

History In-Service Team
Supporting Leaving Certificate History

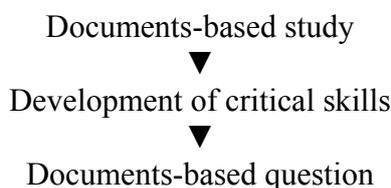
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The documents-based study:

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The Documents-based Question

1. Introduction: a critical skills exercise



The documents-based study is “the primary means of developing their skills in working with evidence”. (S.5)

The documents-based question, “will test candidates’ ability to interrogate, correlate and evaluate a particular body of evidence”. (S.15)

Rationale for the exercise

The intention of the exercise is to illustrate in a practical and active manner the type of critical skills that the documents-based study is designed to develop. The exercise is a group exercise designed to illustrate the type of critical skills that underlie the documents-based study, and one way in which these skills may be developed in a classroom setting.

Essentially, the purpose of the exercise is to encourage students to THINK by discussing snippets of evidence and attempting to make judgements on their import by deciding whether they support or oppose a particular proposition. The PLAY element is important and the exercise should be an engaging one for students. The intention is not to come up with “answers” that are either right or wrong: much of the value of the exercise is in the process itself. That said, it should be possible to reach consensus in most cases and to clarify misunderstandings – where these arise – in the process.

What is involved

Each group of 4-5 students is given an A4 sheet with a proposition at the top of the page and two columns headed, **Agrees** and **Disagrees**. Each group is also given an envelope containing 8-12 short documentary extracts – each on its own small strip of paper – and the task is to discuss with each other the appropriate column in which to place each extract. At least one or two of the extracts should be capable of generating uncertainty as to which column is the appropriate one. It is better if the provenance of the source is not revealed at the outset – although it is possible that some may be recognised by individual students – since the absence of such a contextual framework forces students to focus more closely on the extract as presented. When each group has reached its conclusions, the outcome of the exercise is discussed in a whole group setting. If deemed appropriate, the exercise can end with a “guessing game” where students are asked to link each extract to the correct name from a list read out by the teacher.

The following three pages contain materials that will be used to exemplify this approach.

Proposition: The suffering endured by the strikers in Dublin in 1913 was due to William Martin Murphy.

Place each of the documentary extracts in the appropriate column, depending on whether you think it agrees or disagrees with the above proposition. If the group cannot agree on whether a particular extract agrees or disagrees with the proposition, place it along the dividing line in the middle and wait to hear what other groups have to say about the extract.

Agrees	Disagrees

<p style="text-align: center;">Source A</p> <p>“The consequences of Larkinism are workless fathers, mourning mothers, hungry children and broken homes. Not the capitalist but the policy of Larkin has raised the price of food until the poorest in Dublin are in a state of famine ...”.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Source E</p> <p>“My father thought William Martin Murphy was a blackguard intent on starving not only the strikers but their children into submission ... My mother had no sympathy with the strike and indeed many of the strikers’ wives had just as little”.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Source B</p> <p>“It remained for the twentieth century and the capital city of Ireland to see four hundred masters deciding openly upon starving one hundred thousand people, and refusing to consider any solution except that fixed by their pride ... You masters ... it is you who are blind Samsons pulling down the pillars of the social order”.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Source F</p> <p>“The dispute is only about Larkin and his methods ... All the powers that are supposed to be of importance are against him: the Party, the whole Catholic Church, and the great body of Dublin citizens, to say nothing of the Government, and yet somehow or other he has support and is a great character and figure”.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Source C</p> <p>“I do not know whether the methods of Mr. James Larkin are wise methods or unwise methods (unwise I think in some respects) but this I know, that here is a most hideous wrong to be righted, and the man who attempts honestly to right it is a good man and a brave man”.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Source G</p> <p>“The employers ... carried out with resolution and success their programme of ‘fighting to a finish’ ... They rejected ... all attempts at conciliatory intervention by a Citizens’ Peace Committee, overturning Lord Mayors, Privy Councillors, Deans, doctors and professors like disregarded ninepins”.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Source D</p> <p>“This is not a strike, it is a lock-out of the men who have been tyrannically treated by a most unscrupulous scoundrel ...”.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Source H</p> <p>“As regards the situation in Dublin, nothing could be more mixed and mischievous. Larkin is a malignant enemy and an impossible man ... The employers have been led into a false position by Murphy.”</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Source E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C.S. (Todd) Andrews</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Dublin Made Me</i> (Mercier Press, 1979) pp.66-67</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Source A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Arthur Griffith.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Divided City: Portrait of Dublin 1913</i> (Dublin, O'Brien Press) p70</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Source F</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Augustine Birrell Letter to Asquith, 26 September 1913 (Bodleian Library: Asquith Papers, MS 38)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Source B</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AE (George Russell)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Letter to the Masters of Dublin (delivered Dublin, 6th October, 1913)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Source G</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thomas Kettle</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dublin's Labour Conflict 1913 <i>(Dublin Review, 1914)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Source C</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Patrick Pearse</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Irish Freedom</i>, October 1913</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Source H</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John Dillon</p> <p>Letter to T.P. O'Connor, 16 October 1913. (TCD: John Dillon Papers, MS 6740)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Source D</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jim Larkin</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Speech made on 26 August, 1913</p>

