

GCE AS/A LEVEL



# WJEC GCE AS/A LEVEL in HISTORY

CONSIDERING  
THE WIDER DEBATE  
IN UNIT 2



## CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

Having studied the main events of the period and the range of available evidence, learners should consider the validity of different interpretations of this period of history.

The aim is for students to be able to show awareness of the wider debate and use their understanding of the historical context to reach a judgement regarding the validity of different historical interpretations.

In this aspect of assessment, there is **no** requirement or expectation for any reference to historiography.

Here is one suggested way of helping students to evaluate the validity of different interpretations:

Set up **an obvious interpretation** about a specific issue:

- There is an interpretation that *[Interpretation 1]*.

Introduce **an alternative interpretation** of this issue and encourage learners to evaluate the validity of both interpretations:

- Learners should evaluate *[Interpretation 1]* and compare its validity against *[Interpretation 2]*.

Introduce **at least one other possible interpretation** to show awareness of the wider debate over this issue:

- Learners should compare the validity of *Interpretations 1 and 2* with another possible interpretation that ...

Reach **a judgement regarding the validity** of these interpretations.

Here is a worked example of the above based on the early history of the Weimar Republic:

- There is an interpretation that *the problems of the Weimar Republic 1918–1923 were mainly caused by the harshness of the Versailles settlement*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the problems of the Weimar Republic 1918–1923 were mainly caused by the harshness of the Versailles settlement* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *political change caused the most problems for the Weimar Republic at this time*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the problems caused by the Versailles settlement and political change* with another possible interpretation that *that even greater problems for the Weimar Republic at this time were caused by economic issues*.

## CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

**The same approach can be used for all the optional studies in depth in Unit 2.**

**What follows are some examples of various interpretations of specific content areas that could be used for evaluation using the approach given above.**

**Please note that this is not a definitive guide to the interpretations of these content areas.** There are many more interpretations of these issues which centres should try to address with their students and **teachers will wish to set up debates of their own.**

# CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

## OPTION 1: PROBLEMS, THREATS AND CHALLENGES c.1529–1553

### EXAMPLES OF THE WIDER DEBATE

#### Wales in the 1530s and 1540s

- There is an interpretation that *the most significant change in Wales in the 1530s and 1540s was the growth in power and influence of the gentry.*
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the most significant change in Wales in the 1530s and 1540s was the growth in power and influence of the gentry* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the most significant change in Wales in this period was the passing of the Acts of Union.*
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the significance of social and political change in Wales* with another possible interpretation that *religious change had a greater impact on Wales in this period.*

#### Religious changes in Wales and England

- There is an interpretation that *the main reason for changes in religion in this period was the desire to achieve more power for the monarch.*
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the main reason for changes in religion in this period was the desire to achieve more power for the monarch* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the religious changes of this period were mainly driven by the need for increased revenue.*
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the main reasons for religious change* with another possible interpretation that *religious change was largely caused by the need to secure an heir for the Tudor throne.*

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### The Henrician Reformation

- There is an interpretation that *the most significant impact of the Henrician Reformation was the growth in the power of the monarch.*
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the most significant impact of the Henrician Reformation was the growth in the power of the monarch* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the growth of Protestantism was the most significant impact of the Henrician Reformation.*
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the impact of the Henrician Reformation* with another possible interpretation that *the Henrician Reformation had very little impact on the life of most people in this period.*

### The major rebellions

- There is an interpretation that *religious change was the main cause of rebellion in this period.*
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *religious change was the main cause of rebellion in this period* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the main cause of rebellion in this period was economic hardship.*
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding the *religious and economic causes of rebellion* with another possible interpretation that *the most likely cause of rebellion was dissatisfaction with the policies of the government.*
- A further interpretation that could form part of the wider debate is that *rebellions at this time were mainly caused by local grievances.*

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## OPTION 2: THE PRESSURE ON THE MONARCHY AND THE DRIFT TO CIVIL WAR c.1625-1642

### EXAMPLES OF THE WIDER DEBATE

#### Charles I

- There is an interpretation that *Charles I's biggest problems were caused by his foreign policy.*
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *Charles I's biggest problems were caused by his foreign policy* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *Charles's reign was mostly dominated by religious problems.*
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the problems caused by foreign policy and religion* with another possible interpretation that *the main problem for Charles I was his worsening relationship with radicals in Parliament.*
- A further interpretation that could form part of the wider debate is that *economic issues were the main cause of Charles' other problems.*

