



South African History Online
towards a people's history

History Skills Pack

Based on the CAPS curriculum

For an outline of the FET Curriculum Assessment Policy, click [here](#).

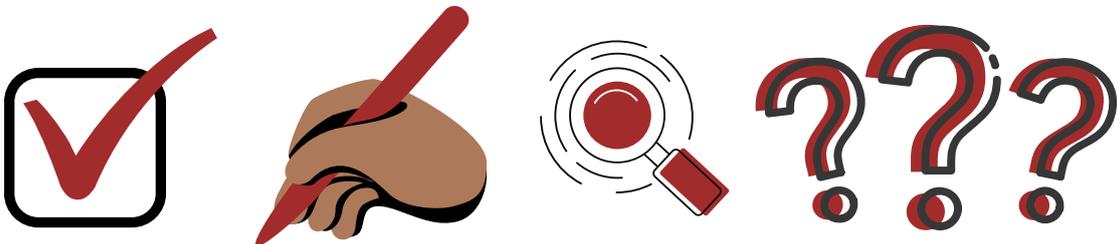


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Mark Allocation



The Nine Historians Skills

Identified Skills	Applying Skills
Using Multiple Types of Sources	Use various sources, such as cartoons and diary extracts to analyse different perspectives of the past.
Extraction, Interpretation and Explanation	Analyse sources to select relevant information which answers the question. Interpret the sources with the contextual knowledge of what happened in the past. Explain the causes and consequences of events.
Evaluate Usefulness	Determine whether the source is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reliable: Does the source give you a true account of the past? What is the purpose of the source?• Stereotyping: Do people have oversimplified ideas of the past?• Subjective: Does it only give one perspective of the past, while ignoring other people's experiences? Substantiate why you find a source useful but also limited.
Multiple Perspectives	There are usually two sides of a story. Apply the A, B, C rule for a balanced view of the past by including: A = The first perspective B = The second perspective C = Combination of the two perspectives for a conclusion
Different Interpretations	Historians can analyse the same sources and come to different conclusions. Analyse these opinions and discuss whether you agree or disagree with the conclusions.
Evaluating and Debating	Develop opinions about historical events and people that is substantiated by facts and evidence.
Line of Argument	Introduce your argument at the beginning of the question, substantiate your argument with facts and conclude with an analysis of your argument.
Coherency and Chronology	Sequence relevant facts logically and chronologically. Facts should not be repeated, because of sequencing events in an achronological manner.
Heritage and Conservation	Analyse how the past is currently portrayed and celebrated. How will today's commemoration of the past impact the interpretation of historical facts?

Department of Basic Education: History National Curriculum Statement FET and Training

Mark Allocation



In your paper one exam you will have 3 sections:

Section	Content
Section A	1. Visual Analysis 2. Textual Analysis
Section B	Sourced Based Questions (material booklet)
Section C	Source Based Essay

Question Levels

Source Based Questions	
Mark Allocation	50 marks
Levels	Level 1 – Easy Questions (30 % of test) Level 2 – Source Questions (40 % of test) Level 3 – Application Questions (30% of test)

Level One

The first level includes the easiest questions, which amount to 30% in the test paper. Students are asked to either define concepts they have already been taught in class or to read a source and only extract the answer from the piece they have read. The students' marks are given based on providing a proper definition or identifying the relevant answer to the question.



Mark Allocation

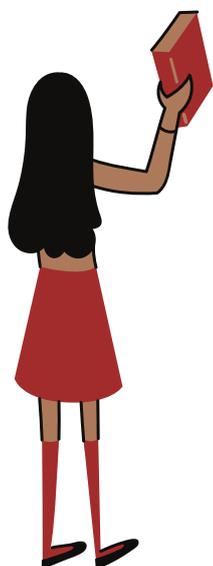


Level Two

Level two source-based questions require more insight from the students and make up 40% of the source-based section. They need to be able to interpret, explain and analyse the sources given in the test. These questions will ask students to explain the causes or consequences of specific events in history. It is vital that students focus on the sources given in the test and not only reiterate facts discussed in class. Students should only use the facts in class as background information that gives them context to the sources given in the test. The answer needs to be relevant to the sources given.

Level Three

The remaining 30% of the source-based questions consist of level three source-based questions, which is more challenging than the first two levels. Students need to learn how to compare sources given, interpret and evaluate sources, and determine whether a source is reliable, bias useful or limited. Students will receive marks if they give a relevant answer that is substantiated by a valid argument. Students are asked to interact with the sources and think critically.



