

# Galore Park's Guide to History for Common Entrance at 13+

By Gavin Hannah

This guide contains useful material to help your child to prepare for their forthcoming 13+ History Common Entrance exam:

- an outline of skills required when answering the evidence questions
- a suggested method of tackling evidence questions
- an example evidence question in the new style
- a model answer to the evidence question
- an outline of skills required when answering the essay questions
- example essay questions in the new style

## The new History for Common Entrance at 13+ syllabus

The revised syllabus, based on Key Stage 3 of the National Curriculum, comes into force in September 2013. The first examination paper will be set in autumn 2013 and the first major examination in the summer of 2014.

The complete syllabus can be found on the ISEB website: [www.iseb.co.uk](http://www.iseb.co.uk)

The syllabus covers British History during the period 1066–1914 and is divided into three named time periods:

- Medieval Realms: Britain 1066–1485
- The Making of the United Kingdom: 1485–1750
- Britain and Empire: 1750–1914

In each of the three time periods, there are five common study themes:

- war and rebellion
- government and parliament
- religion
- social history (social and economic history for the period 1750–1914)
- general topics, including local history

## The new History for Common Entrance at 13+ exam format

The examination paper will be 60 minutes long.

You must attempt:

- ONE evidence question
- ONE essay question

It is suggested that you spend 5 minutes reading and planning, then 20 minutes on the evidence question and 35 minutes on the essay question.

## The evidence question (20 marks / 20 minutes)

The evidence question will consist of two written sources (which may be contemporary, modern or a mix of both) and a third source that is pictorial. The question will always begin with the words: 'Using ALL the sources and your own knowledge ...' and will ask you to consider a viewpoint derived from the sources.

In this exercise you will be expected to demonstrate the following skills:

- comprehension
- comparison and corroboration by cross-referencing sources
- differentiation between first-hand evidence and hindsight
- deduction and interpretation
- an understanding of provenance
- evaluation of the utility of the sources
- the ability to present an overview, supported by your own knowledge which serves to place the sources into their historical context

### Evidence question skills

When evaluating pieces of evidence with a specific question in mind, there are **four** main skills which you should note and seek to develop. These are: **comprehension**, **comparison**, the idea of the **utility** of a source in a given context and the appropriate use of your **own knowledge**.

**Comprehension** – this means understanding the material. Comprehension underpins the whole exercise. Without understanding, you cannot offer any meaningful responses. Regular practice with the appropriate sources will develop skills and techniques in this area. **Specialised vocabulary** for any particular period or topic should also be noted. For example, if you are learning about Thomas Becket, you should be familiar with the word 'martyr'. Likewise, when studying slavery, you ought to know the meaning of the term 'triangular trade'.

**Comparison** – you must pick a clear theme or idea to compare. Remember that only two sources may be compared at any one time. You should get into the habit of cross-referencing sources with regard to one particular idea. You must consider the differences as well as the similarities. A rough sketch, in the form of a table with rows and columns, on a planning sheet, can help in this respect. Do not struggle to hold too many ideas in your head at the same time. Above all, be clear about what it is you are trying to compare, otherwise your answer will be muddled.

**Utility** – this means usefulness. In evidence questions, it means how useful a particular source is **for a particular purpose** – how fit for purpose **for a particular question**. You should always bear in mind the question which the examiners have set and assess the utility of the sources in relation to this. The content and provenance of a source are vital things to consider when judging the utility of a piece of evidence.

