



BOARD OF STUDIES
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HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION

WRITING BOOKLET

Examination

Ext Hist - Case Study
John F Kennedy

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II	1	2

Date

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Instructions

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Start here.

The study of the presidency of John F. Kennedy (JFK or Kennedy) demonstrates the changing views of history, and the nature of historical truth in the past events. However, ~~as we can see~~ with a critical analysis of Kennedy's ~~political~~ handling of the Cuban missile Crisis & his relationship with Khrushchev ~~& the his public & private life (in particular his health problems)~~, the debates that arise emphasise the fact that the historians ~~is forever unable to fully~~ can reconstruct a dead world ~~as it was~~ through ~~the~~ or ~~was~~ the release of more documents or ~~are~~ through research.

However, before we can examine the truth of this argument, the ~~two~~ three views of thinking surrounding this controversial debate must first be explained. The first view is that ~~of~~ the Conzelmann historians, or those of the consensus era. They present a romanticised view of the Kennedy's presidency, where Kennedy's reign was ~~the~~ one between a man ~~and~~ & his country he was dedicated to. The historians ~~Arthur Schlesinger~~ Arthur Schlesinger, a author of A Thousand Days (1965) and Sorensen Kennedy (1965) ~~are the key~~ present the key arguments of this era, characterised by often glossy interpretations of past events and of Kennedy's actions. ~~The~~ ~~Realist~~ ~~historians of the later~~ Their views are inevitably influenced by the ~~changes~~ social & political climate in the wake of Kennedy's assassination — where the common opinion was of 76% of the population viewing the death of Kennedy akin to that of a family member. This influenced the nature of the ~~historians~~ histories written by the two men, and emphasise their ~~best~~ attempt to revive the

memory of John F. Kennedy ~~is~~ to be as thrilling as possible. The Revisionist historians of the ^{late 70s,} 80s and 90s marked a move away from the initial 'accepting' views of Kennedy. They began to challenge the nature of information being presented to them, as the context of the high casualties of the Vietnam War began to hit them. The growing political disillusionment characterising these ~~times~~ ~~decades~~ meant that Kennedy's initial ~~accepting~~ ~~was~~ ~~to~~ ~~a~~ ~~then~~ ~~idealised~~ ~~image~~ ~~begin~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~altered~~. ~~With~~ ~~the~~ ~~increasing~~ ~~release~~ ~~of~~ ~~information~~ The release of US archival information, and that of Russian archives enabled historians such as Thomas Reeves A Question of Character (1991) and Michael Beschloss ^{Kennedy vs. Character (1991)} to begin ~~examining~~ ~~the~~ a more detailed examination of Kennedy's reign. ~~These~~ ~~three~~ ~~highly~~ ~~critical~~ ~~views~~ however began to change by the early 2000s with the entrance of analytical historians such as Lawrence Freedman or Robert Dallek. In the ~~late~~ ~~stage~~ ~~of~~ ~~2000s~~, it became ~~much~~ ~~easier~~ ~~for~~ ~~the~~ ~~historian~~ ~~to~~ ~~obtain~~ ~~material~~, especially with the allowance of Dallek ~~&~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~Kennedy~~ ~~archives~~, and Freedman to modified views by Sorensen ~~&~~ ~~and~~ ~~other~~ ~~historians~~. As such, with more thorough documentation, the ~~historians~~ ~~are~~ ~~able~~ ~~to~~ ~~reconstruct~~ ~~a~~ ~~version~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~dead~~ ~~world~~ ~~as~~ ~~accurately~~ ~~as~~ ~~they~~ ~~can~~, particularly when using recordings of White House tapes (as Freedman does) which reveals an insight ~~to~~ ~~into~~ ~~the~~ ~~to~~ ~~presidency~~ ~~of~~ ~~Kennedy~~ ~~as~~ ~~never~~ ~~before~~.

