

Writing the internal assessment for IB History

Key concepts

- Causation → Change
- Consequence → Perspective
- Continuity → Significance

Key questions

- What is the purpose of the internal assessment in history?
- How is the internal assessment structured and assessed?
- What are some suggested strategies for choosing a topic and getting started?
- What are some common mistakes students make?
- What are good criteria for selecting sources?
- What are the challenges facing the historian?

“Doing history”: Thinking like a historian

The **internal assessment (IA)** is an engaging, inquiry-based **2200 word investigation** that provides teachers and students with the opportunity to personalize their learning. You will select, research and write on a historical topic of individual interest or curiosity.

The IA is an essential component of the IB History course. Students in both standard level (25%) and higher level (20%) will complete the same task as part of their course mark. Your teacher will evaluate your final draft, but only a small, random sample of your class' IAs will be submitted to the IB for moderation.

The purpose of the historical investigation is to engage students in the process of thinking like historians and “doing history” by creating their own questions, gathering and examining evidence, analyzing perspectives, and demonstrating rich historical knowledge in the conclusions they draw. Given its importance, your teacher should provide considerable time, guidance, practice of skills and feedback throughout the process of planning, drafting, revising and submitting a final

copy of the IA. In total, completing the IA should take **approximately 20 hours**. This chapter is designed to give both students and teachers some guidance for approaching these tasks.

Class discussion

How does the place and the time you live in affect the topics you might be interested in, or curious about? How might where and when you live affect the evidence and sources you have access to? Which topics could you investigate that students in other places could not? What does this tell us about the nature of history?

What does the IA look like?

The IA is **divided into three main sections**. Each of these sections will be explained and approached in more detail later in this chapter. Below is an overview of each section:

1. Identification and evaluation of sources (6 marks)

- Clearly state the topic in the form of an appropriate inquiry question.
- Explain the nature and relevance of two of the sources selected for more detailed analysis of values and limitations with reference to origins, purpose and content.

2. Investigation (15 marks)

- Using appropriate format and clear organization, provide critical analysis that is focused on the question under investigation.
- Include a range of evidence to support an argument and analysis, and a conclusion drawn from the analysis.

3. Reflection (4 marks)

- Reflect on the process of investigating your question and discuss the methods used by historians, and the limitations or challenges of investigating their topic.



Your history teachers can use the IA for whatever purposes best suit the school context, syllabus design or the individual learning of students. Nevertheless, you should be encouraged to select and develop your own question. The IA can be started at any point during the course, however the task is most effectively introduced after students have been exposed to some purposeful teaching and practice in historical methods, analysis and writing skills.

The IA is designed to assess each of the following History objectives:

Assessment objective 1: Knowledge and understanding

- Demonstrate understanding of historical sources.

Assessment objective 2: Application and analysis

- Analyse and interpret a variety of sources.

Assessment objective 3: Synthesis and evaluation

- Evaluate sources as historical evidence, recognizing their value and limitations.
- Synthesize information from a selection of relevant sources.

Assessment objective 4: Use and application of appropriate skills

- Reflect on the methods used by, and challenges facing, the historian.
- Formulate an appropriate, focused question to guide a historical inquiry.
- Demonstrate evidence of research skills, organization, referencing and selection of appropriate sources.

Beginning with the end in mind: what does success look like?

Self-management skills

Throughout the process of planning, researching, drafting and revising your investigation, you should be continually checking the criteria. Ask your teacher and other students to provide specific feedback using the criteria. Continually ask yourself if your work meets the criteria.

Before getting started, you should look carefully at the assessment criteria to appreciate what each section of the IA demands. Teachers will **use the same criteria for both SL and HL**. It is important to have a clear understanding of what success will look like before you invest the time and hard work that this task will require. Teachers will use the criterion found in the IB History Guide to provide feedback to teachers and to assess the final draft. The assessment is based on “positive achievement”, meaning that teachers will try to find the best fit according to the descriptors in each criterion. Students do not have to write a perfect paper to achieve the highest descriptors, and teachers should not think in terms of pass/fail based on whether scores are above or below 50% of the 25 marks in total.

To simplify the criterion and to provide some fixed targets for what success looks like, consider using the assessment tool provided on the next page.

Teacher, Peer and Self-Assessment Tool

Criterion A: Identification and evaluation of sources (6 marks)

Suggested word count: 500

Criteria for success	Strengths	Improvements needed
• Does the investigation have an appropriate question clearly stated ?		
• Has the student selected, identified, and referenced (using a consistent format) appropriate and relevant sources ?		
• Is there a clear explanation of the relevance of the sources to the investigation?		
• Is there detailed analysis and evaluation of two sources with explicit discussion of the value and limitations , with reference to their origins, purpose and content ?		