Usually teachers can ask questions, such as:

- "To what extent is this source useful?"
- "To what is this source reliable?"

It is vital that a student takes a stance when answering these questions. They need to highlight both the shortcomings of the source and yet credit the information the source.

Mark Allocation



Essay Writing

Essay Writing	
Mark Allocation	50 marks
Criteria	Introduction Body Mark Guideline & Line of Argument

TIP: Students will also be asked to write an essay consisting of 50 marks in the exams. It is vital that students use the correct layout when writing an essay, which will contain introduction, a body and a conclusion. Before a student starts to answer their essay, it is vital that they first grasp the question being asked. If students write irrelevant statements or indicate that they do not understand the question by making a wrong statement, they will be penalized.

Introduction

The moment the student starts writing an introduction, they need to highlight the specific question the teacher is asking. Then they need to select relevant information they will discuss throughout the essay that addresses the question being asked. This will indicate to the teacher that the student grasped the question and know how to approach the question.



Mark Allocation



Body

In the body, the student also needs to be able to select **relevant facts** and sequence facts that it reads chronologically. Students will be penalized if they constantly repeat facts, because of not reasonably sequencing events.

Students will also be penalized if they write **irrelevant** facts that do not answer the question. For example, students should refrain from explaining consequences of a historical event if the question focuses on the causes.

The text should also be **coherent** and **balanced**. Students need to make a clear argument and try to give a balanced perspective of the past by analysing the pros and cons of past events. For example, if students are asked to analyse Stalin's Five-Year Plans they need to be able to focus on the humanitarian costs as well as the economic achievements. Towards the end of their essay they can then argue whether the "**means justifies the cause**". In other words, students need to determine whether extreme measures to achieve a specific goal is worth it in the end. The students argument needs to be **substantiated by evidence** and **facts**. This will enable students to give a **balanced** view of historical events.



Mark Allocation



Mark Guideline

Teachers mark students based on the **general impression** of their essay. They do not mark per fact given. Teachers do not want students to study the facts and simply rewrite it on paper. Students should have an argument which they introduce in their introduction and then substantiate throughout their essay till they have written their conclusion.

This is what teachers call "**line of argument**", which means that the argument needs to be prevalent from the start to the end of the paper. This also means that students will be marked by linking different historical events, causes or consequences that substantiate their argument. Students' arguments need to be original, addressing the question at hand and clearly indicating that they can critically analyse historical events. Students' **opinions** and the **evidence used to substantiate** their opinions are ultimately what differentiates a student struggling to pass from an A-candidate.

It is possible for all struggling students to become A-candidates if they know how teachers allocate marks in exams. Teachers need to identify whether students have developed these specific skills when marking papers. Unfortunately, if students do not know what skills they need to have in exams, because they do not understand how marks are allocated, they will never be able to excel in History.



TIP: Incorporate the question asked in exams by rephrasing it in your introduction paragraph.

Source-Based Questions



How exams are usually set up

Exams are compiled to include two sections: **Section A** which includes source-based questions and **Section B** which includes essay questions. Each section has **three** different questions, where a student is usually required to answer at least one question **from** each section and then will be able to decide whether they would like to answer another question from Section A or another question from Section B.

What can be expected from Section A:

Section A is compiled out of different source-based questions. Each student will usually receive a variety of sources, where they are required to read and analyze each source. As mentioned in the Mark Allocation article, source-based questions are usually divided into three levels. Level 1 is usually where students are required to apply what they have already been taught in class and/or what they are able to read in the given sources. Level 2 questions require more interpretation and/or analyses of the given sources in the exam. Level 3 requires students to be able to compare, evaluate and analyse different given sources (please refer to the Mark Allocation page for more information).

Examinations that you usually write, use the following mark allocation:
(1x2) or (4x1) or (2x2)

The first number indicates how many facts you are supposed to write down and the second number indicates how many marks each fact counts. Therefore, (1x2) means that you should write down one fact and you will receive 2 marks. And (2x2) means that you should write down TWO facts and each fact counts 2 marks, giving you a TOTAL of 4 marks for the question.



TIP: It is important to look at the mark allocation next to each as it tells you what is required of you.

