

The Historical Investigation

What is a Historical Investigation?

The historical investigation is a problem-solving activity that requires you to develop and apply the research skills of a historian to an interesting historical topic of your choice. You will be required to search for, select, evaluate and use evidence to reach a relevant conclusion. The investigation must be written in the specific format outlined below.

Examples of the types of investigations students may undertake are:

- A historical topic or theme using written sources or a variety of sources
- A historical problem using documents (this could include newspapers)
- A local history study
- A historical investigation based on interpreting a novel, film or work of art

Examples of research questions:

- How did the status of women in ancient Athens compare with the status of women in ancient Sparta?
- How historically accurate was the depiction of... in the film, or book, or myth...
- Were the interests of the Greek people better served by the Spartan oligarchy or the Athenian democracy?
- To what extent was the Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaton a revolutionary?
- Why were the strategies and tactics of Alexander the Great so successful?
- What were the contributions of Genghis Khan to the rise of Mongol power?
- Why were the Persians defeated at the battle of Marathon?
- How did the code of conduct of the ancient Samurai compare to that of the Medieval Knights?
- To what extent were the gladiator competitions in ancient Rome a form of social control over the people?
- With what justification can it be claimed that Ramses II deserved the epithet "The Great"?
- During the Middle Ages, why were women the chief targets of witch-hunts?
- Is it most likely that Atlantis existed or was it a fictional kingdom created by Plato?
- Why was Julius Caesar assassinated?
- Why was human sacrifice a key part of Aztec religious beliefs?
- To what extent can Cleopatra be considered a brilliant strategist?
- How did the geisha's way of life change during the Meiji period?
- Why did the _____ Empire collapse?

Scope of The Historical Investigation

You will be required to:

- Undertake a historical investigation using a good range of historical sources – a **minimum of 5 academic sources** must be used and cited. Avoid extensive use of web sites.
- Select a topic. While a topic from the time period covered by your text is preferable, you may propose an alternative.
- Provide a **title** for the historical investigation, it must be **framed as a question**
- Produce a written account of between **1500-2000 words**, which includes a **cover page with your name, research question and accurate word count**

Choice of Topic

You will choose your own topic, with Ms. Ryan's approval. The topic should be worthwhile and of interest to you. You must ensure there are sufficient sources, **at least 5 academic sources**, to support the investigation. ****Try to select a topic that includes diverse opinions and viewpoints.**

Please be aware of ethical considerations when undertaking any investigation. You must show sensitivity and respect confidentiality. You are also required to provide references for all sources used.

The Written Account

Every student must produce a written account consisting of the following six sections:

A Plan of the Investigation

100-150 words

Students should:

- State the topic of the investigation, which must be **formulated as a question**
- Define the scope of the investigation – “the what”, identify relevant aspects or areas of study to be explored, indicate timeframe as well.
- Explain the method of the investigation – “the how”, the nature of the sources chosen & why they have been selected; the proposed logical structure of the areas of scope (chronological/thematic) to show how the task will be addressed.

B Summary of Evidence

500-600 words

This section should consist of **factual** material that is:

- Drawn from sources that are appropriate for the investigation – **minimum 5 academic sources cited** (avoid extensive use of web sites)
- Correctly and consistently referenced - MLA format
- Organized thematically or chronologically
- Presented in focused & concise point form notes.

**** Remember your evidence can include: key facts, examples, statistics, & short quotes.**

**** Only the facts – no analysis (this section represents your research notes)**

**** Your analysis (Section D) can only draw on the facts in this section!**

C Evaluation of Sources

250-400 words

This section should consist of:

- A critical evaluation of **one important source** appropriate to the investigation with explicit reference to the origin, purpose, values and limitations. **OPVL**

**** Make sure the source you select is extensively used (and cited) in your summary and analysis.**

**** Remember value & limitations with respect to the origin and purpose, not the usefulness of the sources to your investigation.**

D Analysis**500-600 words**

This section should consist of:

- A brief introduction, include the historical context of your topic, and the thesis (clearly state your answer to the question and briefly outline your supporting arguments)
- Supporting arguments using the detailed factual evidence from the Summary of Evidence.
- An awareness of the importance to your investigation of the source evaluated in Section C.
- A consideration of different viewpoints of historians, where appropriate. When crafting your supporting arguments consider who supports your argument and why other views are not as convincing based on your evidence.