Criterion B: Investigation (15 marks)

Suggested word count: 1,300

Criteria for success	Strengths	Improvements needed
• Is the investigation clear, coherent and effectively organized ?		
• Does the investigation contain well-developed critical analysis clearly focused on the stated question ?		
• Is there evidence from a range of sources used effectively to support an argument ?		
• Is there evaluation of different perspectives (arguments, claims, experiences etc.) on the topic and/or question?		
• Does the investigation provide a reasoned conclusion that is consistent with the evidence and arguments provided ?		

Criterion C: Reflection (4 marks)

Suggested word count: 400

Criteria for success	Strengths	Improvements needed
• Does the student focus clearly on what the investigation revealed about the methods used by historians ?		
• Does the reflection demonstrate clear awareness of the challenges facing historians and/or the limitations of the methods used by historians?		
• Is there an explicit connection between the reflection and the rest of the investigation (question, sources used, evaluation and analysis)?		



Bibliography & formatting (no marks applicable)

Suggested word count: Not included in total

Criteria for success	Strengths	Improvements needed
• Is the word count clearly stated on the cover? (2200 maximum)		
• Is a single bibliographic style or format consistently used ?		
• Is the bibliography clearly organized and include all the sources you have referenced or used as evidence in the investigation?		

Getting started: Approaches to learning history

Thinking skills

To start generating ideas for a topic and to help you focus your question, use a research-based thinking routine such as **Think-Puzzle-Explore** (see Ritchhart, Church and Morrison, 2011. *Make Thinking Visible*, Jossey-Bass).

Think: What topics do you think might interest you?

Puzzle: What puzzles you about these topics?

Explore: How can you explore more about each of these topics?

Ideally, you will have opportunities throughout the IB History course to explore and develop understandings about the methods and the nature of history. This will prepare you to better develop the skills necessary for the IA and the other assessment papers in the IB History course. Additionally, these kinds of learning activities provide clear links to TOK.

- Debate controversial historical events and claims.
- Compare and corroborate conflicting sources of evidence.
- Take on, role play or defend different perspectives or experiences of an event.
- Discuss the value and limitations of historian's arguments and evidence.
- Develop criteria for selecting and comparing historical sources.
- Gather and analyze a variety of different kinds of sources (photos, artwork, journal entries, maps, etc.) focused on the same event or issue.

- Co-develop good questions and carry out an investigation of a historical event as a entire class.
- Read an excerpt from a historian's work and identify which parts are analysis, evidence and narrative.

If students better understand that history is more than simply memorizing and reporting on facts, dates and chronological narratives, then they are more likely to be curious, engaged and motivated learners of history. Accordingly, they will more likely develop appropriate questions for their investigation and have a better understanding of how to organize and write effective analysis.

Selecting a topic and appropriate questions

Self-management skills

Before beginning, ask your teacher to find some examples of student IAs with examiner's feedback. These can be found on the **IB Online Curriculum Centre** or in the **Teachers' Support Materials** for History. Examine the formatting and layout of each component to visualize in advance what your IA might look like, and the steps that will be required to complete them.

Once you have some general understanding of the IA components and are familiar with the assessment criteria, it is time to select a topic focus. Students often do not know how to begin selecting a topic. Identify a historical topic of interest and get to know it well by conducting some background reading from a general history textbook or an online encyclopaedia. You may find some information that will help you narrow the topic focus quickly. These kinds of sources often outline the differing perspectives, interpretations and controversies

that make for an engaging investigation. Well-written textbooks and articles will also include references, annotated bibliographies and footnotes of additional, more detailed sources that will help in the research stage.

After selecting a topic, formulating an appropriate research question can also be very challenging. It is essential that you take the time to carefully think about what kinds of topics help produce good questions for investigations. Before you begin any writing, **you should submit a proposal** to your teacher to ensure that the investigation will be successful.

Some teachers recommend that students write about a topic related to their course syllabus, but there are a countless number of possible topics and you are better off choosing topics that interest you and motivate you to learn. The topic must be historical however, so students **may not investigate any topic that happened within the last ten years**. All investigations will take one of three forms:

- 1 **An investigation of a historical theme, issue, person or event based on a variety of sources.**
- 2 **An investigation based on fieldwork of a historical building, place or site.**
- 3 **An investigation of a local history.**

When selecting a historical topic, students often fail to select a topic that is manageable. For example, examining all of the causes of the Second World War is too broad for the purposes of a 2200 word investigation. Many students also select topics that cannot be researched in depth because there are not enough readily available primary and/or secondary sources.