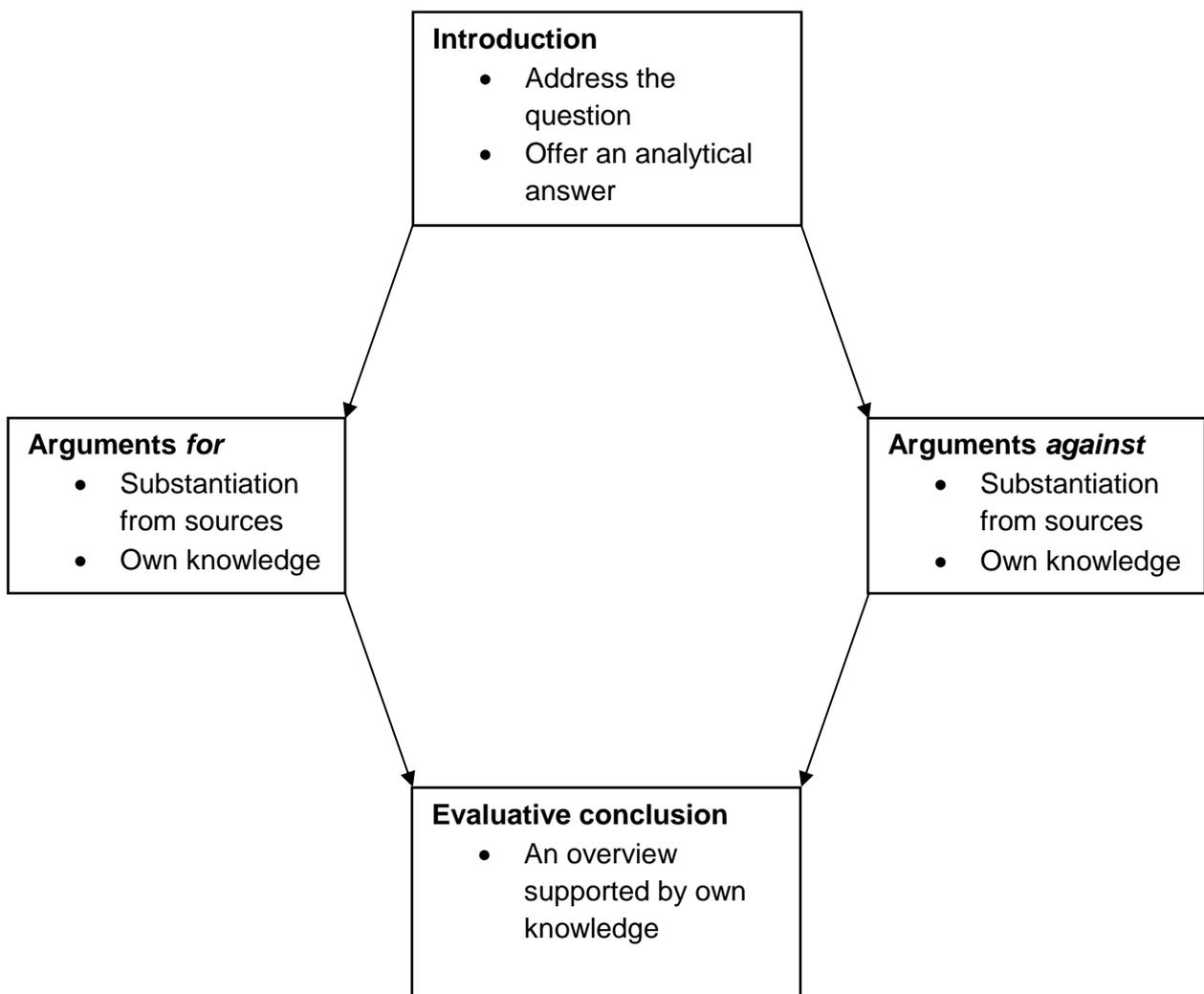
If a source has good provenance, the chances are that it will be reliable. But be careful – think hard here! Even if reliable, a source may not necessarily be useful. Reliability and usefulness are not the same thing. A source can only be useful if it is reliable **and** relevant to the particular question you are handling. Likewise, if the content is full and relevant to the question under consideration, the source will be useful.

**Your own knowledge** – your own knowledge will enable you to put the sources into their historical context, in other words, to ‘contextualise the sources’. Background knowledge is an important element when answering the specific question asked about the sources. The examination board sets two evidence question topics for each year, so you should acquire some background information on these areas.

## Planning your answer

All the above skills are brought into play and form part of a top-level answer. You should try to answer the question by making judgements based on the direct use of the sources. Valid statements on the reliability of the material, as well as relevant reference to your own background knowledge, also comprise vital elements of the best sort of answer. Answers also need to be well structured with a clear beginning, middle and end.

The following plan offers one method of hitting the targets set by the examiners. This is not meant to be a definitive scheme. However, it should offer you a clear framework for a successful approach to Evidence Questions.



## Example evidence question

### Medieval Realms: Britain 1066–1485, Norman Conquest

Read the introduction and the sources and then answer the question which follows.

#### Introduction

*On Saturday, 14th October 1066, Duke William of Normandy and his army won a decisive victory over the Anglo-Saxon forces led by King Harold. Throughout the day, the English army with their impressive shield wall defended the ridge at Senlac Hill. Finally, overwhelmed by superior military discipline and the skills of the Norman archers and cavalry, the English forces were annihilated. Harold was killed. His forty-week reign was over. The English survivors fled the field. The Normans could now begin their work.*

**Source A:** an extract from William of Poitiers, a Norman priest who became a chaplain to William the Conqueror. He was not present at Hastings. He wrote his account around 1071 and his story is inspired by his admiration for Duke William.

Evening was now falling and the English saw they could not hold out much longer against the Normans. They knew they had lost a great part of their army, and also that their king with his two brothers and many of their greatest men had fallen. Dismayed at the heroic courage of the duke, who spared none who came against him, they began to fly as swiftly as they could, some on horseback and some on foot. Many lay on the ground bathed in blood. Many left their corpses in the depths of the forest. Many, fallen on the ground, were trampled to death under the hooves of horses. The brave Normans carried on their pursuit, striking the English rebels in the back and bringing a happy end to this famous victory.