The issue of ~~the~~ the Cuban missile crisis was a central event ~~in~~ in Kennedy's presidency. The common ~~and~~ ~~majority~~ ~~view~~ amongst both

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controversies, revisionist & analytical historians go as such — Kennedy ~~was not~~ handled the events well, managing to avoid a nuclear confrontation with the USSR and thus saving America. In order to understand this majority consensus, it becomes important for the ~~historian~~ the reader to examine Kennedy's foreign policy actions & budgeting schemes in the lead up. ~~Kennedy had ~~planned~~ used 17 billion dollars in the lead up~~

The Cuban Missile Crisis was ~~an~~ example of the work on brinkmanship, that is with the nuclear ~~arms~~ ^{arms} race, both the US & the USSR were ~~was~~ desperate to increase their nuclear weapon ~~superiority~~ & their superiority & gain a foothold. Kennedy in his attempt to beat ahead had used 17 billion dollars by 1963 ~~in the~~ the building of nuclear weapons. ~~As ~~the~~ ~~Revised~~ ~~examples~~, ~~Revised~~ ~~examples~~, he only did so as a result of mis~~ Announcing to the American public in the elections of 1961, Kennedy had ~~claimed~~ ~~the~~ ~~greatly~~ ~~exaggerated~~ ~~the~~ claimed that the USSR was quickly catching up to the US in their nuclear weapons & was soon to surpass the efforts of US. This would be a ill to the people & threaten the interests of America & their military supremacy. Sorensen supports ^{this} in his biography of Kennedy, ~~that~~ presenting only a half truth of the reality of ~~the~~ the arms race. As the Republicans had ~~contested~~ argued then, along with the knowledge we know now from the release of US archival material & the White House tapes (created by Kennedy in the pre-Nixon era), the figures between America's arms capacity & that of the USSR was vastly exaggerated. The US was far superior in its ~~arms~~ nuclear weaponry, with their possession of MR^BMs (medium range ballistic missiles) and

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~~ICBM's~~ ICBM's (inter-continental ballistic missiles). ~~as~~ They, unlike the USSR, also possessed the capability of firing missiles ~~from~~ with their space submarines, ~~and~~ a technology that the Soviets were not even close to — at least five years away. As such, the later revisionist historians show through a more thorough examination of documents ~~that~~ a more accurate depiction of the events ~~surrounding~~ leading up to the Cuban missile crisis.

Another aspect to the crisis is Kennedy's handling of it — that is to say how he reacted. In this case, ~~it~~ it is widely ~~to~~ agreed upon that Kennedy had reacted well to the actual tense events, with Schlesinger going so far as to commend Kennedy's 'methodical precision' and his 'calm and deliberate' handling of these events that 'saved' America. ~~However,~~ However, the approval Schlesinger does ~~not~~ ~~take~~ ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~entirely~~ ~~accurate~~ and his account of Kennedy's actions is not an accurate depiction of events. The actual Cuban missile crisis, though mostly handled well by Kennedy, was caused by Kennedy's tight foreign policies in the first place. As Reeves argues, it was Kennedy's 'lack of foresight' and his aggressive ~~to~~ invasion policies with the Bay of Pigs Invasion and the failed Operation Mongoose that had escalated the events to that high level of tension. ~~Therefore,~~ This contradicts Schlesinger's claim that Kennedy's ~~calm~~ ~~and~~ ~~deliberate~~ ~~handling~~ was 'methodical precision' had gave his opponent "sufficient time for reflection" and to mount a response, and ~~thus~~ thus criticises him. Dallek, alternatively, believes that if Kennedy had tried to ~~avoid~~ ~~his~~

full term, it would be likely that there was to be foreign policy changes in the US, as Kennedy appeared to be making & understanding his own & foreign relations with the USSR better. As such, with the necessity ~~of~~ of more information & a more thorough discourse of the motivations behind the actions taken & claims made by either historians, as more accurate picture of the 'dead world' is shown, and with the consideration of more evidence, it reveals things about the presidency of Kennedy that were never considered before — thus enabling the historian to move closer to reconstructing a dead world.

Kennedy's relationship with Khrushchev remains a key aspect debated upon by both revisionists & conventional historians. Their only meeting in Jan 1961 at the Uman Summit dictated the beginning of the tense relationship between the two men. ~~As Reeves examines,~~ ~~the~~ Friedman suggests that the grizzled, temperamental Khrushchev ~~was~~ intimidated Kennedy, a view often argued upon by ~~other~~ revisionist historians. Schlesinger & Sarason, however, present a image of Kennedy that stood strong throughout, steadily determined on the issue of Berlin. ~~Which~~ Which version is true? In hindsight & through an examination of the release & translated records of their encounter, it becomes evident to us, and Thomas Reeves, that Kennedy, though intimidated by Khrushchev, ~~to~~ stood his ground to the best of his ability & sought to protect the interests of America. "Neither was lost the

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debate a winner or a loser". In this case, they were evenly
matched. With the release of new information, it allows the
historian to examine new facts & influence the historical record.

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