

GCE



Rewarding Learning

Revised GCE
History

Student Guidance

A2 1 Planning an answer to a Synoptic
Essay question

For first teaching from September 2016
For first award of AS Level in Summer 2017
For first award of A Level in Summer 2018



A21 Student Support: Planning an answer to a Synoptic Essay question

To be successful in the A21 examination you need to have done some serious planning in advance. One of the key mistakes made in this paper is that candidates try to include as much detail as possible on the whole period and often lose sight of the question itself. It is absolutely essential that you select your material carefully to allow you to engage with the question. Every question will put forward a 'proposition' – your task is to use your knowledge to challenge the accuracy and validity of this proposition. To do this, you need to plan your answer to allow you to select the most pertinent points to help you challenge or support the proposition.

Planning for the Examination:

The inventor Alexander Graham Bell said '**Before anything else, preparation is the key to success**'. So, in advance of the examination, one way of ensuring you are well prepared is to ensure your notes are organised in such a way that you are ready for any question. This does not mean that you learn off pre-prepared essays or essay plans as questions will change every year. It is very difficult to make an answer to one question 'fit' a completely different question.

In preparation for your examination you can organise your notes in a few ways such as:

- **Timelines** – Chronological order – showing key events as they happened
- **Themes** – Economic, political, foreign policy, religious, cultural
- **Strands** – Aims, objectives, success, failure, impact, significance
- **Turning points** – When did they occur and what were the drivers behind these significant points? Why were they important? What changed? What stayed the same?
- **Key figures** – Who stands out and why? Who is less important and why?
- **Actions and reactions** – e.g. In **Option 5** - Actions by the USSR and reactions by the Western governments; In **Option 1** - Actions of the Crown and reactions of Parliament; In **Option 2** Actions of the British government in Ireland and reactions of Constitutional Nationalists, Revolutionaries Nationalists and Unionists.

Tables, like the one below, are one way of organising your notes. You will be aware that there are key themes or areas which have to be covered in your Option. So, for example, in **Option 5** you could set out your revision notes in the following way:

Period	Actions and Reactions of the USSR	Actions and Reactions of the Western Governments
<p>Revolutionary Russia and opposition from western governments 1917–33</p> <p>Lenin</p>	<p>Survival and spreading communism. (Security)</p> <p>The most important foreign policy aim at this stage was to promote worldwide revolution and encourage the outbreak of Communist uprisings in more advanced Capitalist countries. The formation of Comintern in Moscow in March 1919 was the first step.</p> <p>The aim of exporting revolution was also evident in the Russo-Polish War when Red Army troops came very close to capturing Warsaw in August 1920.</p> <p>Economic factors also influenced Soviet foreign policy in the period 1917-1924. Lenin’s decision to sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, in spite of its extremely harsh terms, was partly due to the serious financial predicament in which Soviet Russia found itself.</p> <p>While the main focus of Soviet foreign policy in the period directly after the Revolution had been to bring about world revolution, the emphasis by the early 1920s was on peaceful coexistence with capitalist countries in order to gain diplomatic recognition.</p>	<p>There is no doubt that Western governments were deeply alarmed about the rise of the Bolsheviks. Their initial response to the perceived threat of Bolshevism was aggression. Security fears prompted the Western governments to intervene in the Civil War in Soviet Russia in the spring of 1918. However, the intervention of Western governments was half-hearted and did not represent a determined effort to topple the Bolshevik regime. Western governments continued their policy of isolating Soviet Russia diplomatically.</p> <p>The Western powers saw the Treaty of Brest- Litovsk as a betrayal. Therefore, in order to ensure that the war materials they had supplied to Soviet Russia were not seized by the Germans, some 30,000 French, American and, above all, British forces took control of the ports of Murmansk and Archangel in the spring of 1918. (Security)</p> <p>Economic factors also influenced the policies of Western governments to the Bolshevik regime. As a result, both Britain and France displayed a willingness to reach trade agreements with Soviet Russia. Germany also sought closer economic relations with the Soviet Union and this formed an integral part of the Treaty of Rapallo, 1922.</p>

