you have read and then seeing whether you can recall it before applying it to a historical problem.

- Review and reword any underlining, margin notes and fuller notes to ensure they are relevant, make sense and, most importantly, have been stated in your own words. Being able to précis someone else's ideas in language that you understand will be a sure-fire way of ensuring that you have assimilated what is important and relevant.
- Use recall 'tricks' to prove that you have absorbed what you have read. For example, can you accurately summarise the key points in a section of a chapter (depending how long it is) on an index card, table or chart without looking back at the original text?
- Use any guidelines you have been given about how to integrate material you have read into essays. In particular, make sure that the authors of key ideas that you use are acknowledged through referencing and that ideas are used as support material for your own arguments. Students too often use quotes or outlines of historians' views to illustrate rather than as evidence.

Activity

Read the article on the Falklands War on page 12 of this issue adopting Stages 1 to 3 of the strategy. Review (rewrite and reorder) any notes you have made. Go over these notes one more time before attempting the following:

Produce a detailed mind map that shows the causes, course and consequences of the Falklands War. Indicate 'most important/least important' causes and consequences on the map.

Conclusion

Adopting this strategy may seem time consuming and laborious (it is!) but persistence with it pays off. Over time you will gain a greater awareness of how to apply different reading approaches to different types of text and how this will start to make reading easier and more enjoyable. You will also notice how reading more and more improves the quality of your writing and how this will lead to a greater chance of success in final examinations.

Andy Holland is an experienced history teacher.