**Higher History**

Exam skills



*How to answer Essay questions*

**How to answer essay questions**



This guide will explain to you how to write an essay for the Higher History exam.

The Contents list below takes you through all the possible questions you may need answers to.

**Remember:** ask your teacher if you need extra help with this.

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**The Exam**

* Final exam will take **2 hours 20 minutes**
* Exam is in two parts:
  + Essay questions x 2
  + Sources questions x 3
* **All sections** must be completed within the 2 hours 20 minutes
* Exam is out of **60 marks** (**20 marks** per essay and for all source questions)
* Final mark is out of **90 marks** (including Assignment)

**Suggested timing**

You have to complete all questions within the allotted time. It is up to you how to do this but you **may wish to use** **the timings** below:

* Essay question 1 45 minutes
* Essay question 2 45 minutes
* Sources questions 50 minutes

For **each essay** you should use the following time suggestions:

* Write a plan 3 minutes
* Write an introduction 4 minutes
* Write the main section 34 minutes
* Write a conclusion 4 minutes

**Marking information**

Each essay is worth **20 marks**. The marks are given as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Marks** | **Summary** |
| Introduction | 2 | * Describe context to the question; * Introduce question/line of argument; * Outline factors you will discuss.   2/3 points above = **1 mark**. 3/3 points = **2 marks** |
| Knowledge | 6 | Aim to discuss six key issues/factors. **1 mark** for each relevant factor/piece of evidence.  Evidence must be factually correct and **relevant** to the question being answered. |
| Analysis | 6 | **1 mark** for each valid analysis point.Analysis marks can cover:   * Discuss the links between all factors; * Contradictions within/between factors; * Historiography |
| Evaluation | 4 | **1 mark** for each valid evaluation point.Evaluation points can cover:   * The extent to which a factor is important * The relative importance of factors * Counter arguments/alternative views * Overall significance of all factors |
| Conclusion | 2 | * Analyse/summarise all factors; * Reach an overall conclusion; * Give evidence for your conclusion   2/3 points above = **1 mark**. 3/3 points = **2 marks** |
|  | 20 |  |

**Types of questions**

Essays ask you to consider a historical question which has a range of potential answers.

They can start in different ways, but the examples below give an idea of the possible questions you could face.

* **To what extent…?**

*To what extent did the reforms of the Labour Government of 1945 - 1951 meet the needs of the British people?*

* **How fully…?**

*How fully did the 1906-1914 Liberal Social Reforms meet the needs of people in Britain?*

* **How important was…?**

*How important was the role of Martin Luther King in the development of the Civil Rights campaign, after 1945?*

* **How accurate is it…?**

*How accurate is it to describe Britain as a fully democratic country by 1918?*

* **“QUOTE.” How valid this view?**

*“WW1 is the reason that women have the vote.” How valid is this view?*

Whatever the question you are asked, the purpose is to discuss a range of different issues and factors before giving an overall answer.

**Past Paper questions**

**Britain 1851-1951**

**2016** To what extent were changing political attitudes the most important reason why Britain became more democratic, 1851–1928?

“The part played by women in the war effort was the main reason why some women received the vote in 1918.” How valid is this view?

To what extent did the social reforms of the Liberal government, 1906–1914, meet the needs of the British people?

**2015** “Britain was a fully democratic country by 1918”. How valid is this view?

“The Liberal reforms of 1906 to 1914 failed to improve the lives of the British people.” How valid is this view?

To what extent did the reforms of the Labour Government of 1945 - 1951 meet the needs of the British people?

**2014** “Britain became more democratic between 1851 and 1928 due to the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation.” How valid is this view?

How significant was the militant Suffragette campaign in helping women achieve the vote?

How important were fears over national security as a reason why the Liberal Government introduced social welfare reforms, 1906–1914?

**2013** How accurate is it to describe Britain as a fully democratic country by 1918?

To what extent did the Liberal Government of 1906-1914 introduce social reform due to the social surveys of Booth and Rowntree?

“The social reforms of the Labour Government of 1945-51 failed to deal effectively with the needs of the people.” How valid is this view?

**2012** “Britain was still far from being a democratic country by 1928.” How valid is this view?

To what extent did the Liberal Reforms of 1906 to 1914 make a significant improvement to the lives of the British people?

“The Labour government of 1945-1951 met the needs of the people from ‘the cradle to the grave’.” How valid is this view?

**2011** How important was the role of pressure groups in Britain becoming more democratic between 1851 and 1928?

“Changing attitudes in British society towards women was the major reason why some women received the vote in 1918.” How accurate is this view?

“The Liberals failed to deal with the real problems facing the British people.” How valid is this view of the Liberals’ reforms from 1906 -14?

