

# Transitioning to A Level History: A guide for current Year 11 students

At Bishop Challoner we study 2 really interesting topics throughout Year 12 and Year 13. There is a huge variety resources you can access that will provide you with a firm foundation ready to begin the course in September!

We have put together this document so that you can use some of these resources to enrich your knowledge and understanding of the two units of study.

## ***AQA Unit 1K: USA: The Making of a Superpower, 1865-1975***

### Visual Resources

- How to Win the US Presidency, available on Netflix
- 13<sup>th</sup>, available on Netflix.
- The Presidents, History Channel on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLA5e6wnPHowgXgpNC9gDSq1E6gVftuNK>
- Films: Free State of Jones, Selma, Malcom X, Gangs of New York, Thirteen Days, Mississippi Burning, Lincoln
- Website looking at the different periods of American History. The course begins from 1865 but it's a good idea to look at American History before this period. <https://www.historycentral.com/USHistory.html>
- Reading about modern US politics will help you understand the way the constitution works <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/us-politics>

### Podcasts

- American Story: A Narrative History is available for free on iTunes and outlines important topics from the founding of America to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Moments in American History – Also available on iTunes it includes short video clips with explanations of key events.
- American – Empire of Liberty. BBC Radio 4 series on the Civil Rights Movement. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00dhv05>

### Books

- Brogan, H, The Penguin History of the United States of America
- R Dallek, Hail to the Chief, Oxford University Press, 1996
- P Boyer, American History: A Very Short Introduction, OUP, 2012
- N Ferguson, Colossus, Penguin, 2004
- D Goodwin, The Bully Pulpit
- D Reynolds, America: Empire of Liberty, Penguin, 2010
- H Zinn, A People's History of the United States

## ***AQA Unit 2S: The Making Modern Britain, 1951-2007***

### Visual Resources

- The Crown, available on Netflix
- Andrew Marr's History of Modern Britain, available on Youtube
- Thatcher: A Very British Revolution, available on BBC iPlayer
- BBC News 'On this Day': <http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday>
- Britannica British Prime Ministers. Start with Clement Atlee: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/list-of-prime-ministers-of-Great-Britain-and-the-United-Kingdom-1800350>

### Podcasts

- History EXTRA Podcast. Listen to the podcast episodes called 'The Windrush Generation', 'The Long History of Brexit', 'Britain in the early 80s', 'Peter Hennessy on Britain in transition', 'The corner shop revolution', 'Women in the 1960s', 'Schools through time', 'Brexit and American Independence', 'Rethinking 20<sup>th</sup>-century Britain', 'Ireland's Past and Present'. You can listen to these for free on Spotify, Apple podcasts, or by visiting their website: <https://www.historyextra.com/article-type/podcast/>

### Books

- S J Lee, Aspects of British Political History 1914-1995
- N Lowe, Mastering Modern Britain
- A Marr, A History of Modern Britain
- A Mayer, Women in Britain 1900-2000
- D Murphy (ed), Britain 1914-2000,
- M Pearce, British Political History 1867-200: Democracy and Decline,
- C Rowe, Britain 1929-1998, Heinemann, 2004

# History at A Level - General Tips and Tricks to have a read through:

## Writing Notes at A Level:

A-Level History is not just about taking notes - but as with any subject you study at A-Level, there are some notes to keep. Here are some general common sense reminders about keeping notes, which may seem obvious - but you would be surprised how many people don't take their own advice! It goes without saying that the most important thing is to keep your notes in a way that is easy and comfortable to you.

*Your notes must make sense when you revise at the end of Year 13, so:*

1. **It is important that you have a folder where you can file your notes in order, add dividers and keep a table of contents.**
2. **Keep your notes organized into topic headings**
3. **Emphasize headings and key words**
4. **Date or number all of your notes and lessons**
5. **Use a system you understand, that will make sense later on in the year**
6. **Keep a glossary of key words, abbreviations and images so that if you do forget something, you can look up what you meant**
7. **Don't take down every word**
8. **Use mind maps, tables, spider diagrams or pictures. You could experiment with different types of note-making to begin with, and see which type makes the content more memorable to you.**

## Essay writing at A Level:

History is not just about writing lots of essays! It is also about discussion, debate and evidence. However, there will be, as with many other subjects at A-Level, some essays to write that are longer and more in-depth than the ones you did at GCSE. But it is not as tough as it looks. Essay writing is a skill that you will get better at over time. These tips will help you to produce a strong essay from the off-set.

