



STUDENT GUIDE TO

HISTORY A-LEVEL

AT MAIDSTONE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Below is a summary of what the department offers from the **Edexcel** syllabus range.

NB. From September 2015 all new History A-Levels had to fulfil the following criteria:

- Each AL course must cover a minimum 200 year time span (MGS cover 1785-1990)
- Each course must have a British element (MGS teaches Britain 1785-1870)
- Each course must have a coursework unit

What do Students need to know, or be able to do, before taking this course?

To study A-Level History you need an interest in the world around you, an enquiring mind and the ability to weigh up different evidence or arguments. You do not need to have GCSE History in order to study A-Level History. However, you may find it helpful, as the A-Level builds on the skills developed at GCSE such as the communication of historical knowledge, the ability to analyse historical sources and an awareness of different historical interpretations and perspectives.

What will I learn?

Paper 1: Breadth Study with Interpretations 30% A-Level

Taking Option 1D: – Britain c1785-c1870: democracy, protest & reform

This option comprises a study in breadth, in which students will learn about the process of change in Britain in the given period and the extent to which popular pressure, protest and cooperation were responsible for political, economic and social change.

The key themes covered are:

- 1) The growth of parliamentary democracy c1785-c1870
- 2) Industrialisation & protest c1785-c1870
- 3) Unionism & cooperation c1785-c1870
- 4) Poverty and pauperism c1785-c1870

This option also contains a study in depth of historical interpretations which is contextualised by, and runs parallel to, the above themes. The study will be:

- 5) The reason for the abolition of the slave trade at the end of the period c1785-1807

How Assessed: **Written exam: 2 hours 15 minutes (60 marks available)**

Students answer three questions: one from Section A, B and C.

Section A: answer one essay from two which cover at least 10 years on the above themes (1-4)

Section B: answer one essay from two which cover at least one third of the timespan of the above themes (1-4)

Section C: One compulsory question that assesses the ability to analyse and evaluate historical interpretations about the abolition of the Slave Trade. Students will have to analyse two historical extracts of about 350 words in total.

Paper 2: Depth Study 20% A-Level

Option 2D1: Unification of Italy c1830-1870

This option comprises a study in depth of the Italian states from the 1830 revolution, through the growing economic and political dominance of Piedmont, to the creation and consolidation of the Kingdom of Italy in the years 1861-70.

Students will gain an in-depth understanding of the nature and extent of change within the Italian states, and the extent to which unity within Italy was established by its leaders rather than by the growth of Italian nationalism.

Key topics are:

- 1) Challenges to the restored order and the failure of revolution c1830-49
- 2) The rise of Piedmont 1849-56
- 3) The creation of the Kingdom of Italy 1856-61
- 4) Consolidating the Kingdom of Italy 1861-70

How Assessed: **Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes (40 marks available)**

Students answer two questions, one from Section A and one from Section B.

Section A: compulsory question based on two contemporary sources of approximately 400 words in total.

Section B: answer one essay from two assessing the understanding of this depth study.

Paper 3: Themes in Breadth with Aspects in Depth (30% A-Level)

Option 37.2: Germany 1871-1990: United, divided and re-united

This option comprises two parts:

- 1) the 'Aspects in breadth' focus on long-term changes and contextualise
- 2) the 'Aspects in depth' which focus in detail on key episodes.

Together, the breadth and depth topics explore the ways in which Germany evolved as a new state in Europe undergoing dramatic changes of fortune, set within broader long-term social and economic developments (after 1945, these focus on West Germany). A dynamic empire ended in a brutal war and defeat; out of the ashes of Imperial Germany, first a democratic republic and then an extraordinary dictatorship came into being, followed once again by democracy and finally a new unity in 1990.