<p>Stalin – 1924-33</p>	<p>The years 1924-1925 witnessed a bitter ideological clash between Trotsky and Stalin on the future of the revolution. Trotsky believed in ‘Permanent Revolution’, whereas Stalin put forward a policy of ‘Socialism in one country’.</p> <p>1928-1929 – saw a significant change in the direction of Soviet foreign policy (Security). The USSR attempted to sign non-aggression pacts with other powers. In 1926 they signed the Berlin Treaty - if either the Soviet Union or Germany was attacked by another power, they would remain neutral. The Treaty was renewed in 1931. Stalin also concluded pacts with France in November 1932 and Poland in the following month. But Stalin also continued to be inward-looking with his economic policies - but it is fair to say that his main focus was on security in this period.</p>	<p>The Western powers acknowledged that they could not destroy the USSR but they remained suspicious of it and tried to isolate it diplomatically. The policy of Western governments in this period was, in general, characterised by continuity but there were also elements of change:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. German-Soviet relations became less close with the rise to power of the Nazis. 2. The threat posed by the rise of fascism in the early 1930s made Western democratic governments recognise the need for closer diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union. <p>Security considerations dominated the foreign policy of the Western powers to the USSR in this period. With the exception of Germany, Western governments, though establishing diplomatic and economic ties with the Soviet Union, nevertheless continued to regard it with mistrust and suspicion.</p> <p>Germany’s relationship with the Soviet Union was quite different from that of the other Western governments. The ‘special relationship’ forged in the Treaty of Rapallo was reinforced by the German-Soviet Economic Agreement in October 1925 and, in particular, the Treaty of Berlin in 1926. There were also secret clauses which led to close military co-operation between the two countries, especially in the period 1929-1932.</p>
<p>The struggle for survival 1933–45</p>		
<p>The search for security 1945–56</p>		
<p>Co-operation and coexistence 1956–79</p>		
<p>Soviet aggression, decline and collapse 1979–91</p>		

The purpose of the table above is to capture the information side by side to see how the actions of one could lead to a reaction and actions by another. Key themes have been highlighted in red to show how you can incorporate them into your table, in this case aims and objectives. Alternatively, these key themes could be done in a separate table to ensure you are prepared for a question on aims and objectives, or indeed any other theme. This example in the table above could be applied easily to the other Options in A21.

In **Option 2**, one way of looking at a theme is to use bullet points. In this case the focus is on the theme of 'The response of the British Government to events in Ireland'. This is a key area of focus in Option 2. You will see the '**British government**' has been highlighted in bold throughout the section to ensure the focus is maintained on the theme in the question.

The Act of Union

- The 1798 rebellion by the United Irishmen in Ireland brought to a head British government concerns over the state of constitutional relations between the two countries.
- In 1800, the Act of Union was passed by both the **Irish and British parliaments** despite much opposition.
- Many members of the Protestant Ascendancy of Church of Ireland landlords, supported by the Orange Order (formed in 1795), were opposed to the passing of the Act of Union as it would mean a reduction of their power and influence, especially as it raised the probability of Catholics being allowed to sit as MPs in Westminster.
- Pitt intended to follow the Act of Union with other, more far reaching reforms, including Catholic Emancipation, but was thwarted by George III, who refused to break his Coronation Oath to uphold the Anglican Church.
- Many of the rising Catholic middle class were enthusiastic towards the Union believing that they would soon gain emancipation. Daniel O'Connell had opposed it from the start, while other Catholic elements, notably the Church, had given the measure some degree of support believing that benefits would follow.
- However, this was to change and instead the Act of Union increased the sense of grievance in Ireland as it did not bring emancipation or the promised economic benefits either. The Act became a liability rather than an asset for the **British government**.

Emmet's Rebellion -1803

- Emmet's rising was directed against a **British administration** in the brand-new United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.
- The fact that it was a military catastrophe did not matter: it signalled that the Act of Union, rather than resolving Irish problems, was going to deepen them.
- Emmet's revolt in 1803 was easily suppressed by the yeomanry; Emmet was captured then tried for high treason against the British king. **The British government** was able to show its superiority and made a swift move against Emmet.
- The revolt reminded Protestants in Ireland that the Union was their 'safety net'. The Catholic Church condemned the rebellion and was worried that such actions would antagonise the **British government** and reform would not come as promised.