**USA, 1918—1968**

**2016** To what extent were the effects of the First World War the main reason for changing attitudes towards immigration in the 1920s?

The weaknesses of the US banking system was the main reason for the economic crisis of 1929–33. How valid is this view?

How important was the continuation of prejudice and discrimination in the development of the Civil Rights campaign, after 1945?

**2015** To what extent was a lack of political influence the main obstacle to the achievement of Civil Rights for black people up to 1941?

How important was the role of Martin Luther King in the development of the Civil Rights campaign, after 1945?

To what extent did the Civil Rights Movement meet the needs of black Americans, up to 1968?

**2014** How important was fear of revolution as a reason for changing attitudes towards immigration in the 1920s?

To what extent was the saturation of the US market to blame for the economic crisis of 1929–1933?

How successful was the New Deal in dealing with America’s problems in the 1930s?

**2013** To what extent were divisions within the black community the main obstacle to achieving civil rights before 1941?

How effective was the New Deal in solving America’s problems in the 1930s?

How far did the Civil Rights Movement meet the needs of black Americans, up to 1968?

**2012** How far can it be argued that the activities of the Ku Klux Klan was the most important obstacle to the achievement of Civil Rights for black people up to 1941?

How important was the emergence of effective black leaders in the growing demand for Civil Rights between 1945 and 1968?

To what extent did the Civil Rights campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s result in significant improvements in the lives of black Americans?

**Essay layout guide**

*Use this guide to tell you what is needed for each section in your essay.*

**REMEMBER:** always plan your essay before you start

**Introduction** Give the context if the time you are discussing **e.g.** what are the key events, etc?

Explain what the question you will be answering is and give a suggestion of your line of argument (conclusion)

Outline the factors you will discuss in your essay (ideally six)

**Main section** Discuss up to six topics which address the question being asked

Within each topic, outline the relevant facts you know that relate to the question

Also include a section of analysis in each part too. This means explain how your evidence fits in with the question **i.e.** is this factor the main cause, or are there reasons it is not important?

***\*\*\**** *One way to do this is to split each topic into two paragraphs; one giving relevant facts, one giving analysis/evaluation.* ***\*\*\****

**Conclusion** Summarise your main findings

Give in an overall answer to the question

Give evidence/reason(s) for your answer

**Planning your essay**

Planning your essay it will save you from realising halfway through writing that you have something. When planning there are four key issues you should consider:

* **What is the exact question?**

Check the question? What is it asking you to do? Are there any relevant dates included? Does it have an *isolated factor*?

* **What will your context be?**

What do you know about the time that the essay covers? Are there any useful facts which would help you introduce the essay?

* **What factors will you discuss?**

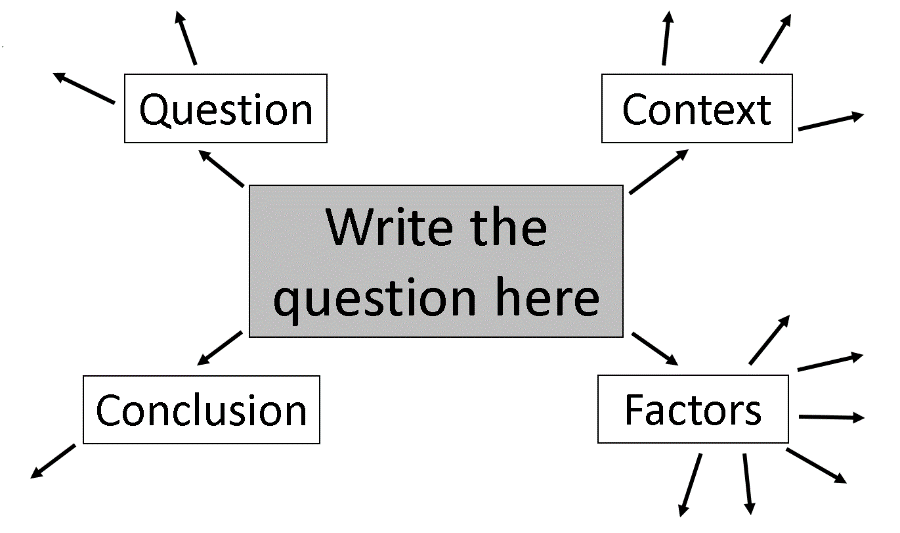
What do you know about the essay’s topic? Can you think of different factors that may have affected it (not just the isolated factor, if there is one)? You should aim to discuss six separate factors.

* **What will your conclusion be?**

What is your conclusion going to be? That one is most important? That all factors have a role but the main one is xxx?

**Plan layout**

It is up to you but you could create a spider diagram to help you plan your essay, similar to the one below:

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**How to write: Introduction**

Your **Introduction** is worth up to **2 marks**.