#### Personal Rule and the recall of Parliament

- There is an interpretation that *the period of Personal Rule was a disaster due to the King's inability to rule effectively.*
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the period of Personal Rule was a disaster due to the King's inability to rule effectively* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the Personal Rule failed due to economic pressures.*
- Learners should compare the validity of both interpretations regarding *the failure of the Personal Rule* with another possible interpretation that *the Personal Rule was undermined by the growing radicalisation of MPs.*

## CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

### The outbreak of Civil War

- There is an interpretation that *the outbreak of Civil War was largely caused by the actions of the King*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the outbreak of Civil War was largely caused by the actions of the King* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the Civil War was mainly the responsibility of the radicals in Parliament*.
- Learners should compare the validity of both interpretations regarding *responsibility for the outbreak of the Civil War* with another possible interpretation that *the Civil War was caused by a combination of long-term economic, social and religious factors*.

### Developments in Scotland, Ireland and Wales

- There is an interpretation that *developments in Scotland, Ireland and Wales only played a minor part in the build up to the Civil War*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *developments in Scotland, Ireland and Wales only played a minor part in the build up to the Civil War* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the Scots in particular played a vital role in the build up to the Civil War*.
- Learners should compare the validity of both interpretations regarding *developments in Scotland, Ireland and Wales* with another possible interpretation that *the issues that caused the Civil War were important in all the Celtic nations*.

## CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

### OPTION 3: RADICALISM AND THE FIGHT FOR PARLIAMENTARY REFORM c.1783-1832

#### EXAMPLES OF THE WIDER DEBATE

##### The governments of Pitt and Lord Liverpool

- There is an interpretation that *the policies of Pitt were the most effective during this period*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the policies of Pitt were the most effective during this period* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *Liverpool's government passed the most effective policies during this period*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the policies of both Pitt and Liverpool's governments* with another possible interpretation that *the policies of both governments were equally as effective as each other*.

##### The Liberal Tory reforms

- There is an interpretation that *the most effective Liberal Tory reforms were connected with Britain's economy*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the most effective Liberal Tory reforms were connected with Britain's economy* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the legal reforms of the Liberal Tories had the most effect*.
- Learners should compare the validity of both interpretations regarding *the effectiveness of the Liberal Tory reforms* with another possible interpretation that *the most effective Liberal Tory reforms were to do with religion*.



# CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

## The growth of working class movements

- There is an interpretation that *the main reason for the growth of working class movements was the influence of the French Revolution*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the main reason for the growth of working class movements was the influence of the French Revolution* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the growth of working class movements was largely caused by economic hardship*.
- Learners should compare the validity of both interpretations regarding *the growth of working class movements* with another possible interpretation that *the evils of industrialisation were the main reason for the growth of such movements*.

## The Reform Act crisis

- There is an interpretation that *the Reform Act was a successful measure to introduce more democracy*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the Reform Act was a successful measure to introduce more democracy* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the Reform Act enabled the ruling elite to share power with the middle classes*.
- Learners should compare the validity of both interpretations regarding *the Reform Act* with another possible interpretation that *the Reform Act was a failure which did nothing to stem the tide of radicalism*.

# CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

## OPTION 4: POLITICS, SOCIETY AND THE WAR: WALES AND ENGLAND c.1900-1918

### EXAMPLES OF THE WIDER DEBATE

#### Social change in Wales and England

- There is an interpretation that *the Liberal social reforms were mainly designed to gain more votes*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the Liberal social reforms were mainly designed to gain more votes* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the Liberal social reforms were based on general humanitarian concerns*.
- Learners should compare the validity of both interpretations regarding *the Liberal social reforms* with another possible interpretation that *the reforms were largely a reaction to the rise of the Labour Party*.

#### Industrial conflict

- There is an interpretation that *industrial conflict was largely caused by the attitude of the employers*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *industrial conflict was largely caused by the attitude of the employers* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the main cause of industrial conflict in this period was the growing power of the trade unions*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the roles of employers and trade unions in creating conflict* with another possible interpretation that *poor working conditions were the main cause of industrial conflict*.
- A further interpretation that could form part of the wider debate is that *industrial conflict was usually associated with local social problems*.

## CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

### The political fortunes of the major parties

- There is an interpretation that *the most significant development in politics from 1900–1918 was the rise of the Labour Party*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the most significant development in politics from 1900–1918 was the rise of the Labour Party* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the most significant development in politics in this period was the split in the Liberal Party in 1916*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the political fortunes of the Labour and Liberal parties* with another possible interpretation that *there was little significant political change in this period which was dominated by the Conservatives in both Houses of Parliament*.

### The impact of war on society

- There is an interpretation that *the most significant impact of the First World War was on the role and status of women*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the most significant impact of the First World War was on the role and status of women* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the most significant impact of the First World War was to expand the power of the state*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the impact of the war on society* with another possible interpretation that *the greatest impact of the First World War was on Britain's economy*.

# CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

## OPTION 5: THE OUTBREAK AND SPREAD OF THE REFORMATION IN GERMANY c.1500-1531

### EXAMPLES OF THE WIDER DEBATE

#### The outbreak of the Reformation

- There is an interpretation that *the main reason for the outbreak of the Reformation was the abuses of the Catholic Church*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the main reason for the outbreak of the Reformation was the abuses of the Catholic Church* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the main influence on the outbreak of the Reformation was the criticisms of the Humanists*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the reasons for the outbreak of the Reformation* with another possible interpretation that *the protest of Martin Luther was the most important reason for its outbreak*.

#### Martin Luther

- There is an interpretation that *Martin Luther's main contribution to religious change was to spark off the outbreak of the Reformation*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *Martin Luther's main contribution to religious change was to spark off the outbreak of the Reformation* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the most important contribution of Luther was to ensure the spread of the Reformation*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the contribution of Martin Luther* with another possible interpretation that *his contribution to religious change was largely accidental*.

## CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

### The spread of the Reformation

- There is an interpretation that *the major factor in the spread of the Reformation was the political opportunity it offered to the German princes*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the major factor in the spread of the Reformation was the political opportunity it offered to the German princes* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the main reason for the spread of the Reformation was the use of the printing press*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the roles of the princes and the printing press in spreading the Reformation* with another possible interpretation that *the main factor in the spread of the Reformation was social and economic change during this period*.
- A further interpretation that could form part of the wider debate is that *the major factor in the spread of the Reformation was the refusal of the Catholic Church to reform*.

### The Peasants' War

- There is an interpretation that *the Peasants' War was mainly caused by economic grievances*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the Peasants' War was mainly caused by economic grievances* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the Peasants' War was sparked off by a desire to further the religious reformation in Germany*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the economic and religious causes of the Peasants War* with another possible interpretation that *the main cause of the Peasants War was to overturn serfdom*.

# CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

## OPTION 6: FRANCE: THE CAUSES AND COURSE OF REVOLUTION c.1774-1792

### EXAMPLES OF THE WIDER DEBATE

#### The Ancien Régime

- There is an interpretation that *financial problems were the main challenges to the effectiveness of the Ancien Régime*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *financial problems were the main challenges to the effectiveness of the Ancien Régime* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the effectiveness of the Ancien Régime was mainly impaired by the weakness of Louis XVI*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the effectiveness of the Ancien Régime* with another possible interpretation that *the effectiveness of the regime was mainly hindered by the privileges and power of the nobility*.

#### The causes of revolution

- There is an interpretation that *the main cause of revolution in France in 1789 was the financial situation of the country*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the main cause of revolution in France in 1789 was the financial situation of the country* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *revolution in France was largely due to a power struggle between monarch and nobility*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the financial situation and the relationship between monarch and nobility* with another possible interpretation that *revolution in France was largely due to the failure of the Ancien Régime*.
- A further interpretation that could form part of the wider debate is that *the outbreak of revolution was greatly influenced by the example of the American War of Independence*.

## CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

### The extent and success of changes made by the National Assembly

- There is an interpretation that *the National Assembly managed to deal effectively with the problems facing France*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the National Assembly managed to deal effectively with the problems facing France* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the National Assembly had only limited success such as the Civil Constitution of the Clergy*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the extent of success of the National Assembly* with another possible interpretation that *the policies of the National Assembly largely failed to resolve the main political problems*.

### The causes and consequences of internal conflicts

- There is an interpretation that *the main cause of conflict in France 1789–1792 was the position of the King and his supporters*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the main cause of conflict in France at this time was the position of the King and his supporters* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the most likely cause of conflict at this time was the growth in influence of the sans-culottes*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the influence of the King and the sans-culottes* with another possible interpretation that *the conflict in France at this time was largely caused by the Jacobins*.

# CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

## OPTION 7: SECTIONAL DIFFERENCES AND THE ROAD TO CIVIL WAR c.1840-1861

### EXAMPLES OF THE WIDER DEBATE

#### Slavery and the abolitionist movement

- There is an interpretation that *the most effective aspect of the abolitionist movement was to raise awareness about the wrongs of slavery.*
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the most effective aspect of the abolitionist movement was to raise awareness about the wrongs of slavery* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the abolitionist movement was most effective in making slavery a divisive political issue between north and south.*
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the effectiveness of the abolitionist movement* with another possible interpretation that *the abolitionist movement had little influence in most states in the 1850s.*

#### The failure to achieve compromise

- There is an interpretation that *attempts to achieve compromise in the 1850s failed mainly due to the Dred Scott case.*
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *attempts to achieve compromise in the 1850s failed mainly due to the Dred Scott case* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *a successful compromise was doomed by the actions of John Brown.*
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the failure to achieve compromise* with another possible interpretation that *compromise failed because of the entrenching of political and economic positions in the north and south during the 1850s.*



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### The role of key individuals

- There is an interpretation that *the most influential individual in American politics in the period up to the Civil War was Stephen Douglas*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the most influential individual in American politics in the period up to the Civil War was Stephen Douglas* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *Henry Clay was a far more influential figure in American politics in the years before the Civil War*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the influence of Douglas and Clay* with another possible interpretation that *it was John Calhoun who had greater influence on American politics in the run-up to the Civil War*.

### The causes of the Civil War

- There is an interpretation that *the Civil War was mainly caused by economic differences between northern and southern states*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the Civil War was mainly caused by economic differences between northern and southern states* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the main cause of civil war was the issue of slavery*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the pressures linked with economic differences and attitudes to slavery* with another possible interpretation that *conflict between north and south was largely caused by the issue of states' rights*.
- A further interpretation that could form part of the wider debate is that *Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860 was the main reason for conflict between the north and south*.

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## OPTION 8: WEIMAR AND ITS CHALLENGES c.1918–1933

### EXAMPLES OF THE WIDER DEBATE

#### The pressures on the Weimar Republic 1918–1923

- There is an interpretation that *the problems of the Weimar Republic 1918–1923 were mainly caused by the harshness of the Versailles settlement.*
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the problems of the Weimar Republic 1918–1923 were mainly caused by the harshness of the Versailles settlement* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *political change caused the most problems for the Weimar Republic at this time.*
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the problems caused by the Versailles settlement and political change* with another possible interpretation that *even greater problems for the Weimar Republic at this time were caused by economic issues.*

#### The Weimar Republic 1924–1929

- There is an interpretation that *the Weimar Republic from 1924–1929 was largely successful in dealing with Germany's problems.*
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the Weimar Republic from 1924–1929 was largely successful in dealing with Germany's problems* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the Weimar government in this period was largely ineffective in dealing with Germany's problems.*
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the success of the Weimar Republic in this period* with another possible interpretation that *the achievements of the Weimar government were largely due to a favourable international situation.*

# CONSIDERING THE WIDER DEBATE IN UNIT 2

## Germany and the Depression

- There is an interpretation that *the main impact of the Depression was the economic devastation of Germany in the early 1930s*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the main impact of the Depression was the economic devastation of Germany in the early 1930s* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the main consequence of the Depression on Germany was the rise of general political extremism*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the economic and political impact of the Depression* with another possible interpretation that *the coming to power of the Nazis was the most important consequence of the Depression on Germany*.

## The Nazi rise to power

- There is an interpretation that *the Nazis rose to power mainly because of the leadership of Hitler*.
- Learners should evaluate the interpretation that *the Nazis rose to power mainly because of the leadership of Hitler* and compare its validity against the interpretation that *the policies of the Weimar government were to blame for the rise of the Nazis*.
- Learners should compare the validity of the interpretations regarding *the roles of Hitler and the Weimar government in the Nazi rise* with another possible interpretation that *the main reason for the rise in support for the Nazis was hatred of the Versailles Settlement in Germany*.
- A further interpretation that could form part of the wider debate is that *the rise of the Nazis can be best explained due to their use of effective propaganda*.