Emancipation

- The **British government** ensured that the Three Emancipation bills in the period up to 1820, introduced by Henry Grattan, failed.
- Daniel O'Connell was determined to force the hand of the **British government**. He got tenants to defy their landlords in the 1826 election and four pro-emancipation candidates were returned.
- **British Government** weakness in the period 1827–1829 helped O'Connell in his pursuit of Catholic emancipation. The departure of Lord Liverpool in 1827 brought to the surface fundamental divisions among the Tories over emancipation, with the brief and unhappy tenures of Canning and Goderich testifying to **government instability**.
- In 1828 when O'Connell stood against Vesey Fitzgerald in the constituency of County Clare and won the seat, he presented the **British government** with a dilemma. As a Roman Catholic, O'Connell could not take his seat in parliament without a change in the law.
- O'Connell's victory in the Clare by-election coincided with the crisis within the **Tory government**, so in this sense it was a combination of **government weakness** and O'Connell's ability which resulted in emancipation being granted in 1829.
- Opposing his right to enter parliament would run the risk of widespread public disorder. The **Duke of Wellington** took the threats seriously and concluded that emancipation would have to be granted even if this meant bullying the King, browbeating the House of Lords and facing a Tory revolt in the House of Commons. **King George IV** acquiesced and the bill became law in April 1829.
- In a gesture of political spite by the **British Government**, the franchise qualification in Ireland was raised from 40-shilling freehold to £10 household suffrage, and this cut the Irish electorate to one-sixth of its former size.
- Note that the Protestant clergy played an important role in trying to register Tory supporters at a local level after O'Connell's success. It led Tories to recognise the potential power of the Orange Order and a relationship developed between them in the late 1820s. O'Connell's success also transformed the Orange Order's view of the Union which they had been against.

Reform and Repeal

- When reforms did not seem to come, the Catholic peasantry demanded immediate action from O'Connell. They refused to pay the tithe and this resulted in the outbreak of a vicious 'tithe war' in the 1830s.
- The new **Whig government** was determined to act quickly and imposed a new Coercion Act for Ireland in 1833. This was one of the toughest pieces of law and order legislation to affect Ireland.
- The **strength of the Whigs, backed by the Tories**, thwarted O'Connell's motion for repeal of the Union in 1834, since this was an issue on which there were no party-political differences. In the 1830s and 1840s all Unionists, Whig or Tory, roundly rejected the O'Connellite demand for Repeal.
- Weaknesses in the **Whig governments** after 1835 enabled O'Connell to negotiate the Lichfield House Compact, in which he guaranteed the Whigs much needed parliamentary support in return for Irish reforms. The result was legislation introduced by the **British government** regarding the Irish Poor Law, tithe, municipal corporations and the benevolent changes brought about by the Under-Secretary, Thomas Drummond. As a result of the changes, O'Connell was to become the

first Catholic Lord Mayor of Dublin.