**** This is where you answer your research question – focused arguments supported by detailed evidence from your Summary of Evidence only!**

E Conclusion**150-200 words**

The conclusion must be clearly stated, consistent with the evidence presented and relevant to the research question. No new information should be included here.

F Sources and Word Limit

A bibliography or list of sources and all citations, using one standard method, must be included; any illustrations, documents, or other supporting evidence should be included in an appendix. If you use an interview as a source the transcript of the interview must be in the appendix. None of these will form part of the word count.

The **word count** for the investigation must be clearly and accurately stated on the title page.

Length: 1500–2000 words

Historical Investigation Assessment

Assessment Criteria**A Plan of Investigation****3 marks**

- 0 There is no plan of the investigation, or it is inappropriate.
- 1 The research question, method and scope of the investigation are not clearly stated.
- 2 The research question is clearly stated. The method and scope of the investigation are outlined and related to the research question.
- 3 The research question is clearly stated. The method and scope of the investigation are fully developed and closely focused on the research question.

B Summary of Evidence**6 marks**

- 0 There is no relevant factual material.
- 1–2 There is some relevant factual material but it has not been referenced.
- 3–4 There is relevant factual material that shows evidence of research, organization and referencing.
- 5–6 The factual material is all relevant to the investigation and it has been well researched, organized and correctly referenced.

C Evaluation of Sources**5 marks**

- 0 There is no description or evaluation of the source.
- 1 The source is described but there is no reference to their origin, purpose, value and limitation.
- 2–3 There is some evaluation of the source but reference to origin, purpose, value and limitation may be limited.
- 4–5 There is evaluation of the source and explicit reference to origin, purpose, value and limitation.

D Analysis**6 marks**

- 0 There is no analysis.
- 1–2 There is some attempt at analysing the evidence presented in section B.
- 3–4 There is analysis of the evidence presented in section B and references are included. There may be some awareness of the significance to the investigation of the source evaluated in section C. Where appropriate, different interpretations are considered.
- 5–6 There is critical analysis of the evidence presented in section B, accurate referencing, and an awareness of the significance to the investigation of the source evaluated in section C. Where appropriate, different interpretations are analysed.

E Conclusion**2 marks**

- 0 There is no conclusion, or the conclusion is not relevant.
- 1 The conclusion is stated but is not entirely consistent with the evidence presented.
- 2 The conclusion is clearly stated and consistent with the evidence presented.

F Sources and Word Limit**3 marks**

- 0 A list of sources is not included or the investigation is not within the word limit.
- 1 A list of sources is included but these are limited or one standard method is not used consistently or the word count is not clearly and accurately stated on the title page.
- 2 A list of sources using one standard method is included and the investigation is within the word limit.
- 3 An appropriate list of sources, using one standard method, is included. The investigation is within the word limit.

Total:**25 marks**

Planning Your Historical Investigation

1. Start by identifying a general area of interest. Read, read, and read!
2. Narrow it down to a specific question or area of investigation.
3. Choose a working title (in the form of a question) that may be changed or refined at a later stage.
4. Make sure sufficient resources can be obtained for the planned investigation – a minimum of 5 academic sources.
5. Complete section A, the plan, and evaluate the suitability of the research area.
6. Read widely around the area of study and note all resources used.
7. Review the research question and refine it if necessary.
8. Take notes from resources, gathering evidence and diverse opinions.
9. Ensure accurate use of referencing – MLA format.
10. Sort evidence thematically or chronologically.
11. Choose a suitable source to evaluate in section C.
12. Review your analysis. Check for differing viewpoints where appropriate.
13. Write the investigation, according to IB guidelines.
14. Revise
15. Submit your final investigation!

Checklist

It may be useful to refer to this checklist before submitting your historical investigation.

Task

Completed

Does the front cover have your name, candidate session number, word count and thesis question/statement?

Are all the pages numbered?

Have you completed section A, plan of the investigation?

Have you completed section B, summary of evidence?

Have you completed section C, evaluation of sources?

Have you completed section D, analysis?

Have you completed section E, conclusion?

Have you completed section F, sources and word limit?

Have you completed all six sections of the investigation thoroughly?

Does your bibliography contain all the sources used?

Is your bibliography set out in alphabetical order?

Is your investigation within the word limit of 1,500–2,000 words?

Has your teacher asked you to sign the relevant forms?