The introduction must cover the following:

* **Context**
* Background about what is happening at the same time as the essay’s topic
* **Question**
* Explain what the question you are discussing is, including a line of argument (your conclusion)
* **Factors**
* Outline the specific issues/factors which you will discuss as part of your essay

** Example introduction **

In 1945 Clement Attlee, the leader of the Labour Party, won a landslide and unexpected victory against the Conservatives. He immediately set out to try and deal with needs of the British people who had been ravaged by world war. The Labour Party looked to the Beveridge Report as a blueprint for change. **(Context/Background to issue)** However a huge debate still exists about the extent to which Labour achieved their goals and meet the British people’s needs. **(Question identified)** The report highlighted five key social problems which had to be tackled to meet the needs of the people: Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness. **(Factors identified)** It was these evils that Labour set out a tackle, doing so with varying success. **(Line of argument)**

**How to write: Knowledge**

Your **Knowledge** is worth up to **6 marks**.

* Each piece of relevant knowledge is worth **one mark**.
* Ensure it is **relevant** to the question. Random facts which do not help answer the question will not gain you any marks.

** Example Knowledge **

One of Labour’s biggest successes in meeting the needs of the British people was the National Health Service (NHS). The NHS was to be free, comprehensive and universal. **(One mark for a Knowledge supporting a factor)** It allowed everyone in the country to have to access to medical attention, regardless of income. Many diseases that had been rampant before the NHS died off and the medical needs of the people were met. However the NHS was a victim of its own success as Labour was not prepared for the numbers of people using it. This meant that not only did they have to charge for some areas such as dental and eye care **(One mark for a Knowledge supporting a factor)**, they used funds from different government areas as the costs were too high compared to what was originally thought. This meant less money going towards meeting the needs of people in other areas of government policy. Also the decision to charge for some health services undermined the effectiveness of the NHS, limiting access for some.

**How to write: Analysis**

Your **Analysis** is worth up to **6 marks**.

Each piece of relevant analysis is worth **one mark**.

* This could cover:
* Establishing contradictions or inconsistencies within factors
* Establishing contradictions or inconsistencies between factors
* Establishing links between factors
* Exploring different views, including **Historiography**

** Example Analysis **

One of Labour’s biggest successes in meeting the needs of the British people was the National Health Service (NHS). The NHS was to be free, comprehensive and universal. It allowed everyone in the country to have to access to medical attention, regardless of income. Many diseases that had been rampant before the NHS died off and the medical needs of the people were met. However the NHS was a victim of its own success as Labour was not prepared for the numbers of people using it. **(One mark for analysis of aspects within a factor)** This meant that not only did they have to charge for some areas such as dental and eye care, they used funds from different government areas as the costs were too high compared to what was originally thought. This meant less money going towards meeting the needs of people in other areas of government policy. **(One mark for analysis of relationships between factors)** Also the decision to charge for some health services undermined the effectiveness of the NHS, limiting access for some.

**How to write: Evaluation**

Your **Evaluation** is worth up to **4 marks**.

Each piece of relevant evaluation is worth **one mark**.

* This could cover:
* The extent to which the factor is supported by evidence
* The relative importance of factors
* Counter arguments including alternative interpretations
* Overall impact of factors when taken together
* Importance of factors in relation to the context

** Example Evaluation **

One of Labour’s biggest successes in meeting the needs of the people was the National Health Service (NHS). The NHS was to be free, comprehensive and universal. It allowed everyone in the country to have to access to medical attention, regardless of income. Many diseases that had been rampant before the NHS died off and the medical needs of the people were met. However the NHS was a victim of its own success as Labour was not prepared for the numbers of people using it. This meant that not only did they have to charge for some areas such as dental and eye care, they used funds from different government areas as the costs were too high compared to what was originally thought. This meant less money going towards meeting the needs of people in other areas of government policy. Also the decision to charge for some health services undermined the effectiveness of the NHS, limiting access for some. **(One mark for evaluation)**

**How to write: Conclusion**

Your **Conclusion** is worth up to **2 marks**.

It must cover the following:

* **Factors**

Summarise all your main factors, including the extent that each is relevant

* **Answer**

Reach an overall conclusion about the topic

* **Evidence**

Provide reasons and evidence to support your conclusion

** Example Conclusion **

Overall it is clear that whilst the 1945-51 Labour governments did make some improvements to people’s lives, they did not fully meet their needs. **(Overall judgement)** Labour introduced many changes which profoundly improved the lives of people in Britain, not least the introduction of health care through the NHS, significantly reducing unemployment and extending education opportunities. However many weaknesses existed, including failing to meet house building targets and sickness benefit not being universally available. **(Summary of factors / Evidence)** Nevertheless in the short time they had – and in the context of damage caused by World War Two – they achieved a huge amount and laid the foundations for the modern Welfare State.

