Your notes

GCSE History: revision notes

Source and interpretation skills

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Sources and interpretations

- A source comes from the time being studied, such as a letter, photograph, cartoon or speech. An **interpretation** is a later view of the past, such as a historian's book or a documentary.
- Question every source with NOP: its Nature (what kind of source is it?), its Origin (who made it, and when?) and its Purpose (why was it made?).

Judging usefulness

- How useful a source is depends on the question being asked. Even a biased source can be useful, because it shows people's attitudes.
- Judge a source using its content (what it tells you), its **provenance** (who made it, when and why) and your own knowledge of the **context** (does it fit with what you know, and what does it leave out?).

Comparing interpretations

- Historians' **interpretations** differ because of the sources they use, what they focus on, when they were writing, and their purpose or point of view.
- To compare **interpretations**, identify the difference, support it with details from each, and explain why they might differ.

Exam technique

- Quote briefly, explain what the quotation shows, link it to your own knowledge, and reach a judgement.
- For 'how far do you agree?' questions, argue both sides with evidence, then give a clear, supported conclusion.
- Some answers also earn marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar, so check your writing.

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Key terms

Primary source	Evidence from the time being studied.
Secondary source	A later account of the past, based on other evidence.
Interpretation	A later view or explanation of the past, such as a historian's.
Provenance	Where a source comes from: who made it, when and why.
Utility	How useful a source is for a particular enquiry.
Bias	A one-sided view that favours one side.
Context	What was happening at the time.
Corroboration	Checking a source against other evidence.
Propaganda	Information designed to persuade people to think in a certain way.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is a primary source?
2. What is an interpretation?
3. What is provenance?
4. Can a biased source be useful?
5. What does 'context' mean when analysing a source?
6. Why might two historians disagree?
7. What is corroboration?
8. What is propaganda?

Answers

1. Something from the time being studied
2. A later view of the past, such as a historian's
3. Who made a source, when and why
4. Yes, it can show people's attitudes
5. What was happening at the time it was made
6. They used different sources or focused on different things
7. Checking a source against other evidence
8. Information designed to persuade people to think in a certain way

What to do next

Practise 12 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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