**Source B:** an extract from a modern historian writing about the achievements of the Normans after the Battle of Hastings.

After the battle, William still had much to do to make sure that he really took control of England. His first job was to reward his faithful followers. He did this by giving them land and estates taken from Saxon lords who had been killed at Hastings. Then he began a programme of building castles to make himself stronger. The first castles were of the motte-and-bailey type which could be put up quickly and which gave the Normans firm control of their new lands.

William also developed the feudal system by which, in return for their lands, his great lords had to provide a certain number of mounted knights to raise an army for their king. William's clerks produced a great survey which came to be known as the Domesday Book. This showed the king how much land there was and how much his kingdom was worth. The Domesday survey was probably made for taxation purposes. More money would make William stronger. The Normans gradually took control of the Church. Many bishops and abbots came from the Continent to organise religion in England. There was even a new language – Norman French – used by the new foreign rulers and little understood by the defeated English.

**Source C:** a nineteenth-century painting showing William the Conqueror leading his Norman knights against the English at Hastings during the Norman Conquest. Victory at this battle was total. The battleground was stained with the blood of the best of the English nobility.



© The Gallery Collection/Corbis

### Question

Using ALL the sources and your own knowledge, how true is it to say that the Battle of Hastings completed the Norman Conquest of England?

## Evidence question model answer

On the next page there is a model answer to the evidence question. This is a suggested answer only. Look at it carefully and see how it fits in with the ISEB mark scheme at the top level (you can find the latest ISEB mark scheme on the ISEB website at [www.iseb.co.uk](http://www.iseb.co.uk)).

The answer was written out in full in about 20 minutes, which is the normal time suggested for tackling such exercises. The answer might be considered too long by some people. It shows what might be done and is something to which pupils should aspire.

When you read it, focus on the structure and technique and not the opinion put forward. History answers are not 'right' or 'wrong' in the sense of those in a maths sum. Of course your dates and facts must be correct, but opinions vary. You can say anything you like as long as it is reasonable and sensible and you can back it up with evidence.

Not everyone would agree with the opinion about the Norman Conquest expressed in the model answer. There are as many possible answers as there are writers. Usually the subject you are discussing will itself give you guidance about what to say.

No answer is perfect. Indeed, there are plenty of alternative ways of earning the marks. This is, of course, both the beauty (and one of the difficulties) of history.

Remember to plan your answer properly:

- At the start, work out a 'thesis'. That means the line you are going to take. Then direct your arguments towards maintaining this idea. In the model answer, the thesis is that the Norman Conquest was not completed at the Battle of Hastings.
- Without a thesis to guide you, you will be lost. State your thesis at the start. Then argue for and against it using the sources and your own knowledge. Finally, provide a short conclusion which states your original thesis or view.

Enjoy what you write and let your enthusiasm come through your script and impress your examiners!

## Evidence question

Using ALL the sources and your own knowledge, how true is it to say that the Battle of Hastings completed the Norman Conquest of England?

### Model answer

In 1066, William the Conqueror won a great victory at the Battle of Hastings. But did the battle complete his conquest of England? A case may be made suggesting that Hastings was not the end of the Norman Conquest, but only the start.

**Source C** shows William leading his knights to victory. The English are beaten. But the source does not offer much correct information. It is based on the imagination of a nineteenth-century artist. It is useful for giving an impression of what the battle may have been like, but it is not accurate. Nonetheless, the event it illustrates did take place. After a long march from victory in the north, at Stamford Bridge, Harold and his army were defeated at Hastings.

**Source A** adds to this idea of the conquest of England at Hastings. It states that the English lost 'a great part of their army', that Harold and his brothers were killed and that the rest ran away into the forests. But this material needs to be handled with care. William of Poitiers was biased. As a chaplain to the Conqueror, he was a Norman supporter. He further shows this by describing the English as 'rebels'. He was not even at the battle! However, he wrote about a true historical event.

On the other hand, perhaps Hastings represented just the beginning of the Norman Conquest. After 1066, William did much to extend Norman power. He constructed castles, starting with the quickly built wooden forts of the motte-and-bailey type. These were followed by the great stone keeps, such as the White Tower at the Tower of London, completed by 1100, or at Castle Hedingham and Rochester.

**Source B** talks about castle building, as well as the tightening up of the feudal system. William gave land to his tenants-in-chief who passed land to their own knights. Estates were held in return for military service. Men swore oaths of homage to their lords and to the king. All this helped the Normans to control England. **Source B**, from a modern historian, should be accurate and reliable. The writer will have done careful research to try to find out the truth about the past. The evidence here suggests that much of the Norman Conquest gradually took place after 1066.