Investigating a historically-themed film or piece of literature can be very engaging; but many students write better papers when they focus the investigation on a particular claim, portrayal or perspective contained in the work, rather than the entire work itself. Students who choose to investigate a historical site, or to investigate local or community history, often have an opportunity to engage in experiences that are more authentic to the work of professional historians, but these can also produce a lot of challenges when looking

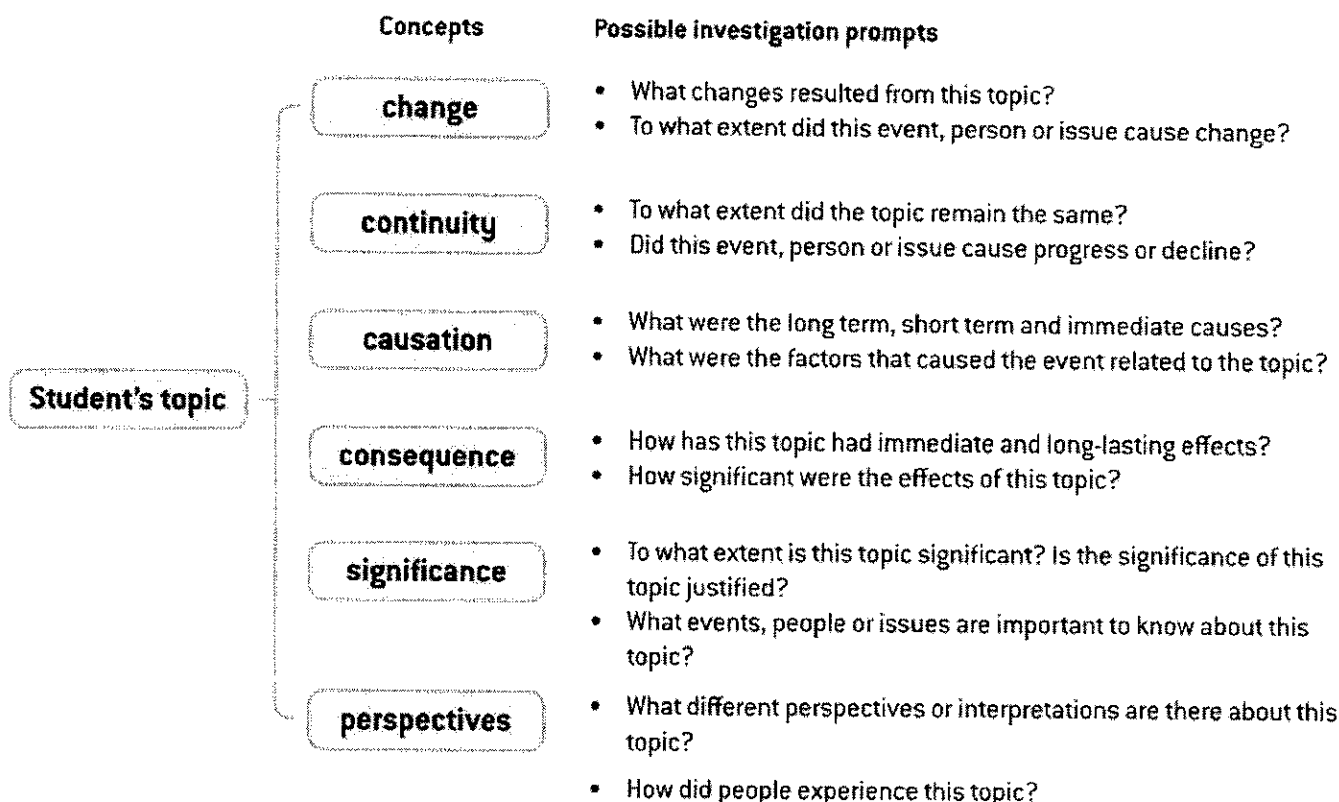
for sources. Whatever the topic that you select, it is essential to formulate a good question.

One of the most common errors students make when planning and writing the IA is formulating a poor question about their topic. Formulating a good question is essential for success and helps ensure that the IA is a manageable and researchable investigation. Consider the following criteria when formulating a good question:

1 The question is researchable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There is an adequate variety and availability of sources related to your topic.</i> • <i>The sources are readable, available and in a language that is accessible.</i>
2 The question is focused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Questions that are vague or too broad make it difficult to write a focused investigation limited to 2200 words.</i> • <i>Questions that are too broad make it difficult to manage the number of sources needed to adequately address the topic.</i>
3 The question is engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Interesting, controversial or challenging historical problems make better questions.</i> • <i>Questions with obvious answers (i.e. Did economic factors play a role in Hitler's rise to power?) do not make good investigations.</i>

Using the concepts to formulate good questions

The IB History course is focused on **six key concepts: change, continuity, causation, consequence, significance and perspectives**. Each of these concepts shape historians' thinking about the kinds of questions they ask and investigate. Therefore, they are helpful to students as a framework for formulating good IA questions. Using the historical thinking concepts, you may be able to generate several good questions about any historical topic that can be eventually focused into successful investigations.