- a) Aspects in breadth: prosperity & social change 1871-1990
 - 1) Social change in Germany & West Germany
 - 2) Economic change in Germany & West Germany

- b) Aspect in depth: different approaches to the problems of difference
 - 1) Ruling the Second Reich, 1871-79
 - 2) The birth of democratic Germany 1917-19
 - 3) A new Reich 1933-35
 - 4) Establishing & ruling the new Federal Republic 1949-60
 - 5) Reunification & recreating a united Germany 1989-90

How Assessed: Written exam: 2 hours 15 minutes (60 marks available)

Students answer three questions: one from Section A, B & C.

Section A: compulsory question assessing a contemporary source of about 350 words.

Section B: answer one from two essays assessing depth of understanding.

Section C: answer one from two essays assessing breadth of understanding, with each question covering at least 100 years.

Paper 4: Coursework (20% A-Level) The Radicalisation of Germany 1935-41:

Students will be provided with a short skills-based course of study that covers the work of historians in creating interpretations and show students how to plan and produce long essays. An overview of Germany 1935-41 will be given and then students will complete a single assignment of between 3,000-4,000 words on a question set by the centre. MGS will create coursework assignments on a selection of different interpretations of Germany 1935-41, for example covering controversies such as:

- Hitler's economic policies 1935-41: economic miracle or looming disaster?
- Hitler's foreign policy 1935-41: carefully planned or opportunistic?
- How efficient was the Nazi system of Government 1935-41?
- To what extent and why did anti-Semitism radicalise in Germany 1935-41?
- How popular was Hitler 1935-41?
- To what extent did Hitler achieve a social revolution in Germany 1935-41?

The assignment will assess the ability to carry-out a historical enquiry, analysing and evaluating historical interpretations, and organising and communicating the findings. Each student must find and evaluate in their assignment at least five relevant works to the chosen question to help them form a view about the interpretation under discussion. Students will have to complete 'a **resource card**' which records historical sources used.

How Assessed:

The coursework essay will be marked out of 40, assessed by the teacher and moderated by Edexcel.

SUMMARY

An AS-Level Qualification is still available (worth 40% of an A-Level):

History AS students will study the same Paper 1 and 2 topics as A-Level students, but not take Paper 3 and the coursework unit. AS questions, sources and markschemes are not as demanding as those assessing A-Level students.

Teaching Methods

A variety of teaching methods will be adopted, as well as a range of teaching material used; we aim to achieve "interactive learning" with critical discussion of material, analytical commentary of events, examination of primary and secondary accounts, awareness of changing historiography, comparisons of contemporary views and historical opinions etc.

Work-load

Of course, it is in the nature of this subject, that you will be expected to research and read around the subject matter. You will consolidate your essay style and sourcework evaluation, so that you can communicate your knowledge and understanding of history in a clear and effective manner. Giving help to students in planning and writing essays is an integral part of the course.

You will be given regular assignments (eg. Note-taking, essays, evaluation of documents, critique of articles/chapters, preparation of talks, formal debates etc). It is expected that you will be prepared to spend **4 hours per week** on History assignments. The department has a wide selection of paper and electronic resources to assist the required independent learning.

Why do History A-Level at MGS?

- a) **The History Department at MGS** has a great deal of expertise; its teachers are enthusiastic, and thoroughly professional. We get very impressive results, for example, since 2007 72% of our 478 students have achieved A*-B grades at A-Level with 10% achieving the prestigious A* qualification. Many of our students go on to study History (and related subjects) at top universities.
- b) **History A-Level in general:** History is a respected subject, regarded as a 'heavy-weight' subject which promotes and develops many wide-ranging skills that are very useful in many Higher Education Courses and areas of employment. A-Level History will give you a number of skills relevant to many types of employment, such as the ability to seek information and to analyse it in order to identify facts and motives and to present information clearly for others to understand. The skills you will obtain through studying history will be useful in a number of careers, either directly related to history (eg working in museums, galleries, heritage sites, record offices and archives, and teaching), or **in areas such as law, journalism, accountancy, television and radio broadcasters, national and local government and the civil service** etc.

I look forward to you joining us.

GM Walker, Head of History