### *The Must-Haves*

#### **1. A well considered argument**

This is VERY important to get right. It means that you will need to make sure that you clearly state your line of argument and do it convincingly. At the same time, you will also need to give full coverage to other factors/opinions/arguments that are at play - even if it is to rubbish them!

The key to providing a considered argument is to read widely and to provide evidence to support different lines of argument.

Your job is firstly to present these lines of argument.

Secondly, you should critically evaluate these views and evidence as you explain them. Is there evidence to counteract? By providing a considered argument - what we **don't** mean is that you sit on the fence! Every essay **MUST** have an argument, but by considered, we simply mean that you should be prepared to consider other arguments/factors, other than your own view, even if it is to critically evaluate them and dismiss their importance! But you must be convincing and be prepared to examine them fully.

At A level, the mark-scheme is stepped into 5 different levels; you cannot progress beyond level 2/3 if you do not provide a well considered argument! The examiner wants to see what your opinion is, but they also want to know that you have not just "plucked" this opinion from nowhere - they want to see that you have considered the topic fully, taken account of all of the views and arguments before making your judgement. Therefore, you should stick to your line of argument throughout, but you should clearly evaluate other points of view, showing your reader how and why they are less valuable arguments than your own.

#### **2. Reference to the question**

Where possible you should show how the evidence you are presenting links back to the question. You should refer back to the question wherever a link or piece of evidence provides some clues to help formulate an answer. This should help you to avoid going off track. Always think as you are writing "does this paragraph help to present the evidence to support my line of argument or help me to answer the question?"

#### **3. The Introduction**

The introduction should set the scene. It should be short and snappy, no more than a few lines, but they are very important as you need to hook your reader in. There should be some very brief background detail to the question. You should also include some brief information on what the main debate is about this issue. You should also at this point wish to state what **YOUR** argument is going to be. This is called your **assertion**.

#### **4. The Middle**

This is the substantive part of the essay. This is the bit where you have to present the evidence and arguments. It should predominantly contain your analysis/argument but you must also look at the counter-arguments.

#### **Do:**

**Present evidence in a balanced way:** You should present your argument/response to the question clearly and effectively, using evidence to back up the points you make.

On the other side, you should also consider the arguments against your own and critically evaluate them in order to show why they are less important/plausible than your own.

**Present your evidence in a logical order:** Try to avoid jumping around. Make a plan before you write that organizes your evidence logically. This could either be in themes or in chronological order. Try to form **links** between your points.

**Include analysis:** You must make sure that you don't just fall into the trap of presenting evidence without analysis. This reads more like a list! When presenting a piece of evidence, don't forget to critically analyse. Is the evidence reliable? What do you think? Is it a valid point?

**Refer often to the title:** Don't forget to link your points back to the question where possible. It will help your essay and your reader stay focused on the answer to the question!

## **5. Conclusion**

This is the end of the essay. This is the bit where you are expected to answer the question! Here you should sum up in a couple of sentences what your argument is, and why it is the most plausible explanation, being careful to remind the reader of supportive evidence. Be confident in your argument, leave the reader convinced.

The Historical Association has put an article together on How to write a Synoptic Essay. It is definitely worth a read, as this is a skill you will need to develop across your A Level. It can be found here:

<https://www.history.org.uk/student/categories/916/resource/3210/what-is-a-synoptic-essay-and-how-do-i-write-one>

## **Reading at A Level**

**At A-Level, in most subjects there is an expectation that you will read. History is no exception.**

This does not mean you have to go down to the library and get out 30 different books on Margaret Thatcher and read them all from cover to cover - unless you want to of course!

The idea is that you read *around* topics. What this means is that you might read a particular chapter of a book that relates to the aspect of the course you are studying.

Your teacher might tell you to read particular pieces and give you a list of suggested books to delve into - it will be up to you to delve into those books and others. Of course, during this time between Year 11 and Year 12, you might want to start some of that reading.

You should also try to keep notes on everything that you do read. Remember the tips for taking notes at A Level, though. Keep them organized into the relevant topics and do not copy everything down – just the important arguments and evidence which would help if you needed to write an essay on that topic.