Historical Investigation 

The IB History Internal Assessment

Student Guide



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**APPENDIX A:** Assessment Criteria from 17-18

IB DP History Subject Guide

Below are deadlines for your historical investigation. Adherence to these will help you to ensure that you create the best product possible. Failure to meet them will limit your teacher’s ability to guide you through this process.

**Nov 30/Dec 3rd Preliminary Topic Selection**

**December 6th/7th Final Historical Investigation Proposal form completed**

**December 12th/13th Research Diary Check**

**December 14/17th Outline of Historical Investigation**

**December 20th/21st First Draft of Historical Investigation**

**Week of January 7th-11th Draft returned by teacher/Start Reflection**

**January 15th/16th Final Draft Due**

If you, for any reason, will miss one of the above deadline, your teacher must be informed prior to the class in question.

**Historical Investigation**

**HL 20%**

Students at both SL and HL are required to complete a historical investigation into **a topic of their choice**. The historical investigation is made of up three sections.

Students have a free choice of topic for their historical investigation—the topic need not be related to the syllabus, and students should be encouraged to use their own initiative when deciding on a topic. However, the topic must be historical, and therefore **cannot be on an event that has happened in the last 10 years**.

Students should choose their own topic, with their teacher’s guidance and approval. Teachers must approve the topic and question for investigation before work is started. It is crucial that there are sufficient sources to support the investigation, and that the investigation can be assessed by the criteria for internal assessment. Teachers must also make students aware of any relevant ethical considerations when undertaking their investigation, for example, the need to show sensitivity or to respect confidentiality.

The investigation is an opportunity for students to demonstrate the application of their skills and knowledge to a historical topic of their choice. The emphasis must be on a specific historical inquiry that enables the student to develop and apply the skills of a historian by selecting and analyzing a range of source material and considering diverse perspectives. The activity demands that students search for, select, evaluate and use evidence to reach a relevant conclusion consistent with the evidence and arguments that have been put forward.

**Section 1: Identification and evaluation of sources**

This section requires students to analyze in detail **two** of the sources that they will use in their investigation. The sources can be either primary or secondary sources. In this section students must:

* clearly state the question they have chosen to investigate (this must be stated as a question)
* include a brief explanation of the nature of the two sources they have selected for detailed analysis, including an explanation of their relevance to the investigation
* analyze two sources in detail. With reference to the origins, purpose and content, the student should analyze the value and limitations of the two sources in relation to the investigation.

A crucial element of this section of the internal assessment task is formulating an appropriate question to investigate. The six key concepts for the history course (causation, consequence, continuity, change, significance and perspectives) can be a very useful starting point in helping students to formulate a question.

The following are examples of historical investigations recently submitted by students.

* How systematic were the deportations of the Jewish population of Dusseldorf to Minsk between 1941 and 1942?
* How significant were economic problems as a cause of the Bamberg Witch Trials (1623–1633)?
* What were the most important reasons for the failure of Operation Market Garden?
* To what extent was weak leadership responsible for the collapse of the Egyptian Old Kingdom in 2125 BC?

**Section 2: Investigation**

This section of the internal assessment task consists of the actual investigation. The internal assessment task provides scope for a wide variety of different types of historical investigation, for example:

* a historical topic or theme using a variety of written sources or a variety of written and non-written sources
* a historical topic based on fieldwork, for example, a museum, archeological site, battlefields, places of worship such as mosques or churches, historic buildings
* a local history study.

The investigation must be clearly and effectively organized. While there is no prescribed format for how this section must be structured, it must contain critical analysis that is focused clearly on the question being investigated, and must also include the conclusion that the student draws from their analysis.

In this section, students must use a range of evidence to support their argument. Please note that students can use primary sources, secondary sources, or a mixture of the two.

**Section 3: Reflection**

This section of the internal assessment task requires students to reflect on what undertaking their investigation highlighted to them about the methods used by, and the challenges facing, the historian.

Examples of discussion questions that may help to encourage reflection include the following.

* What methods used by historians did you use in your investigation?
* What did your investigation highlight to you about the limitations of those methods?
* What are the challenges facing the historian? How do they differ from the challenges facing a scientist or a mathematician?
* What challenges in particular does archive-based history present?
* How can the reliability of sources be evaluated?
* What is the difference between bias and selection?
* What constitutes a historical event?
* Who decides which events are historically significant?
* Is it possible to describe historical events in an unbiased way?
* What is the role of the historian?
* Should terms such as “atrocity” be used when writing about history, or should value judgments be avoided?
* If it is difficult to establish proof in history, does that mean that all versions are equally acceptable?

**Bibliography**

A bibliography and clear referencing of all sources **must** be included with every investigation, but these are not included in the overall word count.