**Example essay**

This example answer deals with the following question:

*‘The Social Reforms of the Labour Government of 1945-51 failed to deal effectively with the needs of the people.’ How valid is this view?*

In 1945 Clement Attlee, the leader of the Labour Party, won a landslide and unexpected victory against the Conservatives. He immediately set out to try and deal with needs of the British people who had been ravaged by world war. The Labour Party looked to the Beveridge Report as a blueprint for change. **(Context/Background to issue)** However a huge debate still exists about the extent to which Labour achieved their goals and meet the British people’s needs. **(Question identified)** The report highlighted five key social problems which had to be tackled to meet the needs of the people: Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness. **(Factors identified)** It was these evils that Labour set out a tackle, doing so with varying success. **(Line of argument)**

Want was one of the first social evils to be tackled. The National Insurance Act of 1946 was introduced to allow those too sick to work or those unemployed to maintain a basic standard of living.**(1 mark ofr Knowledge used to support a factor)** In theory this sorted a great deal of social problems however the only way to get the benefits when off sick was to pay 156 weekly contributions, which is three years’ worth. If the person was too sick and couldn’t contribute this money then they received nothing. **(1 mark for Analysis of aspects within a factor)** This meant that although the Labour government met the needs of many workers, there was still a large portion of people that did not receive this help and therefore Labour failed to meet the people’s needs. **(1 mark for Evaluating an individual factor)**

One of Labour’s biggest success in meeting the needs of the people was the National Health Service (NHS). The NHS was to be free, comprehensive and universal. It allowed everyone in the country to have to access to medical attention, regardless of income. **(1 mark for Knowledge used to support a factor)** Many diseases that had been rampant before the NHS died off and the medical needs of the people were met. However the NHS was a victim of its own success as Labour was not prepared for the numbers of people using it. **(1 mark for Analysis of aspects within a factor)** This meant that not only did they have to charge for some areas such as dental and eye care, **(1 mark for Knowledge used to support a factor)** they used funds from different government areas as the costs were too high compared to what was originally thought. This meant less money going towards meeting the needs of people in other areas of government policy. **(One mark for Analysis of relationship between factors)** Also the decision to charge for some health services undermined the effectiveness of the NHS, limiting access for some. **(One mark for Evaluation)**

Education was seen as a good way to close the gap between lower and upper classes and so meet the needs of the people. The Education Act meant children had to stay in school until age 15. **(1 mark for Knowledge used to support a factor)** This meant they got a better education and were more likely to get better jobs. Labour also implemented the 11+ exam which sat at the age of 11 to decide what type of school the pupil would go to. The high scorers went to grammar schools and the other to secondary modern schools **(1 mark for Knowledge used to support a factor)** This was meant to allow lower class children to achieve greater potential, however the system was still biased towards the upper class (who were most likely to pass the 11+) and therefore did not meet the needs of all the people. **(1 mark for Evaluating an individual factor and linked back to the question)**

During the war millions of houses had been destroyed and a third of all remaining home were damaged as well. **(1 mark for Knowledge used to support a factor)** This meant Labour would have to focus on building more homes to meet the needs of the people. As there was already a housing shortage problem even before the war Labour had a huge task and aimed to build 200,000 houses per year. **(1 mark for Knowledge used to support a factor)** However after the war Britain lacked resources and manpower **(1 mark for Analysis of aspects within a factor)** to build the homes and so, even with the mass production of prefabricated houses, the housing needs of many people were not made. **(1 mark for evaluating an individual factor)**

Unemployment rates during this time were down massively compared to a decade before. The Beveridge Report had stated that unemployment would never fall below 3% yet Labour smashed this and reached 2.5%. **(1 mark for Knowledge used to support a factor)** Many say that Labour met the needs of the people as they helped reduce the unemployment rate which allowed people to work and be financially better off. However it can be argued that it was not Labour policies but simply the consequence of recovering from a war which caused unemployment to drop. **(1 mark for Analysis of different interpretations of a factor)** So during the time of the Labour government the employment needs of people were certainly met, but it is debatable if this was due to Labour or not. **(1 mark for Evaluating an Individual factor)**

Overall it is clear that whilst the 1945-51 Labour governments did make some improvements to people’s lives, they did not fully meet their needs. **(Overall judgement)** Labour introduced many changes which profoundly improved the lives of people in Britain, not least the introduction of health care through the NHS, significantly reducing unemployment and extending education opportunities. However many weaknesses existed, including failing to meet house building targets and sickness benefit not being universally available. **(Summary of factors / Evidence)** Nevertheless in the short time they had – and in the context of damage caused by World War Two – they achieved a huge amount and laid the foundations for the modern Welfare State. **(2 marks for overall judgement with evidence)**