Source-Based Questions



How to answer the different types of questions

There are usually easily identifiable keywords in each question that helps you to understand how to answer the question. These keywords are also listed below each level, but here are some examples of how to approach specific questions. Remember to look at the mark allocation as explained above.

Define: When a question asks you to define a word, you will need to answer with a full definition of the word. Again, these definitions are usually learned in class.

Quote: When a question asks you to quote, you are required to use quotation marks (“”) and use the direct words from the given source.

List: When a question asks you to list, it means that you may simply provide words or facts to answer the question.

It is preferable that a student uses bullet points (*) when answering these types of questions.

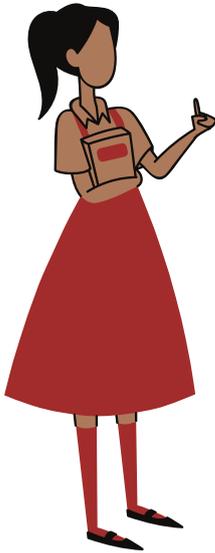
Compare: When a question asks you to compare you are required to use every source as stated.

An example:

If the examiner asks: Compare source 1A with 1B. Explain why source 1A is more reliable than source 1B.

A student should answer by making references to BOTH sources: Source 1A is more reliable than source 1B because Source 1A is... AND Source 1B is...

Source-Based Questions



***TIP:** Remember to ALWAYS use your own words when answering a question. Only when the question asks you to QUOTE are you allowed to use a sentence directly from the source. Even if a question asks you to LIST from a source, you have to use your own words.*

What type of Sources can be found in an exam?

- Extracts from newspaper articles
- Extracts from newspaper headlines
- Photographs
- Cartoons
- Speeches
- Letters

***TIP:** For helpful tips and information on Source analyses, please visit our [Source Analyses page](#).*

Source-Based Questions



Example questions

Level 1:

The answers for these types of questions are usually found straight from the given source OR in the study-material for the examination. These questions usually include the words/phrases: define, according to the source, quote and/or list.

1. Define the concept quarantine in the context of the Cuban Missile Crisis. (1x2)
 2. Identify TWO ways in the source in which the USA was able to detect whether ships were carrying missiles. (2x2)
-

Level 2:

These questions require you to use the work you have been taught in class and to apply it to the content (what is said) of the source. These questions usually include the words/phrases: compare, explain, analyse and/or comment.

1. Why do you think some of the Soviet ships changed course as they approached the 'quarantine line'? Support your answer with relevant evidence. (2x2)
 2. Compare Sources 1C and 1D. Explain how the evidence in Source 1C differs from the information in Source 1D regarding Khrushchev's response to the quarantine of Soviet ships in the Atlantic Ocean. (2x2)
-

Level 3:

1. Using the information in the relevant sources and your own knowledge, write a paragraph of about EIGHT lines (about 80 words) explaining how the United States of America and the Soviet Union used brinkmanship to resolve the Cuban Missile Crisis. (8)

Source-Based Questions



How to write a source-based paragraph

1. The first sentence of the paragraph is about context. It should start by **establishing** the following:
 - Where
 - When
 - Who
 - How
2. The next sentence needs to make a **stand/claim** that refers to the question.
3. Every point should then take up one sentence. The **sources provided should support your stand** in different ways. Try to order your sources. They can be ordered either chronologically or thematically. If evidence is directly referenced from a source, students should cite the source. This is done by including the source name in a bracket after the sentence. Students can quote or they can paraphrase. Try to limit quoting; too many quotes will come across as lazy. This is an example of paraphrasing:
Evidence suggests that the Chris Hani was an inside job (Source B).
4. The final sentence of the paragraph should **conclude** by wrapping up the key points in support of the stand. It should then reference the stand and essay question.
“Therefore, one could conclude that . . .”



***TIP:** For more examples and NSC past papers from the South African Department of Basic Education, please click [here](#).*

Source Analysis



General

All historians need to be critical of the sources they use. Rather than accepting sources at face value, they need to evaluate and analyse the sources to determine how reliable and useful the sources are. This skill is called **source criticism** and includes **analysis skills** and **evaluation skills**. Students apply these skills when they are able to ask and answer the following questions:

1. What is the source's **explicit** historical account?
2. What is the source **implying** about the past?
3. Does the source's information **corroborate** with other historical sources?
4. Does the source's information **contradict** other historical accounts?
5. Who **created** the source?
6. What is the **purpose** of the source?
7. Out of whose **perspective** is the source written?
8. Who was the **intended audience** of the source?
9. How **relevant** is the source to answer the question asked?
10. To what extent is the source **reliable** and **trustworthy**?