**Word limit**

The word limit for the historical investigation is 2,200 words. A bibliography and clear referencing of all sources **must** be included in the investigation, but are not included in the overall word count.

Below are suggested word allocations for each section of the historical investigation. Please note that these word allocations are suggestions only.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Suggested word allocation** | **Associated assessment criteria** | **Marks** |
| 1. Identification and evaluation of sources | 500 | A. Identification and evaluation of sources | 6 marks |
| 2. Investigation | 1,300 | B. Investigation | 15 marks |
| 3. Reflection | 400 | C. Reflection | 4 marks |
| Bibliography | Not applicable | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| **Total (maximum word limit)** | **2,200 words** |  | **Total:25 marks**  |

**Advice on your Historical Investigation Topic**

Below are some points that you need to think about in relation to your topic for the Historical Investigation:

**Topic**

Within certain limits, the topic will be for you to decide. It can be concerned with international, national, regional or local political, social, or economic issues or foreign policy. **The selection of a topic should take into account the amount of material available and the scope for personal and individual investigation.**

**Structure**

In parts of your Historical Investigation you will need to analyze and evaluate different historical points of view. To help you achieve this, the title for your Historical Investigation should be phrased as a question. In structuring such a question, you should consider the phrases “to what extent” or “how far”. What and how questions should be avoided because they foster a descriptive or narrative approach. For example, on the topic of the Origins of the Second World War, a good question would be:

***To what extent did Hitler stumble into war in 1939?***

A poorly phrased title for a Historical Investigation on the same topic would be:

***What was Hitler’s foreign policy between 1933 and 1939?***

You must also structure your Historical Investigation according to the structure laid out on page 4 and you should also read carefully the assessment criteria given in Appendix A at the back of this booklet.

**Personal Interest**

The Historical Investigation must be on a historical topic or issue that you are interested in or keen to find out more about. Your teacher will advise you and act as your tutor, but ultimately the effort, dedication and inspiration must come from you. This is why the choice of topic and the question is fundamentally crucial to a good Historical Investigation. Remember to also bear in mind that a well-produced Historical Investigation will set you up with a strong grade in the bag before you do your final examinations.

**Historical Investigation First Thoughts**

Fill in this sheet to help you start thinking about your historical investigation. Think carefully about your answers:

**Circle the option for you:**

1) Which period of History interests you mainly?

Ancient (before 500 BC) Medieval (500-1500BC) Modern (1500BC+)

2) Which part of the world do you want to find out about?

Middle East Europe Asia Africa Americas Australasian

3) What sort of History are you interested in?

Political Economic Social Military Local

4) What sources would you like to compare and contrast?

Novels Diaries Newspapers Feature Films Art History Books

5) Which of the below topics, or subtopics within them, that you have studied to date did you go: “hmmm, that is interesting…..”

WWI Peace Negotiations/League of Nations Taiping Rebellion Opium War

6) Write down a list of possible areas of interest:

**Historical Investigation Source Ideas Sheet**

The most important part of your historical investigation is finding two sources that provide **conflicting interpretations** of the same event. These do not always have to be in the form of history books. They can be works of literature, personal diaries, detailed posters and even films. Look at the examples below that you could use to help in your historical investigation e.g.

Literature:

George Orwell – “Animal Farm” (Russia 1917-1945)

Harper Lee – To Kill a Mockingbird (Racial discrimination in the United States)

George Orwell – “The Road to Wigan Pier” (Britain in the 1930’s)

Erich Maria Remarque – “All Quiet on the Western Front” (World War One)

George Orwell – “1984” (Totalitarian regimes)

Jung Chang – “Wild Swans” (20th Century China)

William Shakespeare – “Julius Caesar” (Roman Empire)

E.M.Forster – “A Passage to India” (British India between WW1 and WW2)

Film:

JFK – Murder of John F Kennedy

Thirteen Days – Cuban Missile Crisis

Saving Private Ryan – D-Day Landings

Schindlers List – Holocaust

Saladin – Saladin (Arabic Film)

Apocalyse Now – Vietnam (There are many on this conflict)

You could compare each of these sources to a more standard historical book on an issue in the work of fiction or feature film.

You may be better able to think of some a topic from your personal heritage/national history you may want to do. Be aware though of the importance or accessing the necessary sources.

**An Example of Narrowing Down a Topic**

Taken from <http://www.historyguide.org/guide/image.html>

“You also need to look at your topic realistically. Obviously, no one would contemplate a topic so broad as “A History of Europe, 1648-1996,” for an essay only twenty pages in length. Not only could you not condense 350 years of European history in twenty pages, fifteen weeks is hardly enough time to do the research for a longer study, even if it were possible.

