

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE History

Other Guidance:

Advice from the Chief Examiner on the assessment of
Historical Interpretation (AO2b) in A2 History



Historical Interpretations at A2: Assessment Objective A02b

Teachers of the AQA History GCE History specification for A2 examinations from 2010 onwards will be aware of the demands of AO2b, as set out on page 65 of the specification document.

The generic mark scheme for A2 refers to an awareness of historical interpretations as one of the criteria for the judgement of a level.

Please be aware:

- The first point of reference for a decision on the award of a level will be the understanding of the question, the knowledge displayed and the analysis and synoptic links between ideas, arguments and information in the answer.
- Analysis and argument will, of necessity, show some understanding of historical interpretations and therefore an essay which displays some of the former qualities will be considered for an award of Level 3 or higher.
- In Levels 4 and 5 candidates will display an awareness of historical interpretations as they examine events, developments and issues from a variety of angles. One way in which they may reinforce their understanding of these different viewpoints is to refer to the views of historians, but this is not essential. It is the evidence on which the historians' views are based that is crucial. Understanding will always be more highly rated than name-dropping.
- Some issues, events and developments studied at A2 have provoked important historiographical debate and where this is the case, it would be expected that at A2 students would be introduced to 'real' historians' interpretations in their preparation of the content of their unit. Such an approach should help students to form their own judgements and enhance the quality of their arguments, helping them to demonstrate their historical understanding.
- Some issues, events and developments have not given rise to specific historiographical controversy and whilst questions will be worded in a way which will allow students to debate issues, candidates will never be obliged to introduce names, quotations or refer specifically to schools of historical thought in an answer.
- In short, awareness of historical interpretation is not the same as awareness of historiography. When appropriate and properly used to enhance an argument, historiography will be rewarded, but whether reference to historiography is appropriate depends on the question itself and it is not a requirement, even for the highest marks.