Tips:

*If a source contradicts another source use the two different sources to give a **balanced** view of the historical event.
If a source **corroborates** information in other historical sources, use this to emphasize the **reliability and usefulness** of the source.*

Source Analysis



In Section A, a variety of source-based questions are asked. These questions are mostly based on the sources as provided in the paper. This section will explain how to use and analyse the sources that are provided in the exam. For an in-depth explanation of how the exam set-up usually works, please visit our Mark Allocation article and our Source-based Questions article.

Types of Sources

Visual Sources

Cartoons, Photographs, Posters

Textual Sources

Newspaper articles, Newspaper headlines,
Speeches, Letters, Interviews

The difference between primary and secondary sources

Primary

A source directly from the event it refers to.

- Photographs
- Cartoons
- Newspaper article
- Speeches

Secondary

A source that is written/created after an event. Usually based on primary sources.

- Books
- Reviews



Source Analysis



How to do a source analysis

For any source, one should always try to determine origin, purpose, limitations and value.

1. *How to determine origin:*

Is the source **Primary** or **Secondary**?

*TIP: Look at the **date** of the source. A newspaper article could also be a secondary source if it is an article that is referring to an "old" event.*

2. *How to determine purpose:*

- Ask yourself why the source was created.
- What is the source saying?
- What is the source not saying?
- What is it showing or attempting to show its viewers?
- Who is the intended viewership?

3. *How to determine value:*

To determine the value of a source, one should attempt to compare the strengths and limitations of a source. The strengths and limitations of each source will tell you how reliable (can the source be trusted) and how valuable (can the source be used) each source is.



Source Analysis



Assessing how valuable a source is

Source	Strengths	Weaknesses
Newspaper Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A primary source and contains first-hand information of what occurred at an event.• A newspaper article usually contains a lot of information on an event, given one a better idea of what occurred (context).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Although newspaper articles generally give a lot of information on an event, it is important to note that they may <i>still</i> be one-sided based on their audience.
Speeches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A primary source and contains a first-hand account of what occurred at an event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speeches usually only portray one side of the story.
Cartoons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A primary source. It shows the viewer what the “feeling of the time” is. In other words, it shows one a general feeling of how <i>most</i> people view current events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cartoons are satirical. This means that they are usually over-exaggerated.• Cartoons are not usually accompanied by in-depth information. They may be misinterpreted.
Photographs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A primary source and <i>shows</i> the viewer a part of history. For example, you can determine what a group or area looked like at the time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photographs do not always show the whole picture.• Photographs are not usually accompanied by in-depth information. They may be misinterpreted.