2. Documents-based question: important concepts and vocabulary

Section A.

Source and evidence: Students need to understand that it is through the interrogation (or asking questions) of sources that historical evidence is produced. A source, therefore, is anything that has the potential to answer questions that historians pose about the past. When historians draw on that potential, we have what is referred to as historical evidence.

Fact and opinion: The distinction here is not so clear-cut as is often assumed. (Is it a fact that Lee Harvey Oswald shot JFK?) In common parlance, one can distinguish “facts” as data that are readily proven and/or unlikely to be disputed and “opinions” as personal thoughts or judgements of an individual writer with which other individuals might disagree. The philosopher of history, Michael Stanford, writes that, “What gives the status of historical fact is the consensus of historical judgements”.¹

Bias and objectivity: Again, the distinction is not a “black and white” one. Every account of a past event is conveyed by a subject with her/his own viewpoints. Where the viewpoint of the subject results in an account that is one-sided and excludes some of the available evidence - often to serve a political ideology or to reflect an acquired prejudice – we refer to the resulting account as “biased”. “Objectivity”, therefore, is the attempt to be as open and fair-minded as possible, taking all of the available evidence into account and resisting the temptation to focus on evidence that matches one’s own pre-existing viewpoint. The point where a personal viewpoint may be characterised as a bias is a somewhat blurred one.

Propaganda: Originally referring to the propagation of religious dogma, the term “propaganda”, in modern parlance, usually refers to the communication of messages that are designed to serve a particular ideological, political or socio-political purpose.

Thinking critically: In an historical context, as the syllabus objectives (p4) make clear, critical thinking requires that judgements be made based on an evaluation of evidence, and that students be aware that evidence may be open to more than one interpretation. Learning to ask relevant questions of evidence (including the **5 Ws** – *What? Who? When? Where? Why?*) is an important step towards the development of critical thinking skills in history. (See teacher guidelines, pp. 12 and 21.)

Interpretation: The judgements formed by historians/students of history based on their evaluation of evidence are what we refer to as “interpretation”. Because historians have fuller access to the sources and a greater range of skills and experience in the evaluation of evidence than other commentators, their interpretations are usually regarded as more soundly based and definitive than the interpretations of non-historians.

Types of historical sources: As students encounter different types of sources, their awareness of the different classes of document should be fostered e.g. eyewitness accounts, public records, memoirs, letters, maps, photographs, political cartoons.

Provenance: The word “provenance” refers to the origins - and originating context - of a piece of evidence, usually a document, i.e., a written or visual source. We need to consider the provenance of a document if we are to be in a position to meaningfully evaluate the evidence it contains. The **5 Ws** referred to under “Thinking critically” above are a useful framework for establishing the provenance of documents.