- Despite high hopes Catholics seemed to gain little of real substance from a decade of Whig reforms and the power of the Protestant Ascendancy still remained unbroken. However, political realities at Westminster curbed O'Connell's satisfaction with virtually every aspect of the Compact, as the **Tory-dominated House of Lords** could veto all legislation. In the mid-1840s the Orange Order was revived after being suppressed as part of Thomas Drummond's reforms.
- O'Connell had promised that he would come back to the issue of repeal. The signal for the new policy came in 1840 with the formation of the National Repeal Association. With the Conservative's victory in the 1841 General election, the issue of Repeal was going to be a challenging one for O'Connell.
- Peel's strength in the 1840s presented O'Connell's repeal movement with a formidable obstacle. Backed by both a **unified parliament** (a large majority in the House of Commons) and the Conservative Party, Peel deployed all his political skill and experience of Irish affairs to uphold the Union. A combination of firmness, such as the banning of the famous Clontarf rally, arrest of O'Connell in 1844 and conciliatory reforms, such as the Maynooth Grant, undermined the repeal campaign.
- The lessons that Peel drew from the Repeal campaign was that 'mere force will do nothing as a permanent remedy for the social ills of Ireland'. He aimed to win over the Catholic middle classes in the hope of convincing them of the benefits of the Union. Peel therefore continued appointing suitable Catholics to official posts in Ireland, particularly to the Judiciary. In 1844, **Peel submitted to his Cabinet** a wide-ranging programme of reform for Ireland, covering the franchise, landlord-tenant relations and Catholic education. However, his programme was not that successful.
- **Peel decided** to support a bill which would increase the state grant to Maynooth College, a training facility for Catholic priests. It led to a storm of protest throughout the United Kingdom, since it seemed to provide state encouragement for the Roman Catholic Church. It also split the parliamentary Conservative Party. In the end, it only became law because of the support of the **Irish in the House of Commons, and the Whigs in both houses of parliament**. Peel went on to pass the Colleges Bill, which led to the establishment of non-denominational university colleges at Belfast, Cork and Galway.

The Famine

- Ireland's Great Famine of 1845 is seen by some historians as a turning point in Ireland's history. The **response of the British government** is key in explaining why the Famine is often viewed as a watershed.
- The **government in London** initially decided to do nothing. By 1846 it was plain that this was no 'ordinary' famine. Sir Robert Peel, despite opposition from the Treasury, imported £100,000 worth of corn. By 1846, £3,500,000 worth of potatoes had been lost – therefore, **the government's** initial aid was well below what was needed.
- **Peel's government** also started a series of public work schemes around the country. At these people were given food in return for working on public works projects. After Peel's failure to repeal the Corn Laws, he resigned and a new **Liberal government** under Lord John Russell was formed.
- The new **Russell administration** was influenced by laissez-faire economic theories and believed that the market could provide a solution to the crisis. Russell was particularly concerned with

the idea that the Irish could become dependent on relief and stop working. This led the **Russell government** to cut back on the amount of food relief that they obtained for Ireland and led them to cut back on the number of public works in Ireland. This meant that many people were left without food, work or money at a particularly difficult time.

- As the Famine worsened, the **Russell government** introduced outdoor relief in the form of soup kitchens and the provision of free food. They also expanded the number of people who could receive help in Workhouses.
- **Russell's policies** were largely seen as having failed when it came to helping the starving Irish. This caused much bitterness at the time and since. The whole issue was not helped by the majority of landlords in Ireland who showed no sympathy for those who worked their land. Those who could not pay their rent were evicted despite the government's effort to establish some form of employment in rural Ireland.
- The famine proved to be a watershed in the demographic history of Ireland. As a direct consequence of the famine, Ireland's population of almost 8.4 million in 1844 had fallen to 6.6 million by 1851. The political impact of the famine in Ireland was great. There were those who believed that the **government in London** had done as little as it could to help the Irish.
- Some landlords saw the Famine as an opportunity to clear their land of tenants and to use their land for commercial farming. In the post famine period, landlords came under extreme pressure to carry the financial burden of relief. The **government's** 1849 Encumbered Estate Acts allowed them to have more financial freedom. Landlords exerted their powers through the eviction of their tenants and by 1850 there were approximately 100,000 people evicted in Ireland
- The Famine and the **British government's handling** of the crisis left much bitterness in Ireland and radicalised many and some have argued that their policy amounted to genocide. Many historians argue that there was no deliberate intention to take advantage of the Famine, to destroy the native Irish. The British government response was not adequate certainly and that there were many in London who were not sympathetic to the Irish.

