

Preparing for History A Level

At A Level we will be studying the OCR History course (H505). You can view the full specification here - <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/170128-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-history-a-h505.pdf>

We recommend that you do this to get an impression of what specific content we will cover, but you don't have to read the whole thing! We will study the following units, so you should focus on those pages:

Y112: Britain 1900–1951

Y221: Democracy and Dictatorships in Germany 1919-1963

Y306: Rebellion and Disorder under the Tudors 1485-1603

Y100: A coursework essay to be completed in at the end of Year 12/beginning of Year 13

We encourage you to contact Miss Wenlock and Mr. Brown for recommendations on reading, watching and listening for the above units.

In addition, it would also be extremely beneficial for you to take the following free 3 week course: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/learning-from-the-past>

You can study from home for approximately 4 hours a week and will get to grips with some of the basics of historical research.

On the following pages you will also find some tasks we would like you to complete to the best of your ability. The aim is to help you prepare for the transition to Year 12, and to bridge the gap between GCSE and A Level.

Using primary sources

Historians use primary sources (any information or evidence produced at the time of the event studied) to interpret the past. These are rarely straightforward, as in doing so we have to take into account the intentions of the source's creator and how this might affect the reliability in answering certain questions. However, no primary source is useless and **all** sources can tell us everything. Even a speech by a Nazi leader, whilst full of exaggerations and distortions, is valid evidence for how the Nazis tried to win support. In other words, there are no poor sources, only poor questions.

Below is a piece of writing by Josef Goebbels in 1927, during which he attacks the Treaty of Versailles. Read through the source and then answer the questions underneath.

“The German people are an enslaved people. Under international law, Germany is lower than the worst Negro colony in the Congo. One has taken all sovereign rights from us. We are just good enough that international capital allows us to fill its money sacks with interest payments. That and only that is the result of a centuries-long history of heroism.

Have we deserved it? No, and no again! Therefore we demand that a struggle against this condition of shame and misery begin and that the men in whose hands we put our fate must use every means to break the chains of slavery.

Three million people lack work and sustenance. The officials, it is true, work to conceal the misery. They speak of measures and silver linings. Things are getting steadily better for them, and steadily worse for us. The illusion of freedom, peace and prosperity that we were promised when we wanted to take our fate in our own hands is vanishing. Only complete collapse of our people can follow from these irresponsible policies.

Thus we demand the right of work and a decent living for every working German.

While the front soldier was fighting in the trenches to defend his fatherland, some Eastern Jewish profiteer robbed him of hearth and home. The Jew lives in the palaces and the proletariat, the front soldier, lives in holes that do not deserve to be called “homes.” That is neither necessary nor unavoidable, but rather an injustice that cries out to the heavens. A government that stands by and does nothing is useless and must vanish, the sooner the better.

Therefore we demand homes for German soldiers and workers. If there is not enough money to build them, drive the foreigners out so that Germans can live on German soil.

Our people are growing, others diminishing. It will mean the end of our history if a cowardly and lazy policy takes from us the posterity that will one day be called to fulfill our historical mission.

Therefore we demand land on which to grow the grain that will feed our children. While we dreamed and chased strange and unreachable fantasies, others stole our property. Today some say this was an act of God. Not so. Money was transferred from the pockets of the poor to the pockets of the rich. That is cheating, shameless, vile cheating!

A government presides over this misery that in the interests of peace and order one cannot really discuss. We leave it to others to judge whether it represents Germany's interests or those of our capitalist tormenters. We, however, demand a government of national labour, statesmen who are men and whose aim is the creation of a German state.

These days anyone has the right to speak in Germany – the Jew, the Frenchman, the Englishman, the League of Nations, the conscience of the world, and the Devil knows who else. Everyone but the German worker. He has to shut up and work. Every four years he elects a new set of torturers, and everything stays the same. That is unjust and treasonous. We need tolerate it no longer. We have the right to demand that only Germans who build this state may speak, those whose fate is bound to the fate of their fatherland.

Therefore we demand the destruction of the system of exploitation! Up with the German worker's state! Germany for the Germans!”

1. When interpreting a primary source, context is always key. Establish some context by noting down the following information
 - a. What was the Treaty of Versailles?
 - b. Who was Josef Goebbels (in 1927) and what did he later become (after 1933)?
 - c. What was the condition of the German economy and society in 1927?
 - d. How much support did the Nazis have in 1927? Which kind of people tended to support them?
2. How does Goebbels structure his writing in order to make it more persuasive?
3. What are the key demands laid out by Goebbels in this piece of writing? Hint: Look out for the phrases 'we demand', but try and put it into your own, less emotive language.
4. Goebbels refers to several key Nazi ideas in this piece, although it would be another 6 years before they could be put into practice. Which Nazi ideas can you see in this extract?
5. Why is this a useful source for a historian studying the rise of the Nazis? Think about what questions it might help us to answer, and any information it could provide us.

Constructing an argument

History is rarely about finding the 'correct' answer. Most often it is about constructing an argument, based on evidence, about a particular aspect of the past. Historians love to disagree on things, and sometimes have quite fierce debates about seemingly obscure topics! However, it is important that you are able to construct your own argument and that you can write about it convincingly.

To help you practice this, we would like to write a short essay (2+ sides of A4) about a topic of your choice. It can be a historical topic, for example about a particular figure, or it can be a contemporary issue, such as lowering the voting age to 16, removing statues of historical figures, the return of the death penalty etc. Just make sure it is interesting to you as you will produce a better piece of writing if it is!

In order to turn it into a debate, you will need to pose yourself a question from which to form a debate. For example, if you have chosen to write about the death penalty, you could ask 'do you agree that the death penalty should return in Britain?' If you have chosen to write about statues you could ask 'should statues of historical figures ever be removed?'

Please make sure that your response to this question:

- Includes both/all sides of the argument
- Includes your own point of view, backed up by solid reasoning and/or evidence
- Uses a variety of sources – this will mostly have to be online at the moment, but please make sure that you look into views that you do not agree with, and use books if possible!

Finally, remember that this is the first piece of formal written work we will see from you – so make sure you have read through it all, that it makes sense and that the grammar is as good as can be! Please submit this task to Miss Wenlock (Kate.Wenlock@open-academy.org.uk) and Mr. Brown (Rob.Brown@open-academy.org.uk) by the **first week of term in September**.