Source Analysis

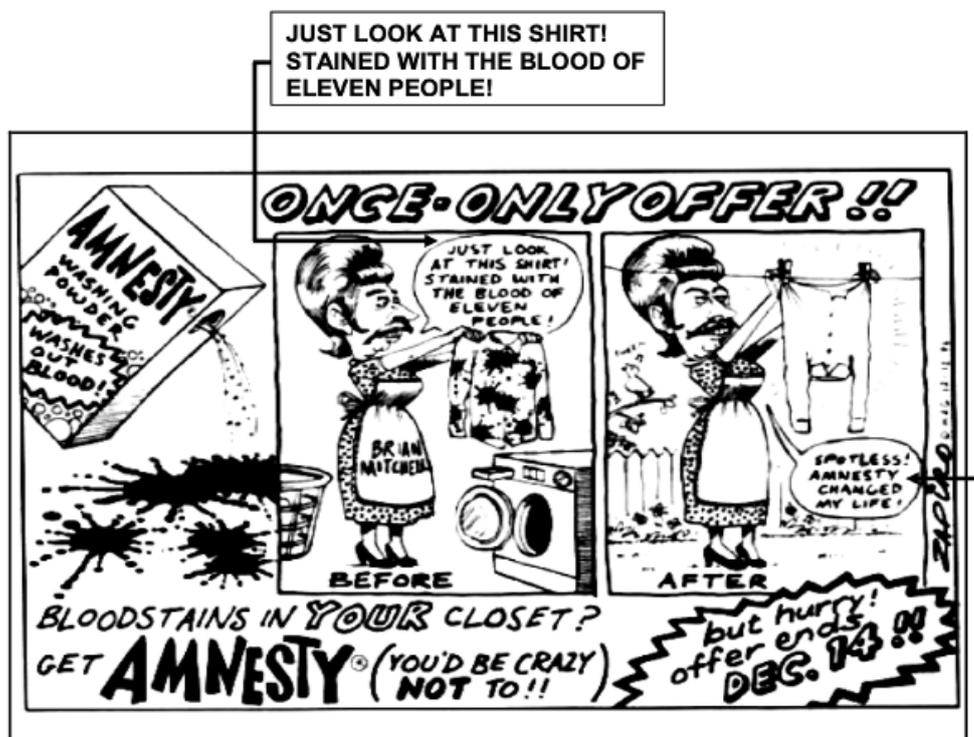


How to analyse the different visual sources

1. A Cartoon (this example is from the 2019 May/June National Senior Certificate History paper 2 examination):

SOURCE 2C

The cartoon below, by Zapiro, depicts Brian Mitchell accepting the TRC's 'ONCE-ONLY OFFER!!' of amnesty. It was published in the *Mail and Guardian* on 12 November 1996.



[From https://www.zapiro.com/cache/com_zoo/images/m_961212mg_6e19e617dc4891b33abe9e607c4159cb.jpg. Accessed on 6 August 2018.]

SPOTLESS!
AMNESTY
CHANGED MY LIFE!

Source for cartoon and memorandum answers: The Department of Basic Education South Africa, "National Senior Certificate Examinations: History Paper 2 Addendum," (May/June 2019), (Accessed: 23 May 2020), Available at <https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/CD/2019%20June%20Exams/Non-Languages%20May-June%202019%20PDF/History/History%20P2%20May-June%202019%20Addendum%20Eng.pdf?ver=2019-06-04-075918-000>

Source Analysis



- What does the exam description say?
- When was the cartoon published?
- What is the cartoon saying/ who is being mentioned?
 - Who is Brian Mitchell?
 - What does amnesty mean?
 - What do the bloodstains represent?
 - What does 14 December mean in the context of this cartoon?

Example questions for this cartoon

1. Explain the message that is conveyed in the cartoon. Use the visual clues in the source to support your answer. (1x2)
2. What do you think is implied by the words, 'ONCE-ONLY OFFER!' in the context of the amnesty process of the TRC? (1x2)

Answers

1. The cartoonist is showing that Brian Mitchell is being cleared of any crime that he has committed.
 - Reasoning: The word **Amnesty** refers to being excused for any crimes committed.

TIP: Remember to always look at the mark allocation as it tells you how long your answer needs to be. Please refer to the Mark allocation section on the [Source-Based Questions page](#).

2. The period of amnesty was only offered until 14 December.

Source Analysis



1. A Photograph (this example is from the 2019 May/June National Senior Certificate History paper 2 examination):

SOURCE 1C

The photograph below shows members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) confronting students with dogs in Soweto on 16 June 1976. The photographer is unknown.



[From https://risingsunoverport.co.za/wp-content/uploads/sites/108/2016/06/u1_ch4_Soweto_1976-520x400.jpg. Accessed on 3 September 2018.]

SADF soldier

Students

Source for photograph and memorandum answers: The Department of Basic Education South Africa, "National Senior Certificate Examinations: History Paper 2 Memorandum," (May/June 2019), (Accessed: 23 May 2020), Available at <https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/CD/2019%20June%20Exams/Non-Languages%20May-June%202019%20Memos%20PDF/History/History%20P2%20May-June%202019%20Memo%20Eng.pdf?ver=2019-09-29-111637-000>

Source Analysis



When looking at the image above, try to ask yourself the following questions:

- What does the source description say?
- When was the photograph taken?
- What are the students doing?
- What are the soldiers doing?

Example questions for this cartoon

1. Explain the messages that are conveyed in the photograph with reference to the following: (1x2)
 - a) Members of the South African Defence Force (SADF)
 - b) Students
2. Comment on the usefulness of the evidence in the source for a historian researching the events that unfolded in Soweto on 16 June 1976. (1x2)

Answers

1.
 - a) The photograph shows the South African Defense Force (SADF) using methods of intimidation by showing the presence of police dogs and weapons.
 - b) The photographs show that the students are participating in a peaceful protest as they are not carrying any weapons and have their arms the air.
2.
 - The source is useful as it could show a historian what happened on 16 June 1976.
 - The photograph shows the historian that peaceful protestors were met by displays of intimidation.