¹ *A Companion to the Study of History*, p.125, Blackwell, 1994.

Section B.

Edited extract/excerpt: A piece from a longer document, from which some words have been removed to make it more accessible to students.

Transcript: A written version of a piece of evidence that was delivered orally, or a written copy of an original document that is difficult to decipher in its original form..

Contemporary: This describes a piece of evidence that comes from the period of time to which it relates.

Reliable: To determine the reliability of a piece of evidence, students need to ask themselves whether they think the writer/artist/photographer is fair-minded. They also need to consider the provenance of the evidence.

Viewpoint: Identifying the viewpoint of the writer/artist/photographer is an important step in the evaluation of a piece of evidence. The viewpoint may be a hostile or sympathetic one, for example, or it may be ostensibly impartial. Where a viewpoint is not evident, this may be a consequence of an attempt to be impartial and objective.

Hostile: The viewpoint of a writer/artist/photographer may be described as “hostile” if there is clearly an attempt to present the subject in a negative light.

Sympathetic: The viewpoint of a writer/artist/photographer may be described as “sympathetic” if there is evidence in the source that s/he favours or is positively disposed towards the subject.

Portrayal: Students may be asked to comment on the “portrayal” of a particular person or persons in a document. The task here is to identify the viewpoint of the writer/artist/photographer towards the material that s/he is presenting.

Judgement: Judgements in history are based on an evaluation of evidence.

Evaluation: Evaluation involves the “weighing up” of evidence, to try to determine, for example, which of two pieces of evidence appears to be the more accurate and reliable. Attempts to evaluate evidence will always be constrained by factors such as: our knowledge of the provenance of a document and the purpose(s) for which it was prepared; our familiarity with the surrounding context; and our level of experience in evaluating evidence.

Compare: Identify the similarities, points of agreement.

Contrast: Identify the differences, points of disagreement.

Strengths: Ways in which a particular document or class of document may yield valuable evidence and increase our historical understanding.

Weaknesses: Characteristics of a document or class of document that require us to exercise caution in evaluating the reliability of the evidence it contains.

3. The documents-based question: format and question styles

Section 1 **Comprehension**

Candidates will be required to extract relevant data from documents to answer questions that are designed to test their understanding of a passage or their interpretation of a visual source.

Question styles:

In document A, what is meant by ...?

According to document A, who ...?

What is the essential message of the cartoon?

Section 2 **Comparison**

Candidates will be required to compare two or more accounts of the same historical experience and to note similarities and contrasts.

Question styles:

Which document is more sympathetic to ...?

How do the documents differ in their interpretation of ...?

Which document is a personal/official account?

Which document is more effective in communicating its message?

Comment on the portrayal of ... in documents A and B.

Section 3 **Criticism**

Candidates will be required to recognise bias and propaganda; to note viewpoint; to identify contradictions; and to make judgements about the reliability of various sources.

Question styles:

Do you find bias in either document?

How reliable is document A ...?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of ... as an historical source?

Is a [political cartoon] such as document A a reliable source of historical evidence?

Section 4 **Contextualisation**

Candidates will be required to place the subject matter of the documents in their historical context and to show understanding of issues and events associated with that period as outlined in the elements of the topic.

Question styles:

How did ... between ... and ...?

Describe the ... up to

Did ... achieve its aims during the period ...?

What impact did ... have during the period ...?

Question styles: specific examples from sample questions

Comprehension

In document A, did the crowd like Larkin's speech ...? Explain your answer.

In document A, how does William Martin Murphy contradict the claim that ...?

Comparison

Compare and contrast the evidence in documents A and B about (the military strength of Dublin).

Do the two documents, A and B, agree or disagree as to the kind of man (Meiler Magrath) was? Explain your answer by referring to both documents.

Which document, A or B, was intended to be read by a number of people rather than by one only? Give a reason for your answer.

Do the two documents, A and B, agree or disagree as to whether (the GAA was a popular organisation)? Explain your answer.

What differences of opinion about (Harrier clubs) are revealed in documents A and B?