To illustrate, a student interested in the Russian Revolution might use the concepts to brainstorm the following possible investigations:

Change: *In what ways did the Russian Revolution change Russian society?*

Continuity: *To what extent did Stalin's regime resemble the Tsarist system?*

Causation: *How significant were long term factors in causing the February Revolution?*

Consequence: *To what extent did Stalin's purges affect military preparedness?*

Significance: *How important was Lenin's role in the October Revolution?*

Perspectives: *To what extent did Doctor Zhivago capture the experience of upper class Russians during the Revolution?*

After generating some possible questions, students can bring greater focus to their topic. For example, a student interested in how women experienced Stalinism may narrow the focus to a particular place or event. A student investigating long-term causes of an event may have more success if the

question is focused on the significance of a specific, singular cause. For good examples of historical questions, you should consult past Paper 2 or Paper 3 examination questions.

You should notice that many of the questions above include more than one concept. Most good historical investigations will require students to think about perspectives because there will likely be multiple accounts of the issue under investigation, or there will be some controversy between historians. Here are some question exemplars showing how they capture more than one key historical concepts:

- *How significant was Allied area bombing in reducing German industrial capacity during the Second World War? (significance; consequence)*
- *To what extent did Gandhi's leadership achieve Indian independence? (significance; perspectives; causation)*

All successful IAs begin with a well-developed, thoughtful and focused question that is based on one or more of the historical concepts.

Internal Assessment skills

Categorize the following questions [Good – Needs Improvement – Poor] according to their suitability as a historical investigation according to the criteria provided above. Suggest ways the questions might be improved.

- 1 Which Second World War film is the most accurate?
- 2 To what extent did nationalism play a role in causing the First World War?
- 3 How did women win the right to vote in the United States?
- 4 Did Hitler use film for propaganda?
- 5 In what ways did Stalin start the Cold War?
- 6 To what extent was the influenza epidemic a factor in the collapse of the Central Powers in 1918?

Common problems when selecting a topic and question:

- Poorly focused question – too broad and unmanageable.
- Obvious question.
- Question is not researchable.

Getting organized: making a plan of investigation

Self-management skills

Create your own plan for completion with target dates and goals. Submit this with your proposed topic and question. Include some initial sources of information you will use.

Completing the IA successfully requires that students **create a plan for completion** that includes several important steps of the inquiry process. Some of the steps may overlap, but it is important that you organize your tasks and stay on track for completion by setting goals and due dates. Your teacher should read at least one draft and give some feedback to ensure that the IA is not plagiarised. A plan of investigation should include the following steps:

1 Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a topic and formulate a question. • Submit a proposal to your teacher. • Identify information sources.
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2 Researching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information sources and evidence. • Carefully read and evaluate information.
3 Organizing and processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create notes. • Record references using a standard citation format. • Create a bibliography. • Organize ideas into an outline. • Formulate an argument.
4 Drafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write each section of the IA. • Revise and edit. • Check assessment criteria.
5 Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit a draft for feedback.
6 Revising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise based on feedback from your teacher.
7 Publishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit final copy to your teacher. • Evaluate using criteria.

Getting organized: researching

Communication skills

When supporting historical claims, it is important to make your evidence visible to your reader. Make sure you use a standard bibliographic format to show the reader where your evidence was found. In the discipline of history, the University of Chicago style or MLA style is most commonly used because it provides significant information about the origins of the source, and the endnotes or footnotes format allows the historian to insert additional information about the source where necessary.

Take good notes during the research stage.

Post-it notes are helpful to record thoughts and ideas next to key passages as you read and think about the information in relation to the question. Using different coloured highlighters to identify different perspectives on the question as you read can also be helpful. If using borrowed books, take a photo of important pages on a tablet device and use a note taking application to highlight and write notes on the page. Students who make their thinking visible as they read will have a easier time writing later in the process. Create a timeline of the event you are researching to ensure the chronology is clear in your mind.



It is strongly recommended that you record the bibliographic information and page numbers where you find important evidence and analysis. Many students wait until the very end of the writing process to compile their bibliography, but this is much more easily accomplished if the information is recorded throughout, instead of as an afterthought when the draft is finished. There are several easily accessible web sites that provide the most up-to-date versions of **MLA** (www.mla.org), and **Chicago Manual of Style** (www.chicagomanualofstyle.org), which are the two

most common formats used for bibliographies in university history departments.

