



2011
HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION
WRITING BOOKLET

Examination

History Extension

Section	Part	Question Number
2	1	2

Date

3/11/2011

Number of booklets
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Instructions

- Write your Centre Number and Student Number at the top of this page.
- In the boxes provided write the name and date of this examination, and the number(s) of the question(s) attempted in this booklet.
- If you have not attempted the question, you must still hand in the Writing Booklet, with the words 'NOT ATTEMPTED' written clearly on the front cover.
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JFK

The presidency of John Fitzgerald Kennedy has been one of much historical scrutiny. Over the years ^{a variety of} ~~the views~~ views have emerged of "the man of a thousand days." The variety of ~~interpretations~~ interpretations come out of the need, as Schama states, to "reconstruct a dead world." ~~This is only~~ The use of 'dead' is only applicable in the sense that ^{the} ~~is~~ present is unsure of the truth and the historians wish to revive it. In trying to represent, or reconstruct, the truth the traditionalists, such as Sorenson and Schlesinger, provide a glorifying view while Revisionists, Reeves, and post-Revisionists, Dallek and ~~Frederick~~ Freedman, provide a different light on the debates such as man vs myth and the political dealings with Cuba.

To understand the interpretations and reconstructions, let alone the reasons, an understanding of ^{the} ~~SFK's~~ controversy around JFK must be examined. The Camelot Myth, a romanticised love story between man and nation, was instigated by Kennedy's wife, ^{Jackie} ~~Jean~~ ~~Edith~~, during an interview with Theodore White

for his TIME Magazine article For President Kennedy: An Epilogue. It is clear from the title that a positive image was being constructed as 'Jackie' quotes, supposedly, Kennedy's favourite song: "Do not let it be forgot... that for one brief, shining moment there was Camelot."

The myth took hold of a grieving nation with approximately 76% saying they felt as if a family member had died. It was in such a climate that the Camelot historians grew. They not only maintained the myth but fanned its ^{flames} ~~fanatic~~ by ^{depicting} ~~constructing~~ Kennedy's life as a tale of self-growth, having reached spiritual wisdom through pain and hardship only to be struck down at the peak of his performance. ~~It is clear that these historians~~

→ ^{Schlesinger} ~~Arthur Schlesinger~~, author of Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House, was a close friend of JFK ~~and~~ with an historical background. He writes a "personal memoir" of his interpretations of JFK's presidency. Schlesinger uses little archival material, preferring to use eyewitness accounts and interviews. Those sources he does use he refuses to name "to protect

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confidential communications". If this is considered in light of the conspiracy surrounding JFK's death we see it was ^{intended} ~~to~~ to reflect the seriousness of his sources in Schlesinger's attempt to be sound more reliable.

Another Camelot historian was Theodore Sorenson, author of Kennedy. He also cites his work as a "personal memoir" but goes as far as to state "this work is a substitute for the one [book] he [JFK] was going to write". Both these historians intended to keep the ~~same~~ positive sentiments of JFK alive making Schama's comments of little relevance to these historians.

Both these historians rely heavily on oral evidence which raises doubt as to the level of understanding they reflect. The close personal contexts of these historians also makes them biased in favour of JFK. For example, in relation to man vs myth, Sorenson states JFK's extra-marital affairs impacted little on his skills as a president ^{and so are not} ~~while also~~ is important historical information. This is significant as no one can be sure of what will be considered significant in the future and so everything must be assumed to be historically.

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significant. The Camelot historians also overlook the impact of JFK's dominating father, Joe Kennedy, and represent him as the ideal father, paving the way for his son, while simultaneously neglecting Kennedy's health problems. It is clear that in relation to Camelot historians, Schama's comments hold little relevance as to them the myth was true and so ^{no reconstruction} ~~the~~ of "a dead world" was needed with man vs myth.

In 1977, with the emerging popularity of gossip magazines and the public desire to 'know the dirt' on their 'seemingly perfect power figures' (Hersch), the Revisionist history came. ^{This} ~~These~~ new wave of historical thinking included writers such as Thomas Reeves.

The Revisionist wave sought to unravel the myth created by the Camelot historians. To do this they conducted further interviews, but like the Camelot school used little archival material.

Renowned Revisionist writer, Reeves, believes that the truth is not represented by Camelot history and so effectively reflects Schama's comment as the myth being "dead". For example, he states the Kennedy was not as evangelic as represented by the Camelot school, but selfish, reckless, vain and lecherous.