***TIP:** Use the information that you can see. Try not to overthink the photograph – do not use information that you cannot see on the photograph (unless asked to use your own knowledge or other sources).*

For more example questions and answers, please refer to the South African Department of Basic Education [website](#) where you can find several past papers and memorandums of all NSC subjects.

Essay Writing



General

When writing history essays, never use the personal pronoun. Historians avoid placing themselves and their personal opinions in a debate. Instead of using 'I' or 'we', rather use 'one'. "One could argue that..."

You can also avoid personal pronouns by making the argument or source the subject of the sentence. Statements like 'Evidence supports the claim' or 'Arguments suggest that' will remove a personal presence from your debate. Make the content the focus, not your opinion.

Where to start

1. Some topics naturally lend themselves to essay questions. Study these topics and learn as many points of information as possible.
2. Students then need to look at the question being asked. There will be a stand that markers want students to take, as well as a counter argument.
3. A rough page can be used to write out all of the studied points. These points need to be placed in an order that best fits the question. In some cases chronology is effective, whereas in other cases it may be best to look at which points are stronger/weaker.



Essay Writing



Structure

Introduction

The introduction should set the scene for the essay debate. The following pieces of information need to be established:

- When
- Where
- Who
- How

This information should take up 2 to 3 sentences in the beginning of the introduction. Once this information has been added, students need to refer to the essay question. The essay question then needs to be paraphrased at the end of the introduction. A clear stand must be indicated. Students can also include a brief mention of a counter argument. Here is an example:

“While some sources claim ... , one could argue that there is a more evidence to support the claim that”

Counter-Argument

Depending on the essay, a counter argument may provide balance. If students have points that are not in favour of the stand, they can include them as a counter argument. The counter argument should not be more than one paragraph (point), and should be located near the end of the essay.

Body

Ideally, the stand should be approached from various angles. Each point should tackle a new angle. For example, if an essay asks students to examine the causes of an event, students would then tackle the categories of political, social, economic, etc. A strong essay has at least 5 different points to make on an argument. It is advised that students study at least 10 facts/ points ahead of time. Students can then choose the points that are the most applicable to the question.

Essay Writing



Every paragraph should use the PEAL structure. This structure has 4 sentences that each do the following.

P = Point

E = Evidence/ Explanation

A = Argument

L = Link

Point - The first sentence should introduce the point that the paragraph is trying to make. It should include a certain aspect of the overall argument.

Evidence/ Explain - Your point will need to be contextualized. The following sentence needs to support the point that you have made. It should elaborate on your claim, and provide facts. If you can incorporate some of your own studied knowledge here, you will get more marks.

Argument - This sentence needs to reference your stand. How do the point and evidence link to the greater argument? Is the point in support of the stand or the counter argument? This sentence needs to clearly indicate which aspect of the argument the point tackles. This sentence also needs to show why your stand is supported by this point.

TIP: Markers use the 'PERQ' criteria for essays.

P = Own knowledge and evidence of studying. How info from class is used.

E = Evidence

R = Relevance and repetition. Students should avoid repetition.

Q = Question is referenced.

Essay Writing



Link

The final sentence in a paragraph should conclude the argument. It can either link the paragraph back to the stand, or it can introduce what the next paragraph is going to argue.

- **Here are some examples:**
- One could argue that ... played a role in ...
- Further sources will elaborate on the debate about ...

Supporting Phrases

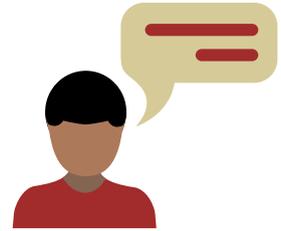
Tone plays an important role in strengthening your argument. You can use supporting phrases at the beginning of your paragraph.

Here are some examples:

- “One important reason”
- “Another reason”
- “It could be argued that”
- “Perhaps if”
- “Whilst one shouldn’t ignore”
- “An important underlying cause”
- “There is evidence to suggest that”
- “It is doubtful whether”
- “If one considers that”
- “When examining this event, one should bear in mind that”
- “If X and Y hadn’t happened, then possibly”
- “Although some evidence suggests that . . . there is enough to counter such an an argument because”

When introducing evidence, supporting phrases like ‘evidence suggests that’ or ‘it is evident that’ can help soften your sentence. They will help create a smoother flow in your paragraph.