Common problems when planning and organizing an IA:

- Lack of general background knowledge of the topic.
- No feedback on proposed topic and question.
- No plan for completion.
- Inaccurately recording page numbers and references.
- Poorly organized notes; or no notes at all.

Internal Assessment skills

Create a proposal for the IA using the template shown.

Topic:	Student:
Research question:	
Proposed sources:	
Sources [2] proposed for evaluation in Section A:	

Section A: Identification and evaluation of sources

Section A is worth 6 of the 25 total marks. It is recommended that the word count does not exceed much more than 500 words. While this section does not count for a substantial portion of the marks, most students will not be successful without a strong Section A. There are three key aspects of this section.

- 1 **Clearly state the topic of the investigation. (This must be stated as a question).**
- 2 **Include a brief explanation of the two sources the student has selected for detailed analysis, and a brief explanation of their relevance to the investigation.**
- 3 **With reference to their origins, purpose and content, analyse the value and limitations of the two sources.**

Common problems with Section A:

- Question is not clearly stated.
- Relevance or significance of selected sources not explained.
- Student summarizes the content of selected sources.
- Limited analysis.
- Discussion of origins, purpose and content is in isolation to value and limitations.
- Poorly chosen sources.
- Speculates vaguely about the values and limitations of sources.
- Reference to origins, purpose and content is not explicit.

Thinking about evidence: origins, purpose, value and limitations

Because it is built on a foundation of evidence, history is by nature interpretive and controversial.

This is not something many people understand – to them history is simply a long list of dates and dead people. While there are a great many things historians agree upon, there are countless historical questions that are enshrouded in debate and controversy. Since relatively few people personally witness the events they study, how one understands the past depends largely on which sources of evidence are used, and how they are interpreted. Even facts that historians generally agree upon can change over time. Philosopher Ambrose Bierce once said, *“God alone knows the future, but only a historian can alter the past.”* Though the past cannot actually be changed, historical memory and understanding is always changing as each generation brings forward new questions, new evidence and new perspectives. This process of changing historical interpretations is referred to as **revisionism**. Revisionist historians are those who challenge **orthodox**, or generally accepted arguments and interpretations.

Besides revisionism, another reason why history is controversial is that accounts or evidence from the same events can differ drastically. People record events from different **origins and perspectives**, and for different **purposes**. Historical evidence might come from a limitless number of possible kinds of sources. Sources that all originate from the same time and place that we are investigating are typically referred to as **primary sources**. The interpretations and narratives that we find in documentaries, articles and books created by historians are called **secondary sources**.

Students often make the error of thinking that primary sources are more authentic and reliable, and therefore have more **value**, and fewer **limitations** than secondary sources. This isn't always the case. Being there does not necessarily give greater insight into events, and indeed, sometimes the opposite is true. Historians can look at events from multiple perspectives and use a wide range of evidence not available to the eyewitness. Students often speculate that a primary source is valuable and significant to their investigation, but

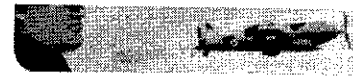
have poor reasons in support of this beyond the fact that it is a primary source.

It is important that you understand how to evaluate the value and limitations of sources with reference to the origins, purpose and content of the source. Discussing the origin, purpose and content outside the context of the value and limitations will result in a poor assessment.

Origins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where did the source come from? Who wrote or created it? Whose perspectives are represented? Whose are not?
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why was this created? What purpose might this document have served?
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does the source mean? What does it reveal or contain? How useful is the information? Is it reasonable to believe it is accurate? Can it be corroborated?

Generally, the closer in proximity (place and time) the origin of a primary source is, the more **value** it has to historians. If students can find ways to **corroborate** (support, confirm) a source by other sources, then the source likely has greater value to the investigation. **Limitations** may include any factors that cause someone to question the truthfulness, validity or value of a source.

Keep in mind, that using the term **bias** is not always useful in history – it is important to be able to identify bias, but bias does not necessarily limit the value of a source. Students often make the error of assuming a source is unreliable because they detect bias. Remember that most people will have biased perspectives that are unique to their own experiences, time and place. This does not mean that you should blindly dismiss the evidence they offer us. You should ensure that you explain clearly how the bias affects the value of the content in the source used.



Internal Assessment skills

Use this template for taking notes from each of the sources used in the investigation.

