How to approach the source questions on Paper 1

Refer to the guidelines below when attempting the source-based questions in each chapter of the book.

First question

This is in two parts. It is made up of a 3-mark and a 2-mark component – giving you a possible total of 5 marks. It is assessing your historical comprehension of the sources. You do not need to give your own detailed knowledge in your response.

This is the only question that asks you to explain the content and meaning of the documents.

Part a

The 3-mark question asks you to comprehend, extract and possibly infer information. Here are some suggestions for answering this question:

- Write: firstly ..., secondly ..., thirdly ... to ensure that you make at least three separate points.
- Do not repeat the same point you have already made.
- Do not overly rely on quotes – make your point and then briefly quote two or three words of the source in support.

Part b

- You should try to make two clear points for this question.
- For each point, refer specifically to the content of the source to provide evidence for your answer.

For parts a and b you should not need to bring in your own knowledge; however your contextual understanding of the topic and sources should enable you to understand more clearly the content and message of each source.

Second question

As you know, historians need to use and evaluate sources as they research a historical era or event.
For the second question, you need to evaluate one source in terms of its “value” and “limitations” by examining its origin, purpose and content. This question is worth 4 marks.

To find the origin and purpose look carefully at the provenance of the source:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For origin</th>
<th>Who wrote it/said it/drew it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When did the person write it/say it/draw it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where did the person write it/say it/draw it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the source – a speech/cartoon/textbook, etc.?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For purpose</th>
<th>Why did the person write it/say it/draw it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who did the person write it/say it/draw it for?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For content</th>
<th>Is the language objective or does it sound exaggerated or one-sided?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the tone of the source?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What information and examples do they select or focus on to support their point?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the information you have on the origins of the source, and what you can infer about the document’s purpose, you must then explain the value and limitations the source has for historians researching a particular event or period in history.

The grid on pages 7 and 8 gives you an idea of the kinds of values and limitations connected with different primary sources.

**Examiner’s hint:** Note that value and limitations given in the grid are general or generic points that could be applied to these sources. However, your contextual knowledge and the specific provenance of any source that you get in the examination will allow you to make much more precise comments on the value and limitations of the source that you evaluate in a document question. Notice also that the value of the source will always depend on what you are using it for.

**What are the values and limitations associated with secondary sources?**

The most common secondary source that you will have to deal with is one from a text book or historian. Again the key questions of “What is the origin of the source?” and “What is the source’s purpose?” need to be addressed in order to work out the value and limitation of the source in question.

Here are some points you could consider regarding the value and limitations of works by historians and biographers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historians</td>
<td>• are usually professionals or experts in field</td>
<td>• might have a broad focus to their work or might have a very specific and narrow focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have the benefit of hindsight which is not present in contemporary sources</td>
<td>• might be an expert in a different region or era from the one they are writing about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• may offer sources based on a range of documents; the more recent the publication, the more sources will be available</td>
<td>• may be influenced by their nationality, racial background, experience, politics or context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographers</td>
<td>• will have studied the individual in question in much detail</td>
<td>• might have become too involved with their subject and have lost objectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• may provide sources that have value due to tone, use of language and expression</td>
<td>• may focus on the role of the subject of their biography at the expense of other individuals or factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• sometimes have the benefit of hindsight</td>
<td>• might not have direct access to the subject and/or other relevant sources [the place and date will be key here]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• may have limitations due to tone, use of language and expression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Thinking skills**

Consider the following provenance:


1. Using the points on the previous page, consider the value and limitations of this source for a student analysing Japanese history in this period. (Remember to research Lodge’s credentials as a historian of South Africa.)

2. How would a school history textbook differ in value and limitations compared to the work of a historian?

**Communication and thinking skills**

**Task 1**

Find a biography of one key figure from the period of history that you are studying. With reference to the questions above, analyse the value and limitations of the source in providing extra insight into the role and impact of this individual.

**Task 2**

What questions would you ask about an autobiography to assess its values and limitations to your research?

**Thinking skills**

Read the following extract:

Part of the problem for historians is defining what a source is. Although primary sources are usually closest, or indeed contemporary, to the period under observation, and secondary sources those works written subsequently, the distinction is actually quite blurred. Once we move away from simple cases [such as politicians’ diaries, or cabinet minutes] which are clearly primary, difficulties do arise. Take Benjamin Disraeli’s novel of 1845, *Sybil; or the Two Nations.* This is first and foremost a piece of fiction ... For historians ... however, Sybil is something of a primary source: it typifies the milieu [social setting] of the young Tory Radicals of the day [of whom Disraeli was one] ...