If you know very little about your topic, your first task is obviously to learn more. Suppose your general topic is the Age of Enlightenment. This a broad topic. Consult an encyclopedia. You will run across names (Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire, Paine), events (Lisbon Earthquake, French Revolution), and ideas (skepticism, deism, liberty). Perhaps one of these things strikes your fancy. Suddenly, you find yourself attracted to Tom Paine’s essay The Age of Reason, in general, and his ideas on deism in particular. You begin to ask yourself questions: who was Tom Paine? What is deism? Who were the deists? Why did deism appear when it did? What effect does deism have on the movement for parliamentary reform in England in the 1790s? Then, for whatever reason, you are led to an entirely different topic, say, English political radicals in the age of the French Revolution.

Through your discovery of Paine’s Rights of Man, you encounter the radical philosopher William Godwin. He was an anarchist which is odd because he was writing at a time (1790s) when most English radicals were trying to reform Parliament, not abolish it altogether. You then thumb through a brief biography of Godwin and soon discover that he married Mary Wollstonecraft, an out-spoken feminist who wrote the first critique of Edmund Burke’s Reflections on the Revolution in France (Paine’s Rights of Man was a response to Burke’s Reflections as well). You also find out that Godwin and Wollstonecraft produced a daughter, Mary, who later married Percy Bysshe Shelley, and wrote Frankenstein. Quite a jump from your first initial interest in Paine’s deism, isn’t it? And all of this could have taken place in a week or two. I mention this example because using this same technique, I arrived at a topic for seminar paper which happened to be about the notion of human perfectibility in the thought of William Godwin.”

**Guidance on How to Structure an HI Question**

Adapted from *Historians’ Fallacies* by David Fischer

An essential skill of the historian is the ability to ask questions. While this may seem like an easy task, it may in fact be one of the most difficult. A historian is someone who asks an open-ended question about past events and answers it with selected evidence that is arranged in an explanatory way. “Questions are the engines of intellect … which convert energy to motion, and curiosity to controlled inquiry.” (3)

There are five general characteristics that a good historical question should have:

1. It must be resolvable with measurable (empirical) evidence

2. It must be open-ended

3. It must be flexible and open to endless refinement

4. It must be explicit and precise

1. It must be tested

The following assignment will try to identify some of the common problems in asking historical questions.

*Types of fallacies*

1. *Too large of a scope: What happened during World War 1?*

The problem with this question is that it is so broad and that there is so much information on the question that it becomes impossible to answer correctly. In order to have a proper focus one needs to start with a reverse pyramid approach to questioning.

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2. *Non-question which sets out to prove an existing opinion*

The historian cannot set out to prove something s/he has already concluded to be true. If you begin your inquiry with the conclusion that “X was the case” than you will simply be trying to find evidence to support your case not trying to discover historical truth. This can also be affected by the sources that you choose to gather your evidence from. If you try to answer your question by only looking at sources from one perspective, your question will not be answered.

3. *Too many questions*

This fallacy of questioning involves framing a question that makes false presumptions. The classic example of this type of a question is “Have you stopped beating your wife?” A historical example is “What were the US’ primary motives for dealing with Hussein” This assumes that there were in fact primary motives and therefore assumes that simple answers will be identified and explained. In fact there may be no simple answer to the question. Another example is “Why are all radical revolutions violent?”

4. *A question that demands a choice between two answers, which are in fact not exclusive or not exhaustive.*

This type of question assumes that there is no choice between two opposites. It is also called either or thinking. It assumes that there are no other options or that there is no middle ground between the two positions. For example, questions like: “The Fall of the Russian Monarchy- Inherent Failure or Planned Revolution?” assumes only two options are available. It also assumes that there is somehow a relationship between the two ideas and that both ideas are mutually exclusive.

1. *The abstract or metaphysical question*

This is the failure in which a non-empirical problem is attempted to be solved by empirical means. For example “Why was Lincoln shot?”

“Was the Korean War inevitable?” When posing a why question, the historian must be careful to define what s/he is trying to determine. Is the why to determine the motive, reason, is a description of possibilities, a historical process, the purpose behind the action, or a justification. *Why questions* on there own lack direction, clarity and need to be carefully thought through.

1. *What if questions*

This is where the historian attempts to explain through empirical evidence what might have happened in history, if in fact it actually had. While what if questions are very interesting and can serve to help clarify historical events they ultimately prove nothing and cannot be viewed as the same as historical evidence. For example, what would have happened if the Nazi’s had developed the atomic bomb first? All historical evidence for what might have happened is necessarily taken from the world in which the Nazi’s did not develop the bomb first. There is no way to escape this fundamental fact, therefore any records or evidence used are immediately counterfactual.