Criticism

What evidence is there in document (A) that the writer was a supporter (of the Pope)?

What evidence is there in document (B) that the writer was hostile to (Meiler Magrath)?

Could it be argued that document (A) is propaganda? Refer to document A (picture and text) in your answer.

What advantages has a (pictorial) source such as (Bartlett's bird's-eye view map of) document A over a (narrative) source such as (Moryson's account in) document B?

In document (B), is (Gladstone's) representation of (the policies of the two main British parties) fair or unfair? Give reasons for your answer.

In document (A), what evidence does the writer offer to support his view that (the members of the RIC do not deserve to be "boycotted")?

Can you establish the political views of the authors of both documents? Explain your answer.

Contextualisation

How successful were (Queen Elizabeth's wars in Ireland)?

How successful was (Sir Henry Sidney) as (Lord Deputy) in Ireland?

How important a part did the (GAA) play in the (new nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries)?

What were the long-term consequences for (sport and for nationalism) of the (founding of the GAA)?

What was the impact of (the GAA) on (culture and society in Ireland) during the period (1884-1914)?

How did (the GAA) contribute to (cultural nationalism in Ireland) up to (1914)?

What impact did (the unionisation of the working classes) have in (Dublin) during the period (1900-1914)?

LMI: Topic 2 – Movements for political and social reform, 1870-1914

Documents-based question (Higher level) marks)

(100

Case study to which documents relate: *The GAA to 1891.*

Study the following documents carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Document A is an excerpt from a newspaper article accusing the GAA of being a political body. Document B is an extract from a police report outlining links between the GAA and the IRB.

Document A

The Gaelic Athletic Association has been persistently represented by nationalists as a purely non-political body, organised solely for the revival and development of national pastimes. Reports of its members having been discovered engaged at drill, using their hurleys as muskets, have been denied, and efforts have been made to explain away the attendance of its uniformed members at political demonstrations as the bodyguards of members of Parliament, and to prevent the encroachment of the police. Despite these precautions, however, the public are in no way deceived by its ostentatious pretence to be non-political. It is very well known that the organization was called into existence at a period when it was feared the National League would have been totally suppressed, in order that the work of the League might be carried on uninterruptedly. It is principally officered by well-known Fenians, who are careful to have its affairs secretly conducted. The Times, 6 September 1888

Document B

Having by direction of the Under Secretary, made enquiry as to the method by which members of the GAA are drafted into the ranks of the I.R.B. I beg to report as follows: A Kerry informant, "Emerald", states that when he had been about six months in the GAA he was accosted while practising football in the sports field at Tralee by Maurice Moynihan (Secretary of Kerry's I.R.B. and GAA) who asked him if he would wish to become "a man." ...Moynihan... swore him as a member of the I.R.B. This informant states that the Tralee sports ground is a favourite place for enrolling members of the GAA. He also alleges that most of the GAA men are also members of the I.R.B ... the leaders are content to keep the GAA in their hands as a training school from which they can at any time draft recruits. National Archives of Ireland, Crime Branch Special Files, 126/S, 12 April 1890.

- What explanations were given by the GAA for taking part in political activities according to document A?
 - In what non-sporting activities is the secretary of Kerry GAA involved, according to document B?
 - How did the informant in document B get the information that he passed on to the police?
(20 marks)
- What points of agreement are there in documents A and B about the role of the IRB in the leadership of the GAA?
 - Compare the political purposes attributed to the GAA in documents A and B? (20 marks)
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of document A as a historical source?
 - How reliable is document B as evidence of the recruiting policies of the IRB within the GAA?
(20 marks)
- How important a part did the GAA play in the new nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?
(40 marks)

LMI: Topic 3 – Movements for political and social reform, 1870-1914

Documents-based question (Ordinary level)

(100 marks)

Case study to which documents relate: *The 1885 and 1886 elections – issues and outcomes*

Study the following documents carefully and answer the questions that follow. Both documents were published after the election of 1885.