*Note: Disraeli was a 19th-century British Conservative Party leader, and British Prime Minister from 1874–80.*

**Question**

What is the problem with trying to define sources as “primary” or “secondary”?

Examiner’s hint: Note that for the purposes of evaluation, a source has no more or less intrinsic value to historians just because it is primary or secondary. Always focus on the specific origins and purpose of a source – not whether it is primary or secondary. You do not need to give this distinction in your answer.

**Communication and thinking skills**

Read the following statements. Why would these statements be considered invalid by examiners?

- A limitation of this source is that the translation could be inaccurate.
- This source is limited because it doesn’t tell us what happened before or after.
- This source is limited because it is biased.
- This textbook was written over 70 years after the event took place so it is unlikely that the author had first-hand experience. This is a limitation.

- A value of this source is that it is an eyewitness account.
- This source is only an extract and we don’t know what he said next.
- This is a primary source and this is a value.
- As it is a photograph, it gives a true representation of what actually happened.
Refer back to the examiner’s hint on page 5 regarding this table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>These sources:</td>
<td>These sources:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private letters (audience – the recipient)</td>
<td>• can offer insight into personal views or opinions</td>
<td>• only give individual opinion, not a general view or government perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaries (audience – personal not public at the time of writing)</td>
<td>• can indicate the affects of an event or era on an individual</td>
<td>• may give an opinion that changes due to later events or may give a view not held in public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• can suggest motives for public actions or opinions</td>
<td>• might have the motive of persuading the audience [in the case of private letters] to act in certain way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• can, through tone, use of language and expression give insight into perspective, opinion or emotions</td>
<td>• may have limitations because of tone, use of language and expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memoirs to be published (audience – public)</td>
<td>• can offer insight into personal views, suggest motives for public actions and might benefit from hindsight – an evaluation of events after the period</td>
<td>• may revise opinions with the benefit of hindsight, i.e. now the consequences of actions are known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• might show how the individual wants his or her motive or actions to be viewed by the public</td>
<td>• might be written because the author wants to highlight the strengths of his or her actions – to improve the author’s public image or legacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers, television or radio reports Eyewitness accounts</td>
<td>• could reflect publicly held views or popular opinion</td>
<td>• may have limitations because of tone, use of language and expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• might offer an expert view</td>
<td>(Note that eyewitnesses are not useful just because they are at an event; each eyewitness will notice different aspects and may miss key points altogether, which could be a limitation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• can give insight into contemporary opinion</td>
<td>• could be politically influenced or censored by specific governments or regimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels or poems</td>
<td>• could inform contemporary opinion</td>
<td>• may only give “overview” of a situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• might offer insight into emotional responses and motives</td>
<td>• might only give a one-sided narrow perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• could emphasize only a minor part of an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• may have limitations because of tone, use of language and expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• could provide a “dissenting” voice, i.e. not popular opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• could exaggerate the importance of an event or individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• could have political agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• may have limitations because of tone, use of language and expression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statistics
- can offer insight into growth and decline
- might suggest correlations between indicators, e.g., employment and voting patterns
- might suggest the impact of an event or its results over time
- make comparisons easier
- are gathered for different purposes (e.g., political, economic) and could be deliberately distorted
- might relate only to one location or time period
- might suggest incorrect correlations; there could be another causal factor not included in some sets of statistics

Photographs
- can give a sense of a specific scene or event
- can offer insight into the immediate impact of an event on a particular place, or people's immediate response
- might offer information on the environment
- are limited as we cannot see beyond the "lens"
- might distort the "bigger" picture because of their limited view
- might be staged
- might reflect the purpose of the photographer; what did he or she want to show?

Cartoons or paintings
- can inform public opinion as cartoonists often respond to popularly held views
- can portray the government's line when there is censorship
- could be censored and not reflect public opinion
- often play on stereotypes (particularly cartoons) and exaggeration
- could be limited to the viewpoint and experience of the cartoonist or artist (or the publication the cartoon or painting appears in)
- may have limitations because of tone, use of language and expression

Government records and documents
- might show the government's position on an issue
- can offer insight into the reasons for decisions made
- might reveal the motives for government policies
- can show what the public has been told about an event or issue by the government
- might be a well-informed analysis
- often do not offer insight into the results of policies and decisions
- might not reveal dissent or divergent opinion
- might not show public opinion
- can be used to keep sensitive information classified for many years
- may not explain the motives for a decision or political purpose
- may have limitations because of tone, use of language and expression

ATL Research skills
Find primary sources of the types listed in the grid above for the topic that you are currently studying. Using the notes in the grid above, analyse the values and limitations of each of these sources.