The Norman Conquest was also extended through a reorganization of the Church, as mentioned in **Source B**. An extensive building programme led to many new cathedrals, like that at Norwich in the years after 1096. Many parish churches were also rebuilt and monasteries were more strictly controlled. The production of the Domesday Book (1086) also gave the Norman kings more power. **Source B** speaks of this 'great survey' which listed what land each tenant had, as well as land use, acreages and land value. Rulers now knew what they owned.

A new language – Norman French – was introduced for the new ruling classes. Trade developed through the closer links with Normandy, but it was mainly Frenchmen who benefited.

Rebellions by the English, such as those by Hereward the Wake in the Fens and the Northern Uprising of 1069, were savagely crushed by William. This also reinforced the idea of Norman domination. Royal judges toured the country administering the king's laws. All these factors meant that England increasingly felt the weight of harsh Norman authority.

To sum up, it does not seem true to say that the Battle of Hastings completed the Norman Conquest of England. 1066 was more a beginning than an end.

## The essay question (30 marks / 35 minutes)

There will be ten essay questions from which you must select just **one**. Each question will be generic and open-ended. Up to 50% of the marks could be awarded for good narrative. However, to produce a top answer you should try to express opinions, formulate judgements and use your analytical skills.

### Essay question skills

Six ideas are offered here as a recipe for examination success:

- careful choice of essay question
- good time management
- clear structure
- appropriate mixture of narrative and analysis
- relevance
- enjoyment!

**Careful choice of essay question** – choose your essay question with care. With essay titles now being generic and open-ended, that is to say broad in scope, it is important for you to choose one with care. Ensure that you are able to make a good and relevant essay out of what you choose and that you can relate your choice exactly to the question. For example, if you decide to write about the significance of the consequences of a war, make sure that the war you choose (presumably you will have studied one in readiness for a 'war' question), has plenty of consequences. Then, focus on them and their significance. Do not merely tell the story of the war itself.

**Good time management** – effective time management is an important element of examination success. This is sometimes overlooked. Take every opportunity you can to write against the clock, particularly in the final run-up to the examinations. You can easily practise to see how much you can write in a given amount of time. Having some idea of this will increase your confidence. If you qualify for extra time, make sure that you follow the advice you are given on how to make the best use of it.

**Clear structure** – make a plan to get a good structure. Include an introduction and a conclusion with reference to the essay title. Between these, there should be a series of linked paragraphs, each making a particular point and following on from the last in a logical way, to form a clear framework of argument.

**Appropriate mixture of narrative and analysis** – narrative is important, indeed it is possible to score 50% of the marks allowed for the essay for narrative alone. But story telling on its own does not make a top-grade answer. Avoid narrative slabs. Ensure that historical material (facts) is carefully and relevantly deployed to underpin logical argument and to support your opinions.

Comment on what you write and try to understand its importance in relation to the question under review. Do not make wild, unsubstantiated generalisations. Always have a piece of evidence to support what you say. In short, make your facts work hard. Every fact should have a job in an essay and not just be there because it is an interesting fact.

**Relevance** – be relevant, use precisely selected knowledge. Keep a sense of focus. Produce a question-led response. Appreciate the difference between topic knowledge and question knowledge. Topic knowledge means everything you have been taught about a topic, such as Medieval Monasteries or Robert Walpole, question knowledge means only the knowledge necessary to answer a particular question on that topic.

**Enjoyment** – above everything else, enjoy what you write and let that sparkle come through your script. After all, you have chosen to tackle that particular essay. Good luck!

## Example essay questions

Here is a selection of example essay questions you can use to practise your essay-writing technique.

1. Choose a war which you have studied and explain its most important consequences.
2. Explain the causes of any one rebellion you have studied.
3. Explain the importance of the work of any one government minister.
4. Choose any one religious leader and explain the importance of his ideas.
5. Explain the significance of the changes to daily life in any period you have studied.
6. Explain the role of women in any period of history you have studied.
7. Choose any important building in England/Britain and explain its significance in the lives of people.
8. Assess the importance for England/Britain of any one technological development.
9. Choose a local historical site that you know well. Explain its importance to that particular area of the country.
10. Choose a person (not a monarch) who you think has made the greatest contribution to England/Britain and explain why his or her achievement is so important.

## **Information for teachers and parents – new Galore Park History resources**

The sample evidence and essay questions included in this guide will help your child to prepare for their forthcoming 13+ History Common Entrance exam.

In spring 2014, Galore Park will be publishing a series of fully updated History books to meet the demands of the new syllabus.

### **How to reserve your copies**

To reserve your copies, or to be notified as soon as the books are published, please get in touch with us by emailing [marketing@galorepark.co.uk](mailto:marketing@galorepark.co.uk) or calling **020 7873 6405**.

Further information will be available on our website [www.galorepark.co.uk](http://www.galorepark.co.uk)

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