He quotes Eleanor Roosevelt in stating "he [JFK] was little more than an extension of his father's ego." Reeves goes further to state that his adulterous affairs not only risked national security, but also "demeaned the nation's highest office." However, ^{despite Reeves' thoroughly} ~~Reeves also states that~~ ~~researched~~ material he states that the truth about ^{JFK} ~~Kennedy~~ can never be known until the Kennedy family "release their secret files". This is clearly ^{shows the} relevance of Schama's statements as ^{is the} ~~being~~ impossibility to reconstruct the truth despite thorough research.

A work similar to Reeves in both purpose and approach is the ~~an~~ ABC mini-series The Kennedys. Both ~~the~~ ^{Kennedy} ~~impressive the~~ was with the mini-series making John's brother, Bobby, appear the hero. The Kennedys ^{is}, at its most basic, a character assassination of JFK. Like Seymour Mersh ~~it~~ is populist, sensationalist and privity to relying on popular history. what they, ^{including} ~~reflect~~ ^{complete} Reeves, is not the truth, for their purpose ~~was to oppose~~ ^{opposed} undeniably ~~obscures~~ that of the Camelot historians and so as to remain shocking the Revisionist historians became hypocritical in stating "information critical of"

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[or historiographic of] JFK was neglected."

With the advantage of hindsight historians have found two opposing views on JFK. Following the circular approach to history the post-revisionist wave attempted to reach a middle ground ~~by~~ between the Camelot and Revisionist historians and hence make ~~become~~ more accurate history. This is evident when in the "dying mystique of the Presidency (Dallek)" as well as the Clinton-Lewinsky affair and Watergate Scandal, the errors by JFK did not seem so large. This clearly reflects Schama's ~~com~~ statement where the historian is trying to "reconstruct a dead world"; however, it is only of partial relevance for Dallek and Freedman both believe the truth can be found.

Dallek is a professor at an Ivy League college and was the first to truly begin the post-revisionist wave. His research method had the advantage of access ~~to~~ the Kennedy family private library and so he could determine what the Camelot historians and what the Revisionist historians were accurate and unreliable about. ~~This is~~ ~~for example,~~ ~~for example with~~ Kennedy's father

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Dallek tends to agree ^{with Reeves} about Joe's dominating nature but insists that the two "were" united". Dallek goes further on to say that certainly Kennedy had his health problems but his keen public speaking ability and charisma were what made him appear so strong and that Kennedy was certainly a remarkable man. This clearly makes Schama's statement that the truth is "a bad world" that cannot be revived despite thorough ~~research~~ research and "documentation" of no relevance for through historical objectivity the post-Revisionists have achieved the closest possible truth we can.

This is certainly evident in Kennedy's relations with Cuba. For example, in April 1961, the Bay of Pigs debacle occurred. This was a plan instituted by ~~pres~~ President Eisenhower and was a CIA sanctioned invasion of Cuba by Cuban exiles. Though Sorenson and Schlesinger provide the typical Camelot description and Reeves the typical Revisionist reconstruction, Dallek, Freedman and Talbot come to separate and more accurate conclusions. ~~For For~~

instance, Sorenson states the Bay of Pigs fiasco was due to poor planning and troubleshooting by the CIA. Reeves states it was due to Kennedy's interference in a purely military matter. Talbot states neither is correct. Talbot, instead, believes Kennedy was only partially responsible for the disaster because he had "inherited a plan that was going to fail." This is supported by Dallek and Freedman who states that Kennedy's withdrawal of naval and air support as well as faulty reports from officers that caused the plan to fail. This shows Schama was incorrect in stating that "Historians... are painfully aware of their inability to ever reconstruct a dead world in its completeness."

In conclusion, the debates surrounding JFK and his presidency show that Schama's comment can have, at most, a partial relevance. Camelot historians did not reconstruct, but preserved, so Schama's statement is of no relevance. It is also of little relevance with the post-revisionist historians who, through

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thorough research were able to ~~to~~ reconstruct the past ^{as} quite accurately as possible. However, Schama's statement has some relevance with Revisionist historians who thought that until more information was available, the truth of JFK can never be known. Therefore, Schama's statement ^{is of relevance} applies only partially.

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