

How to write Section 3 of your IB History IA

In Section 3 you are required to write 400 words and to reflect on two main themes:

- what you have learnt while researching and writing your investigation.
- the challenges and limitations faced by the historian.

You must provide specific examples from your own experience and sources and it is advisable to break this section down into three paragraphs.

1. Discuss the methods/steps you used similar to that of a historian...

- Research?
- Analysis?
- Evaluation?
- Comparison?
- Interpretation?
- Differing perspectives?
- Reaching a conclusion?

Example

“This investigation has allowed me to gain an insight into some of the methods used by historians, as well as to the challenges that historians face when carrying out historical investigations. I feel I have developed a skill that is fundamental in the study of history: that of carefully analysing sources, often presenting different points of view on a same subject, to reach a justified conclusion.”^[1]

2. How has this investigation helped you appreciate the challenges faced by the historian...

- Difficulty of research, too little or too much information?
- Dealing with differing perspectives?
- Working with unreliable/biased sources?
- Is there a difference working with primary sources compared to secondary?
- Determining the importance of one source above another?
- What conditions might affect the historian?
- The difficulty of reaching a conclusion?

Example

“...calling into question how accurate historical knowledge can be. This challenge was made explicit to me through the examination of Dietrich’s extract, as it contained within in it biases, such as the desire to shift blame away from Nazi officials, which may have distorted the true picture of events, thus distorting the accuracy of our knowledge of them.”^[2]

3. Limitations of the role of a historian

- Can a historian distort history?
- The problem with history being subjective?
- The difficulty of providing a meaningful interpretation?
- The problem of history always being uncertain, always changing?
- How does the process of a historian differ to that of a mathematician or scientist?

Example

“A limitation of this method is the difficulty in being unbiased when providing interpretations, in selecting different historical events and in determining their importance. Past events are interpreted and converted into History by historians whose values and thinking were greatly influenced by the context in which they were set in.”^[3]

The IA examples used are from exemplars published by the IBO – to read the full IA’s for each, please click on the links below:

[1] http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/DP/Group3/d_3_histx_tsm_1503_1/pdf/sample02_en.pdf

[2] http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/DP/Group3/d_3_histx_tsm_1503_1/pdf/sample01_en.pdf

[3] http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/DP/Group3/d_3_histx_tsm_1503_1/pdf/sample03_en.pdf