Research Question:		
Source (bibliographic information):		
Primary or secondary source?	How is the source relevant/significant to the investigation?	Origins/Purpose? Value/Limitations?
Page#:	What evidence does the source provide? (quote, paraphrase, describe)	What is your interpretation? How does the content of the source relate to your question? What perspective does it add?

Selecting sources for the IA

One of the challenges to students writing a successful Section A is making sure that they choose two appropriate sources to evaluate. You should be able to clearly and effectively explain why the chosen sources are relevant and important to the investigation.

Often students make the mistake of relying too heavily on non-scholarly sources such as online encyclopaedia articles and general history textbooks. As stated, these are good starting points for finding a topic, but they are not good sources to build your investigation upon. They are especially poor choices to use for detailed analysis in this section. Before selecting sources consider the following:

- You will be expected to discuss as much detail about the origins and purpose of the source as possible. Be sure to choose sources where you can identify as much of the following as possible: when it was created; who created it; why it was created; where it was created. If much of this information is not readily identifiable, you will have difficulty evaluating value and limitations with explicit reference to the origins and purpose.
- Select sources or excerpts of sources that have clear significance to the question. You should be able to clearly, and explicitly explain why the content of the source is important to the investigation. Some students choose sources that are largely irrelevant or vaguely related to the question.
- The investigation should include an appropriate range of sources. As a general rule, you should include both primary and secondary sources, but this may not work with some types of investigations. While secondary sources on a topic are likely to be easily obtained, they often provide less to discuss in Section A. Interviews, personal correspondence, newspaper articles, journals, speeches, letters, and other primary sources often provide students with much more meaningful material to evaluate in Section A. Ideas about origins and purpose come more readily with primary sources than they might when using secondary sources which generally, but not always, strive to present balanced arguments and perspectives.
- Choose secondary sources that reference the evidence the historians used to support their arguments. You will find it less difficult to

assess the validity of the evidence the historian uses, or how the evidence is interpreted in the arguments, if the historian has documented the evidence clearly.

- Consider using periodical articles. Many historians write excellent, concise articles on historical topics for peer-reviewed journals. These articles often have rich footnoting and bibliographies that you can use to find additional sources for the investigation.
- Be careful about relying too heavily on general web-based sources. Many online sources are not referenced or footnoted properly so it is difficult to validate information about the origins, purpose and authorship. On the other hand, a great number of rich primary sources can be found online, as well as articles written by respected historians.
- Consider using interviews. Some students have written exceptional IAs based on people's experiences, or by interviewing historians or other people with extensive knowledge and experience. When using interviews, record them as an audio file for reference and accuracy.

Analysing the selected sources

After stating the research question and explaining the two selected sources and their relevance to

the investigation, the largest portion of Section A should focus on analysing the two sources.

Depending on the sources chosen, they can be discussed simultaneously and comparatively, or they can be discussed separately. Discussing them separately is often more advantageous because you can make the origins, purpose, value and limitations more explicit.

- It is important that any arguments about the value and limitations make specific references to the content, origins and purpose.
- Be careful that the value of a source is not dismissed on the basis of bias without a strong argument about why the bias limits the validity or reliability of the content.
- You should avoid summarizing the content too much. Summarize and describe content only to the extent necessary to construct a strong analysis about the source's value and limitations.
- You should be thorough in examining all aspects of the source's origins including date of origin, cultural context, author's background, publisher or other important details. If little information about the origins is identifiable, it is likely a poorly chosen source for analysis.

Internal Assessment skills

Use the Section A assessment criteria to discuss and evaluate this excerpt of a student's work. Identify where the student has explicitly discussed origins and purpose, and value and limitations.

This investigation will seek to answer the question "What did the Tiananmen Square protest reveal about the democratic sentiments in China between 1980 and 1989?" Democratic sentiments are defined as people's attitudes toward democratic ideals. This investigation will analyze factors that influenced democratic sentiments from multiple perspectives, but will not assess the ethics and justification of the Chinese government's response to the protest.

In order to take into account the opposing views on this event and keep the scope of the investigation manageable, I have made use of a variety of carefully selected sources. Two primary sources will be evaluated...

Source 1: Prisoner of State: the secret journal of Zhao Ziyang¹

The origin of the source is of great value because the author is Zhao Ziyang, the General Secretary of the Communist Party during the Tiananmen Square Protest (the Protest). Zhao attempted to use a non-violent approach to resolve the protest and spoke against the party's hardliners. After a power struggle, Zhao was dismissed and put under house arrest until his death in 2005. The content of the journal is translated from thirty audiotapes recorded secretly by Zhao while he was under house arrest between 1999 and 2000. The book is published in 2009 by Simon & Schuster, one of the largest and most reputable English-language publishers. The reputation of the author and publisher increases the reliability of this source.