Young Ireland 1848

- Social unrest grew and in 1848 erupted into violence. Mitchel called for an open rebellion against the **British government**, and told those who did not have a gun to sell their 'garment to buy one'.
- After a mass demonstration in Dublin on 21 March 1848, at which O'Brien demanded arms and the formation of a national guard, he, Thomas Francis Meagher and Mitchel were indicted for sedition by the **British government**.
- The **British government** was very quick to react to quell trouble. Mitchel was the first to be silenced under the new Treason Felony Act (1848). His conviction by a packed jury and the severity of his sentence—fourteen years' transportation—had a catalytic effect. It aroused widespread indignation and helped to close the ranks of the Repeal movement.
- In April 1848, Irish Americans mobilised and large donations were made for the cause of rebellion at home, especially in New York where there was drilling of regiments that would be dispatched to Ireland in the event of a rising.
- By June, Gavan Duffy and others had become fully committed to revolt. Smith O'Brien was still hopeful that the mere threat of a rising would somehow bring the government to look at the issue of Repeal.
- The **British government** reacted quickly and suspended the Habeas Corpus Act on 22 July after

reports of a demonstration in County Tipperary, attended by 50,000 people.

- The rebellion of 1848 was doomed from the start. It consisted of O'Brien and other leaders travelling around Co. Wexford, Kilkenny and Tipperary in an effort to raise the people. In some cases, priests interfered with these plans. The revolt of the Young Irelanders in 1848 was firmly dealt with by **the authorities**. The uprising was quickly contained but disaffection continued.

In each of the options there is an e-Guide and guidance on the key themes that you need to have covered. There are past papers and mark schemes available on the website which can help in your preparation (<https://ccea.org.uk/post-16/gce/subjects/gce-history-2019/past-papers-mark-schemes>). The past papers give you an insight into how the key areas will be tested and it is good practice to use these during your revision.

Some of the key mistakes made in this paper are highlighted each year in the Chief Examiner's Report and you can find these on the website <https://ccea.org.uk/post-16/gce/subjects/gce-history-2019/reports>. These reports are incredibly useful as they look at each Option and each question, giving a commentary on how candidates performed including where they did well and where issues arose.

The Examination:

You should spend approximately **5-10 minutes** organising your thoughts and planning your answer. Highlight key words in the question, paying particular attention to dates, names, themes and the proposition itself. Remember that you cannot squeeze 100 years of History into 1 Hour 15 minutes. Remember too, that one of the key aspects of a synoptic essay question is that it requires you to select material. You need to think carefully about what you should include and what you choose to omit. **This is your choice**. Do not be afraid to leave something out – it is up to you to show that what you have selected is pertinent and directly relevant to the question asked. It is your task to use your chosen material to challenge or support the question. You can fully support the proposition, partially support it or completely disagree with it. What you need to do is select the evidence from what you know of the period to support your argument, using examples where applicable and ensuring that at all times you link it back to the question. **Historiography is not a requirement in this paper**. However, you may choose to incorporate the views of an historian to stress a point and this will be credited as knowledge.

You need to plan to ensure you select only the information which is directly relevant to the question. In the exam and before you start to write your answer you should do the following:

- Spend about 10 minutes planning our answer;
- Read the question carefully – underline key words, dates, names;
- Highlight the key instruction, for example, 'To what extent...?', 'How far...?': You must make sure that you follow this instruction throughout your answer. You are being asked to argue your point of view here;
- Keep your focus on the target instruction and the proposition posed and do this throughout the answer. In every paragraph link back to the question to keep your answer relevant - remember - **PEEL** – POINT, EVIDENCE, EXPLANATION and LINK back to the question. Remember that you are not telling the story of what happened but you are trying to prove or disprove the proposition in the question;

- It is your responsibility to ensure that you answer the question asked and not one you would like. Start or finish each paragraph with a **link** back to the question;
- Pay close attention to any dates specified in the question. Your answer must cover the full range of dates given - it is a common mistake to cover only part of the specified dates or to start later or stop earlier than the date given. If you do this, your answer will be marked down as you will have failed to fully address the question;
- Also remember the importance of structure – Start with an introduction where you immediately engage with the question. You are being asked to make a judgement - how far do you agree or accept this point of view or statement? It is vital that you give your opinion throughout your answer using your evidence to help you make your judgement clear in your answer. Try to avoid using 'I think' - you can still give your viewpoint, e.g. it can be argued, or one view is..';
- Be sure to write in paragraphs, avoid abbreviation and finish off with a conclusion where you reinforce your argument by linking back to the question.

