



B O A R D O F S T U D I E S
NEW SOUTH WALES

2002

**HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION**

History Extension

General Instructions

- Reading time – 5 minutes
- Working time – 2 hours
- Write using black or blue pen

Total marks – 50

Section I Pages 2–3

25 marks

- Attempt Question 1
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

Section II Page 4

25 marks

- Attempt Question 2
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

Section I

25 marks

Attempt Question 1

Allow about 1 hour for this section

Answer the question in a writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- present a detailed, logical and well-structured answer to the question
 - use relevant issues of historiography
 - use relevant sources to support your argument
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Using the Source, answer the question that follows.

Source

““THAT NOBLE DREAM””: The Problem of Historical Objectivity’

The American historian, Charles Beard, used the expression ‘that noble dream’ to refer to the disposition among some historians to seek ‘the objective truth’ about the past, to seek, that is, an account of history which would retell perfectly events as they actually occurred and which would be devoid of any clinging residue of the historian’s own predilections and biases . . .

If a reflection on the works of major historians confirms our impression that they have radically diverse, and in some cases highly individual, approaches to recounting and characterising the past, would that not give us pause to reconsider an acquiescence in the dream of the historian as a perfectly detached observer?

One of the values of the study of history is that it not only makes us acquainted

with kinds of social organisation and forms of expression foreign to us, but also enlarges our capacity to grasp them with sympathy and insight. Yet it would be a lack of self-knowledge not to be aware of our own limitations in this regard and it amounts to a lack of critical perception to ignore or disregard limitations of a similar kind in the histories we read.

All the points so far mentioned converge on the topic of the historian’s use of evidence.

Of the importance of the location and proper use of the relevant evidence modern historians are most keenly aware and for this reason they are likely to think of the efforts of historians of past centuries as amateurish and, in spite of the elegance and fascination of their works, as only anticipating in

Source continues on page 3

Source (continued)

one degree or another the thoroughness and rigour in the use of evidence which is central to the twentieth-century idea of historical research.

Herodotus, we are told, consulted witnesses and examined monuments whenever possible but introduced an extraneous element into his historical thinking in relying also on dreams, oracles, and portents. Thucydides' drive to ascertain what actually occurred appeals to the modern reader yet he failed to distinguish clearly between what men said or probably said on certain occasions and what a disinterested commentator might have thought about the events taking place.

Gibbon made wonderful use of written sources yet his weakness in the German language made it impossible for him to use the results of some new research in his time and, of course, he did not benefit from the archaeological research of a later date which his own work helped to inspire.

Modern writers pay tribute to Macaulay's immense learning but take him to task on the grounds that his sources were 'incomplete and often unreliable', and for ignoring evidence which did not fit in with his own judgments. Burckhardt, in writing on the Italian Renaissance, made good use of some written evidence—'diaries, the *Novelle*, the historians'—but ignored, says Denys Hay, 'the incredibly rich archive material of the peninsula'.

Each of the historians made good use of substantial evidence—otherwise, though they might be known as literary figures they would not be memorable as historians—but also that in approaching their work the reader has to have a keen sense of the fact that the historians did not have all the evidence nor did they use it in a way which is beyond question, qualification, and dispute.

ALBERT PRIOR FELL

Question 1 (25 marks)

With reference to the Source and other sources, discuss how this interpretation of history compares with your own view.

Please turn over

Section II

25 marks

Attempt Question 2

Allow about 1 hour for this section

Answer the question in a SEPARATE writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- present a sustained, logical and well-structured response to the question
 - use an appropriate case study
 - present a balanced treatment of the historians and the areas of debate selected for discussion
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Question 2 (25 marks)

Analyse TWO areas of historical debate in relation to relevant historiographical issues within your chosen case study.

Identify your case study at the beginning of your answer.

End of paper