Zhao's purpose for recording these tapes is to publicize his political opinions and express his regret for failing to prevent the massacre. This is valuable because Zhao was not allowed to publicize his opinions while under house arrest, so this source is the only surviving public record of Zhao's opinions and perspectives on the Protest. This source is also valuable because its author, Zhao, was directly involved in the government's decision-making process during the protest. It reveals the power struggle

within the Communist Party through the lens of the progressive bloc.

However, its exclusivity may limit its value because there are no counterparts to compare with and to verify its claims. As a translated material, the source may not accurately present Zhao's intentions and may have lost some cultural expressions. In addition, this source may be biased in that Zhao speaks in favour of political reform and democracy, which does not represent the Party's position ...

¹ Zhao, Ziyang, Pu Bao, Renee Chiang, Adi Ignatius, and Roderick MacFarquhar. *Prisoner of the state: the secret journal of Zhao Ziyang*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009.

Section B: Investigation

Common problems with Section B:

- Too much narrative.
- Poor referencing of sources.
- Limited awareness of different positions or perspectives.
- Listing of evidence instead of integrating analysis and evidence.
- Overuse of quotations.
- Plagiarism.
- Poor organization and arguments that are difficult to follow.
- Few connections to the question and purpose of the investigation.
- Conclusions are not evidence-based.

It is essential that you keep Section B focused on the purpose of the investigation and construct an argument using all of the sources you have listed in the bibliography. No marks are awarded for the bibliography, but an incomplete treatment of your sources, or inaccurate referencing will cost you marks in this section. **Evidence must be integrated with very clear critical commentary** that leads the reader to an eventual **evidence-based conclusion** that addresses the question posed in Section A. Students often make the error of simply listing facts they researched, without explaining how they are relevant or relate to their question. The following points should be considered when writing this section.

- The investigation should be carefully organized. The synthesis of evidence and critical

commentary should be carefully planned to ensure that there is logic and flow to the section, and that your argument is very clear.

- The type of question you pose for the investigation will determine how you organize your writing. For example, a question that invites comparisons (for example: whether a film portrays an event accurately) will require you to discuss both similarities and differences. "To what extent" questions will require you to discuss both perspectives of "ways no" and "ways yes".
- As you gather evidence and document your thinking in your notes, keep in mind you may need to adjust or change your question. You should give some consideration to planning and writing Section B before writing Section A.
- Where appropriate, discuss different perspectives of the topic. Historians may offer different interpretations, or there may be multiple experiences of an event.
- Quotes should be used sparingly. Most of your writing should summarize and paraphrase the evidence collected and explain explicitly how it relates to the investigation. Too many student papers read as long lists of quotes from sources. Quotes must be explained, or integrated as evidence in support of an argument, and add something specifically and convincingly to your argument.
- Any references to sources, or ideas that are not your own, should be referenced appropriately using endnotes or footnotes. If this is not completed carefully, you risk plagiarizing others' ideas as your own.



Section C: Reflection

In Section C (approx. 400 words) you have the opportunity to reflect on what the investigation revealed to you about the methods used by historians and the challenges they face when investigating topics like your own. This section is worth the fewest marks (4), but it could make the difference between a good and an outstanding paper. You should no doubt already have an understanding that the study of history is beset with a number of challenges and limitations, some of which have been discussed earlier in this chapter. Section A is designed to give you an opportunity to reflect on this understanding, but it must be focused specifically on the nature of your topic and/or the kind of investigation you undertook, rather than a reflection on the nature of history in general.

Common problems with Section C:

- Limited understanding of the nature of history and the challenges facing historians.
- Limited understanding of the methods historians use to examine and study history.
- Poorly focused on the challenges specific to the student's topic.

Throughout your IB History course, your TOK and History teachers should provide opportunities for you to think about and discuss the challenges of determining historical truth and understanding.

History can often be determined largely by who writes it, his or her purpose, and the methods he or she decides to use. Consider also that where there is scant evidence, historians often make very authoritative sounding **speculations** – essentially educated guesses – where they fill in gaps in the historical record with judgments they think are reasonable to believe. But often we cannot with absolute certainty verify or prove beyond doubt that their accounts are correct.

Many of the inherent challenges of history stem from problems related to its evidence-based nature. History is also challenging because of how it is used for so many different purposes including political slogans, national narratives, personal and group identity, entertainment, advertising and countless other ways. The past the historian studies is not a dead past. History is living, changing and visible in the present. Therefore, there is no shortage of questions to consider in your reflection section.