History Investigation Proposal Form

Topic/Question

Justification about why I want to study this Topic/Question

A list of five sources (fully referenced) that I have found already and will prove useful.

Two sources that I could use for part 1 (Identification and Evaluation of Sources).

*The below sheet is a suggestion of a format for your research journal. You will each be expected to keep a clear record of each source that you consult in your research diary and have a research page where you take notes. You will be checked periodically. (read: LIVE IN FEAR!!! ☺)*

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Research Diary Template Example

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | *Time Spent* | *Median of Research* | *What did you learn from this source? (Value)* | *What are the limitations of this source in general and in the context of my research?* | *Where are you going to go next?* |
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**First Draft Checklist**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Identification and Evaluation of Sources** |  |
| My question is clearly stated |  |
| My two selected sources are summarized and relevance to investigation explained |  |
| Value and Limitations of each source to the investigation are evaluated using their origin, purpose and content  |  |
| **Investigation** |  |
| Investigation is clearly organized (Thesis, Clear Topic Sentences, Transitions, etc…) |  |
| Demonstrative Evidence from a range of source is included and documented |  |
| Each paragraph has clear analysis that explains evidence, connects back to the specific point and overall argument |  |
| Perspectives are evaluated to show an awareness of historiography |  |
| Clear Conclusion on the research question is reached |  |

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**Appendix A: Assessment Criteria**

### Internal assessment criteria—SL and HL

The historical investigation for both SL and HL is assessed against three criteria.

* Criterion A: Identification and evaluation of sources (6 marks)
* Criterion B: Investigation (15 marks)
* Criterion C: Reflection (4 marks)

**Criterion A: Identification and evaluation of sources (6 marks)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Marks** | **Level descriptor** |
| 0 | The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below. |
| 1–2 | The question for investigation has been stated. The student has identified and selected appropriate sources, but there is little or no explanation of the relevance of the sources to the investigation.The response describes, but does not analyze or evaluate, two of the sources.  |
| 3–4 | An appropriate question for investigation has been stated. The student has identified and selected appropriate sources, and there is some explanation of the relevance of the sources to the investigation. There is some analysis and evaluation of two sources, but reference to their value and limitations is limited. |
| 5–6 | An appropriate question for investigation has been clearly stated. The student has identified and selected appropriate and relevant sources, and there is a clear explanation of the relevance of the sources to the investigation.There is a detailed analysis and evaluation of two sources with explicit discussion of the value and limitations of two of the sources for the investigation, with reference to the origins, purpose and content of the two sources. |

**Criterion B: Investigation (15 marks)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Marks** | **Level descriptor** |
| 0 | The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below. |
| 1–3 | The investigation lacks clarity and coherence, and is poorly organized. Where there is a recognizable structure there is minimal focus on the task. The response contains little or no critical analysis. It may consist mostly of generalizations and poorly substantiated assertions. Reference is made to evidence from sources, but there is no analysis of that evidence.  |
| 4–6 | There is an attempt to organize the investigation but this is only partially successful, and the investigation lacks clarity and coherence. The investigation contains some limited critical analysis but the response is primarily narrative/descriptive in nature, rather than analytical. Evidence from sources is included, but is not integrated into the analysis/argument. |
| 7–9 | The investigation is generally clear and well organized, but there is some repetition or lack of clarity in places.The response moves beyond description to include some analysis or critical commentary, but this is not sustained. There is an attempt to integrate evidence from sources with the analysis/argument. There may be awareness of different perspectives, but these perspectives are not evaluated.  |
| 10–12 | The investigation is generally clear and well organized, although there may be some repetition or lack of clarity in places.The investigation contains critical analysis, although this analysis may lack development or clarity. Evidence from a range of sources is used to support the argument. There is awareness and some evaluation of different perspectives. The investigation argues to a reasoned conclusion.  |
| 13–15 | The investigation is clear, coherent and effectively organized. The investigation contains well-developed critical analysis that is focused clearly on the stated question. Evidence from a range of sources is used effectively to support the argument.There is evaluation of different perspectives. The investigation argues to a reasoned conclusion that is consistent with the evidence and arguments provided. |

**Criterion C: Reflection (4 marks)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Marks** | **Level descriptor** |
| 0 | The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below. |
| 1–2 | The reflection contains some discussion of what the investigation highlighted to the student about the methods used by the historian.The reflection demonstrates little awareness of the challenges facing the historian and/or the limitations of the methods used by the historian.The connection between the reflection and the rest of the investigation is implied, but is not explicit. |
| 3–4 | The reflection is clearly focused on what the investigation highlighted to the student about the methods used by the historian The reflection demonstrates clear awareness of challenges facing the historian and/or limitations of the methods used by the historian.There is a clear and explicit connection between the reflection and the rest of the investigation.  |