For the sources that you have assessed, also look at the content and the language being used. How does the tone, style or content help you to assess the value and limitations of the sources?
Third question
This will ask you to **compare** and **contrast** two sources. Your aim is to identify similar themes and ideas in two sources, and to also identify differences between them. It is marked out of a total of 6 marks.

The key to this question is **linkage**, i.e. you are expected to discuss the sources together throughout your response. The examiner is looking for a running commentary. At no time should you talk about one source without relating it to the other. “End-on accounts” – where you write about the content of one source followed by the content of the second source – do not score well.

**How do you approach this question?**
You must find **both** similarities and differences. This is best presented as two separate paragraphs – one for comparisons and one for contrasts. Here are some tips:

- You could practice using highlighter pens – highlight the similarities in each source in one colour and the differences in another colour.
- You must make sure that you mention **both** sources in every sentence you write. The skill you are demonstrating is linkage.
- Always be clear about which source you are discussing.
- Find both the more “obvious” similarities and differences, and then go on to identify the more specific comparisons and contrasts.
- Deal with similarities in your first paragraph and differences in your second.
- Ensure that each point you make is clearly stated. If you quote from the sources, make this brief – quote only two or three words to support your point.
- Do not introduce your answer or attempt to reach a conclusion. This is not necessary and wastes time.
- Do not waste time explaining what each source says.
- Do not discuss why the sources are similar or different.

**Examiner’s hint:** Note that you must make more than **one** comparison and more than **one** contrast. You should attempt to identify six points of linkage as this is a 6-mark question. This might mean there are three points of comparison and three points of difference. However, there might not be balance – there could be two points of comparison and four points of contrast, or four points of comparison and two points of contrast.

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**How to draw comparisons/show similarities**
Both Source A and Source B …
Source A suggests …; similarly, Source B suggests …
Source A supports Source B …
Like Source B, Source A says …
In the same way that Source B argues …, Source A points out that …

**How to draw contrasts / show differences**
Source A suggests …; however, Source B says …
Source B disagrees with Source A regarding …
Source A claims … as opposed to Source B which asserts …
Source B goes further than Source A in arguing … while A focuses on …

**Examiner’s hint – what not to do:** The focus of this question is how the sources are similar or different – it is asking you to look at the content of the source. This question is not asking you why the sources might be similar or different.

Do not use grids, charts or bullet points – always write in full paragraphs.

It is not a full valid contrast to identify what is simply mentioned in one source but not the other (i.e. “Source A mentions that … played a role, whereas Source B does not mention this” is not developed linkage).
Question Three will be assessed using generic markbands, as well as exam specific indicative content. The markbands are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Level descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5–6   | There is discussion of both sources. Explicit links are made between the two sources.  
|       | The response includes clear and valid points of comparison and of contrast.          |
| 3–4   | There is some discussion of both sources, although the two sources may be discussed separately.  
|       | The response includes some valid points of comparison and/or of contrast, although these points may lack clarity. |
| 1–2   | There is superficial discussion of one or both sources.                              
|       | The response consists of description of the content of the source[s], and/or general comments about the source[s], rather than valid points of comparison or of contrast. |
| 0     | The response does not reach a standard described by the descriptors above.            |

Examiners will apply the “best fit” to responses and attempt to award credit wherever possible.

Fourth question

This is worth the most marks, 9 of the total of 25. It requires you to write a mini-essay. The key to this question is that an essay is required – not a list of material from each source. However, you are required to synthesize material from the sources with your own knowledge in your essay.

How do you approach this question?

It is recommended that you plan your answer as you would any essay question. The difference here is that you will use evidence from the sources as well as from your own detailed knowledge to support your arguments.