- What is history? Is it more creative and interpretive as opposed to scientific and objective?
- How did the nature of your investigation present specific challenges to finding reliable evidence?
- What methods did historians use? How were they limited by time and place? How are they limited by ideology or world views?
- Is it possible to capture the entirety of an event?
- What are the challenges of causation? How far back in time should the historian search for causes? Can immediate causes ever be separated from long term causes?
- How might national identity, cultural norms, values or beliefs affect one's ability to reason and arrive at an understanding of history?
- How might mass culture, the entertainment industry or other powerful forces influence historical understanding?
- Who decides what topics and issues are important to record and study?
- How does bias and editorial selection impact what is recorded and reported on, and what is not?
- In what ways does the outcome of an event determine how it is recorded in history?
- How does technology affect understanding of history, or the methods the historian uses?
- How are value judgements in history determined? For example, how are terms like atrocity, terrorism or revolution treated now compared to the period under investigation? Should historians make moral judgements?
- In what ways does the idea of progress and decline affect our treatment of some historical events?
- What is the role of the historian? Can the historian ever be objective?
- Are all perspectives of history equally valid? If not, how do we determine which have greater value?
- How might knowledge of your investigation be used to solve complex problems in the present? How might it be abused?

It would be far too ambitious for you to consider all of these questions in Section C. It is essential however that you give considerable thought

to what you learned about history from your investigation. You should demonstrate clear awareness of the challenges facing historians, and the limitations of specific methods used in investigating topics like your own. In other words, there should be a clear connection between the nature of history as a way of thinking, and your own investigation. For a greater understanding of the nature of history, the following books are very useful.

E.E. Carr, 1961. *What is History?* Penguin Books. London, UK

M. MacMillan, 2008. *The Uses and Abuses of History*. Viking. Toronto.

J. L. Gaddis, 2004. *The Landscape of History*. New York, Oxford University Press.

Final touches: Wrapping up the IA

The Internal Assessment is arguably the best opportunity IB History students have to maximize their overall course mark. The final assessed mark is entirely in your hands because you control the

process of topic selection, research, planning and writing. Before submitting to your teacher for final assessment, make sure you have completed the following:

- Select and thoroughly research a question of personal interest.
- Complete all sections fully, according to the criteria.
- Compare your IA to examples posted on the OCC or in the Teacher Support Materials.
- Include all relevant sources in your bibliography.
- Reference all sources using a consistent, standardized citation format.
- Edit and proofread your work carefully.
- Submit a draft for effective feedback from your teacher.
- Include a title page with your question, name, candidate number and total word count clearly listed.
- Include a table of contents.

Internal Assessment skills

Discuss and evaluate the student example below using the criteria for Section C:

Ever since Deng declared martial law on May 20th, 1989, the Tiananmen Square Protest had been a taboo topic in Mainland China. There are no public records of the Protest, and any discussion regarding the Protest is immediately censored. In the educational system, particularly, the Protest was considered "non-existent". The Party's illegitimate historical revisionism illustrates the extent to which history can be manipulated to influence public opinions. Therefore, historians have the morally imperative role to present a balanced account of the Protest.

However, historians hoping to investigate the Protest face a dilemma: most primary sources are not made public by the Chinese government, and most available sources are from the protestors' perspectives. Historians either have no primary sources to work with, or have a disproportionate number of pro-protest sources. This dilemma is a common problem caused by illegitimate historical revisionism, which made it difficult for historians to remain objective. Government records are not available. Media coverage during the Protest is censored. Government and military officers who gave orders during the Protest are not permitted to publicize their narratives. On the other hand, a large number of sources originate from political dissidents, protestors who sought asylum overseas, and families of protestors who were killed

on June 4th. These sources, although highly valuable to historians, can be biased and unreliable. Therefore, historians should exercise caution when evaluating these sources.

In order to counterbalance the aforementioned dilemma, I purposely limited the number of sources originated from the protestors. I also took advantage of my Chinese proficiency by looking through Chinese newspaper archives and talking with former protestors and former Party officials during the protest. These methods of acquiring evidence should have helped me gain a more balanced understanding of the democratic sentiments during the protest.

Apart from balancing different perspectives, historians who investigate this issue are under social and ethical pressures. If they suggest that there were democratic sentiments within the Party and the Army executing the martial law, many former protestors (especially families of victims who were killed during the June 4th incident) would accuse the historians of downplaying the Party's crime. In addition, the Western world almost unanimously agrees that the June 4th incident was a massacre and that the Party was the antagonist. Historians who propose otherwise are under significant ideological pressure. Therefore, historians should prevent these pressures from influencing the investigation. Any conclusions should be re-examined by other historians to ensure a higher degree of objectivity.