Oral History



Background

Oral History is a vital component of recording narratives and facts about the past. It has been a part of History since the beginning of history, being the oldest method of recording history. In fact, Herodotus (a Greek historian who is credited with being the first historian) wrote his work by travelling through Greece and collecting accounts of events from different people. He called his work “The Histories”, which is where the word and meaning of History comes from. Although the beginning of history could significantly be accredited to oral history, it is met with a lot of scepticism from some mainstream historians today. However, it is important to keep including oral history as a method of recording history as it gives historians the opportunity to record events or narratives that have not yet been recorded and to give history an extra layer. This article attempts to give the reader a better idea of the basis of Oral History and how to approach it.

What is oral history?

Oral History refers to a field of study within History that uses the method of gathering, organizing and interpreting the voices and memories of any person or community that was involved in a past event. Oral history is essentially composed out of two categories or methods:

1. ***Oral History***

Refers to interviewing someone with first-hand recollection of an event. For example, interviewing a survivor of Auschwitz (the name of a concentration camp in Poland during the Second World War) about their experience in the concentration camp.

2. ***Oral Tradition***

Oral tradition is also called Orality. Refers to interviewing someone who relays events of the past that have been **passed down over several generations**. It gives historians an account of change over time with accounts of knowledge, art, ideas, traditions and culture. For example, interviewing a family-member and investigating an interesting or unique tradition or event.

Oral History



Oral Source Guideline

How to prepare for conducting and using interviews

Stage One: Pre-Interview

- Make a list of possible narrators who have lived experiences and knowledge they can share about the topic you are researching.
- Contact potential narrators via email and give them an outline of the purpose of the interview and an overview of the topics you want to discuss. This enables the narrators to remember their lived experiences and prepare answers.
- If a potential narrator is willing to answer your questions, set a date, time and place where you can meet the narrator. It is vital that the interview is also conducting in a quiet place, as the interview needs to be recorded. Loud noises can make it difficult to hear what is said on the audio-recording later.
- After securing an interview, conduct background research on the topic you want to discuss, and learn more about the person you are interviewing. This will enable you to ask informed questions.
- A historian needs to explain the rights of the narrator before the interview. This includes confidentiality agreements and stating how much the interviewer can edit what was said on the recording. You might be given a slip in class that needs to be signed by the narrator, consenting to the interview and allowing you to use the information for the task.



Oral History



Stage Two: The Interview

- **Equipment:** At the start of the interview make sure that the electronic equipment is on and recording the discussion.
- **Opening:** Open the interview with a “lead”, which includes stating the name of the narrator, the interviewer, the date, time, place and purpose of the interview.
- **Comfortability:** Do not start with a personal question. Let the narrator become comfortable answering questions first, before asking emotional or personal questions.
- **Open-Ended Question:** Ask open-ended questions, as this will extract long answers, with more detail and context than simple “yes or no” questions and answers. For example, rather than asking: “When did Nelson Mandela die?” ask questions such as: “How did you feel when Nelson Mandela passed away?”
- **Follow-up Questions:** Ask follow-up questions, which will expand the information the narrator has given you. For example: “You already explained what happened at the event, but you have not really touched on why the event occurred. Do you have any thoughts and what could have caused this?”
- **Timeline:** Do not expect the narrator to speak chronologically. While it is important to write the task in chronological order, narrators will tell their story from memory. These memories will most likely be achronological.
- **No Interruptions:** Do not interrupt a narrator while speaking unless they have deviated from the topic. Rather use non-verbal cues to show interest in what the narrator is saying. If they do deviate from the topic, kindly inform them that while it is important facts they are raising, you would really want them to answer a few specific questions first.

Oral History



Stage Two: The Interview

- **Understanding:** It is important to focus on what the narrator says, while also focusing on what facts they are excluding. They might briefly mention negative aspects that they do not want to discuss. It is important that you keep in mind that the narrator might only be telling their side of the story. If you want a balanced view of the past, you can ask something like: “Other arguments I have heard about this topic disagrees with this view. How would you respond to such arguments?”
- **Ending the Interview:** If you are done with the interview, thank the narrator for their time. If there is any more information you need to acquire, ask the narrator if they are willing to do another interview later or answer a few questions via email.