Document A

The addresses [speeches] of the Unionist candidates, who polled [received] ... hundreds of votes against the thousands given to Home Rule, attest to [prove] the true character of the issues which were put before the electorate. In every single instance voters were appealed to in the interests of the Act of Union and against separation. 85 Home Rulers and 18 Unionists is the answer from the constituencies. Even from Ulster, the stronghold of Unionism, a majority has been returned in favour of Home Rule

But an explanation has been vouchsafed [offered] in the “Times” for defeated unionism: “the terrorism of the National League and the intimidation of the priests did it all”. ... Is not all this ... ridiculous?

Edited extract from a letter by Michael Davitt to the London *Times* published on 1 January, 1886.

Document B

The conduct of the Roman Catholic clergy in support ... of the Nationalist candidate was most marked ... I believe ... that the priests on several occasions, both publicly and privately, advised their parishioners not to vote for me because I was a Protestant, and I know personally, from conversations I had with more than one Roman Catholic voter ... that they had been told by their priest how they were to vote ... These same voters told me that they dare not vote for me, although they did not want to vote for the Nationalist, because they were, and would be, watched by their priest and the leaders of the local branch of the National League.

Edited extract from “A candidate from one of the divisions of Leinster writes”, in “The Truth about the Irish Elections of 1885 – by the defeated candidates”, published by the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union.

1. (a) According to document A, which province in Ireland was “the stronghold of Unionism”?
(b) Give one point that Michael Davitt makes in document A to support his argument that unionism has been defeated in the election.
(c) According to document A, what reasons does the *Times* newspaper give for the defeat of unionism?
(d) According to document B, what role did Roman Catholic priests play in the election of 1885?
(e) Name the organisation that published the booklet from which document B is taken.

(40 marks)
2. (a) In what ways do documents A and B differ about the role of priests in the 1885 election?
(b) Which document, A or B, is more sympathetic to the views of Unionists? Give a reason for your answer.

(20 marks)
3. (a) What evidence is there in document A that Michael Davitt was in favour of Nationalists?
(b) Document B claims to tell “The Truth about the Irish Elections of 1885”. How reliable do you think this claim is? Explain your answer.

(20 marks)
4. What did Unionists do, at that time and/or later, to try to stop Home Rule?

(20 marks)

LMI Topic 2: Movements for political and social reform, 1870 to 1914.

Documents-based question (Ordinary level) (100 marks)

Case study to which the documents refer: The GAA to 1891.

Study the following documents carefully and answer the questions that follow. Both documents refer to a special GAA meeting in Thurles, Co Tipperary on 9 November 1887.

Document A.

The extreme Fenians ... steadily worked towards their own object [aim], ... [and] under the guise of hurling, football, etc, the youth of the country was brought together, disciplined, drilled and taught their power.

By degrees the Fenians obtained the mastery, and the moderate party took fright at the formidable character of the organisation they had themselves assisted to form ... for some months past, a barely disguised warfare has been going on between the two sections.

We have some valuable informants in its ranks, and we may hope for good results from the ... jealousies which the split will occasion [bring about].

S A W Waters [Special Branch, RIC] Report on the Gaelic Athletic Convention at Thurles, 9 November 1887, dated 11 November 1887

Document B.

The Palace,

Thurles, Nov.10 1887

My dear Sir,

I heard with deep regret, and afterwards read with pain and humiliation, an account of the proceedings of the Gaelic Convention.

I could not have at all believed that the elements of mischief were so painfully present in the organisation as they now appear to be.

Nothing remains for me but to dissociate [distance] myself from that branch of the Gaelic Athletic Association which exercised such a sinister influence over yesterday's proceedings.

T.W Croke, Archbishop of Cashel

(Freeman's Journal, 11 November 1887)

1 (a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(40 marks)

2 (a)

Explain your answer, referring to both documents.

(b)

Explain your answer, referring to both documents.

(20 marks)

3 (a)

(b)

(20 marks)

4.

(20 marks)

Other documents-based questions from EMI 2 and LMI 2 can be found on the HIST CD.