- First make a brief plan based on the sources and group them into either those which support the point in the essay title and those which suggest an alternative argument, or group them under themes if the question is open, e.g. “Examine the reasons for the changing alliances...”. Add the sources to the grid as shown below.
- Then add your own knowledge to the grid. This should be detailed knowledge such as dates, events, statistics and the views of historians.
- When you start writing, you will need to write only a brief sentence of introduction.
- When using the sources, refer to the them directly as Source A, Source E and so on.
- You can quote briefly from the sources throughout the essay but quoting two or three words is sufficient.
- Use all the sources.
- Include own detailed knowledge
- Write a brief conclusion which should answer the question and be in line with the evidence you have given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources that suggest X</th>
<th>Sources that suggest other factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source A</td>
<td>Source B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own knowledge: events, dates, details</td>
<td>Own knowledge: events, dates, details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source D</td>
<td>Source C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own knowledge: historian</td>
<td>Own knowledge: events, dates, details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source E</td>
<td>Source A makes more than one point, can be used to support more than one argument or theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own knowledge: events, dates, details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Planning grid for the fourth question – mini-essay
The Fourth question will be assessed using generic markbands, as well as exam specific indicative content. The markbands are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Level descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>The response does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–3</td>
<td>The response lacks focus on the question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References to the sources are made, but at this level these references are likely to consist of descriptions of the content of the sources rather than the sources being used as evidence to support the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No own knowledge is demonstrated or, where it is demonstrated, it is inaccurate or irrelevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–6</td>
<td>The response is generally focused on the question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References are made to the sources, and these references are used as evidence to support the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where own knowledge is demonstrated, this lacks relevance or accuracy. There is little or no attempt to synthesize own knowledge and source material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–9</td>
<td>The response is focused on the question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear references are made to the sources, and these references are used effectively as evidence to support the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accurate and relevant own knowledge is demonstrated. There is effective synthesis of own knowledge and source material.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examiners will apply the “best fit” to responses and attempt to award credit wherever possible.

---

Here is a summary of the key points for each question with the kind of language that is useful when answering each question.

**First question, part a**

Remember you have to show your understanding of the source and come up with three points. Here are some useful sentence starters:

- This source says that ...
- Secondly ...
- It also suggests that ...

**First question, part b**

Always start with your key point.

- One message of this source is ...
- This is supported by ... [here refer to specific details in the source].
- Another message of the source is ...
- You need to make a separate point, not an elaboration of the first point: you need two clear points about the message of the sources.

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**Second question**

This question is assessing your ability to analyse a source for its value and limitations by looking at its origin and purpose and content.

- Make sure that you use the words "origin", "purpose" or "content" in each of your sentences to ensure that you are focused on what the question needs, e.g.
- A value of the source is that its author ...
- A value of the purpose is that it ...
- The language of the content of this source indicates that ...
- The content also seems to focus on, or use, examples which are ...
- On the other hand, there are also limitations to using this source for finding out about ... This is because [explain here how origin and purpose can cause problems for the historian] or
- A limitation of the origin is ...
- A limitation of the purpose is ...
- The content of this source makes it less valuable because ...
Third question
This is designed to assess your cross-referencing skills.
When comparing two sources you could use the following structures:
Sources A and B agree that ...
Moreover, the two sources are also similar in that ...
This is supported by ... in Source A and ... in Source B ...
For a contrasting paragraph:
Source A differs from Source B in that Source A says ...
while Source B argues that ...
Another difference between the two documents is that ...
Moreover, Source B goes further than Source A when it suggests/says that ...

Fourth question
This is a mini-essay and is assessing your ability to synthesize sources with your own knowledge as well as your ability to give supported arguments or points that address the specific essay question.
Use your essay writing skills and vocabulary for this question.
In addition, as you are using sources as well as your own knowledge, you could use the following to help tie in the sources to your own knowledge:
As it says in Source C ...
This is supported by the information given in Source ...
Source A suggests that ... and this is supported by the fact that in the Soviet Union at this time ...
 Historians have argued that ... This viewpoint is supported by the information in Source E concerning ...

How should I distribute my time in the Paper 1 examination?
A key issue for this paper is managing your time effectively in the examination. If you do not work through the questions efficiently you could run out of time. You must allow enough time to answer the fourth question; after all this is worth the most marks on the paper.
You will have one hour to complete the paper. At the beginning of the examination you have five minutes reading time when you are not allowed to write anything.
We recommend that you use your five minutes reading time to read through the questions first. This will give you an initial understanding of what you are looking for when you read the sources. Read through the questions and then begin to read through the sources.

How much time should I spend on each question?
Some examiners have suggested that the time you spend on each question could be based on the maximum number of marks that the answer could receive. The following is a rough guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First question, parts a and b</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second question</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>4 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third question</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>6 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth question</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>9 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>