

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 could just focus on her achievements and failures. The best answers to this question will compare Thatcher to other post-war Prime Ministers to come to a conclusion about who was the most successful. You should consider what constitutes a successful Prime Minister before you start. Is it someone who helps the economy to flourish? Someone who increases the rights of their citizens? Someone who maintains peace?

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

Recommended starting points:

Who was the best 20th century Prime Minister? *History Extra* article

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>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/theresa-may-resigns-how-long-prime-minister-ranking-legacy-history-brexit-a8929116.html>

Andrew Marr *History of Modern Britain* documentary. This is sometimes available on iPlayer.

2. Read and evaluate Chapter 3 from 'Prisoners of Geography.' 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 chapter 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.

Answer these questions:

How does the author suggest you can divide America up?

Why would it be almost impossible (according to the author) to invade the USA?

How did the Geography of the USA help its early settlers? Give at least 2 examples.

Which parts of the USA came via a purchase rather than a war or treaty?

Why does Cuba 'keep America awake at night'?

How did WWII change everything? How did the war change the USA's position in the world?

Summarise the 'two maps of the United States'.

What is the 'pivot to Asia'? How and why will the US be more involved there?

Challenge: According to Otto von Bismark (and the author of this book) 'God takes special care of drunks, children and the United States of America'. What evidence is presented by author in this chapter that suggests that is the case?

Go further: How far do you agree?

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

K Jefferys, Finest and Darkest Hours

D Sandbrook, Never Had it So Good

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

B Evaristo, Girl, Woman, Other

J Boyne, The Heart's Invisible Furies

A Burns, Milkman

Z Smith, White Teeth

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.