

A Level History Summer Preparation Tasks

The course has 2 examined components- America-The Making of a Superpower: 1865-1975 and The Making of Modern Britain: 1951-2007. The third component is a coursework essay of 3000-4000 words. Our exam board is AQA.

1. Write an essay entitled:

“Thatcher was the most successful post-war Prime Minister”. How far do you agree?

You should:

- include facts about what she did,
- consider both sides of the argument
- Reach a supported conclusion

Whether you agree or disagree with the proposition is not relevant. What we will be looking at is the quality of your argument, the depth of your research, and the clarity of your communication.

You can compare Thatcher to other PMs if you wish, or just focus on her achievements and failures.

The essay should be 1,500-2,000 words (3-4 sides of A4 typed in font 12)

Recommended starting points:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/people/margaret_thatcher

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0005br9>

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/economics-blog/2013/apr/18/margaret-thatcher-leader-failure-strong>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/margaret-thatcher/9979362/Margaret-Thatcher-the-economic-achievements-and-legacy-of-Thatcherism.html>

2. Read and evaluate a historian’s work, in this case ‘Have a gun will travel-The myth of the Frontier in the Hollywood Western’ by John Springhall. Reading academic texts is a key element of the A Level course, this article has been chosen as an easy place for you to start. To read at A Level you need to learn to read in a different way, the basic instructions for this new way of reading are laid out below. You must read the extract and complete the tasks attached. If you cannot print the document, make notes rather than highlighting.

Reading tasks:

1. Read it through once without highlighting or making any notes.
2. Read it through again. Highlight ONLY the main arguments

3. Read it a third time:

This time highlight any words you do not understand or have never read before. Look these up in a dictionary and write down at least 3 words and their definitions.

Summarise the key argument(s) given by the historian using these questions as guidance:

What is the MAIN point that the historian makes?

Note three points of evidence they use to back up this main point.

Are there any smaller points that are made? Make a note of these.

Is the article convincing? Why? Why not?

Extension task:

Choose any fiction or non-fiction books set in the time periods on either of the two main courses. Read this work and write a brief review of the book.

Books might include:

Non-Fiction

Bill Bryson One Summer: America 1927

D Brown, Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee

B Friedan, The Feminine Mystique

D Frost, Frost/Nixon

A Marr, A History of Modern Britain

A Campbell, The Blair Years: Extracts from the Alastair Campbell Diaries

R Winder, Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain

Fiction

R hooker, M*A*S*H: A novel about three army doctors.

J Jakes, North and South

S Plath, The Bell Jar

A Levy, Small Island

George Orwell, 1984

J Winterson, Oranges are not the only fruit

This is not a long list of books-there are many more so do explore! Remember TV and film are also a great start for gaining a background on the period being studied.