Oral History



Stage Three: Post-Interview

- **Transcription:** After the interview is conducted and recorded the audio needs to be transcribed. Make sure you save at least two copies of the audio on your computer and phone.
- **Structure:** The transcription will read like a dialogue, with the names of the narrator and interviewer indicating the turns between the two speakers. One should also indicate when different speakers asked and answered questions, as well as their emotions and actions.

For example:

Helen: [06: 10] How did you feel when the bomb exploded?

Harry: [06: 35] I was shocked and scared. [Shaking head in disbelief]

-
- **Editing:** You can do minimal editing, such as excluding fillers like: “um”, “ahh” and “oh”. These changes will make the interview read fluently, while not changing the meaning of what is being said.
- **Exclusions:** Unnecessary responses of the interviewer, like: “I see” or “interesting” can be excluded from the transcription. Standardizing Structure: Standardize the layout and format of the transcription. Make sure the fonts, paragraphing, use of quotation marks and line spacing is consistent throughout the document.
- **Keep Audio:** After you have finished transcribing the interview, do not discard of the audio. The audio is still a primary source, which enables one to hear and identify the tones and emotions of the different speakers.



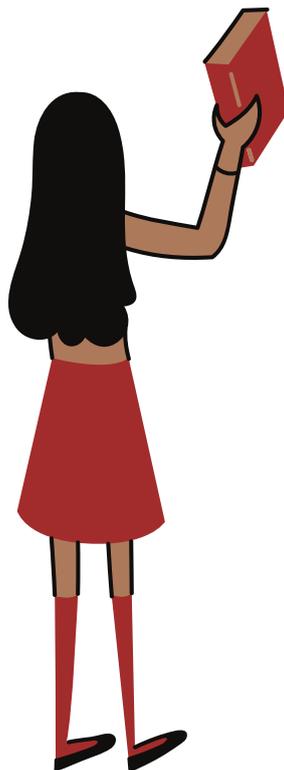
Oral History



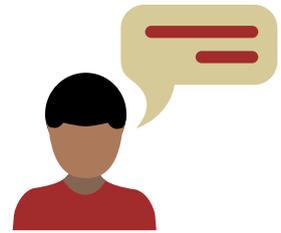
Evaluating an Oral Source

Strengths

1. **Accessibility:** It gives an historian the opportunity to gain access to resources that are not necessarily physically or visibly accessible. For example, in terms of physically; a historian could interview a person telephonically or over various video-call platforms. In terms of visibly; if there are no written accounts of an event, a historian would use oral tradition to write an account of an event.
2. **Added Layer:** Speaking and listening to what people have to say brings an extra layer to history in terms of adding a “quality of human relations”. For example, a historian is able to see or hear the emotion behind an event and would therefore, understand it better.
3. **Method of Democratizing History:** In other words, it gives people the opportunity to share their narrative that would otherwise not be able to share it. For example, many histories or people are excluded from history because they were not “traditionally” (by means of newspaper articles, reports etc.) recorded.



Oral History



Limitations

1. **Accuracy:** Accuracy remains a significant aspect of history. Therefore, oral sources are required to be verified by using other sources as well. For example, if a person gives an account of an event, it is important to hear other accounts and to make sure of the facts.
2. **Overidentification:** The person who interviews someone may experience a feeling of overidentification with the interviewee. This means that the interviewer may over-sympathise with the interviewee and not be able to stay objective. For example, if someone feels too much sympathy for their interviewee, one may not write the full truth (the good AND the bad), which indicates that a part (the bad part) of history is lost or missing.
3. **Depending on the Interviewee:** Using oral sources depends on the interviewee significantly. Therefore, factors such as memory, mental-health, reliability etc. are important to keep in mind. For example, if one speaks to an interviewee who was a first-hand witness of an event that occurred decades ago, memory may play a vital role in the accuracy of what is stated. This is also why it is important to cross-reference other sources and make sure of the accuracy of one's source.



TIP: It remains important to note that all sources (primary and secondary) have both strengths and limitations. When one understands the strengths and weaknesses of a source, one will be able to use resources more effectively. Therefore, it is important to consider using as many different types (newspapers, books, diaries, films, oral sources etc.) of sources as possible – this will ensure a fuller account of the past.

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