

SHFGS

Transition Materials for A Level History:

Edexcel Paper 2, Option 1H: Britain transformed, 1918–97



Introduction

It is great that you are considering studying History at A Level.

This pack contains a programme of activities and resources that you may wish to use to prepare you to start A Level History in September.

It is aimed to be used after you complete your GCSE throughout the remainder of the summer term and over the summer holidays.



20th century British History is fascinating. I hope that you will agree!

Course overview

This option comprises a study of British history from the end of the First World War in 1918 to the election of Tony Blair as prime minister in 1997. During this time Britain was challenged by war, fluctuations in the economy, technological advancement and the desire for greater social equality. The response to these challenges has in many ways created the political, social and economic climate of the twenty-first century today.

In 1918, Britain emerged from the First World War a victorious power, having survived four years of one of the most destructive wars in history. However, the end of the war did not bring peace or prosperity or social stability. Britain was fighting against the communists in Russia, in massive debt to the USA and facing the social consequences of fighting a *total war*. Not only that but domestic problems which had been put on hold from 1914 were about to re-emerge: Irish independence, working-class protest and votes for women. Indeed, some commentators have gone as far as to suggest (jokingly) that with America becoming '*top nation*' British history actually came to a '*full stop*' in 1918.

This course will show that, far from coming to an end, the British response to the challenges of the twentieth century created a history which is dynamic, interesting and, at times, controversial. Britain experienced the General Strike (1926), the abdication crisis (1936), the Blitz (1940), the birth of the National Health Service (1948), the Suez Crisis (1956), the 'Swinging Sixties' and the election of the first woman Prime Minister (1979) to name just a few events.

The broad history of this period is one in which the male-dominated, class-based political and social system of 1918 was challenged both by those who felt excluded from the system and by the technological advances of the twentieth century. Historians differ in their opinions as to the extent to which this situation had been transformed by 1979 but clear trends can be identified. Many people became less deferent to the class system and more secular (less religious). More people gained the right to vote and political representation became more diverse. The rights of women along with social and ethnic minorities became increasingly recognised. A national welfare system was created to provide social security, health and education. A consensus emerged over the necessity of a mixed economy: part capitalist, part socialist. While technological developments modernised communications and saw the spread of mass popular culture.

In the 1980s, the ability of Britain to adapt to these trends and challenges further came into question. The conservatism of Margaret Thatcher suggested that social and cultural changes had, in fact, undermined social stability, and that the mixed economy had undermined Britain's economic strength by becoming imbalanced towards socialism. Her attempts to 'roll back' some of the trends of the previous decades were more successful in some areas than others and often very controversial. Historians still debate the impact of her time in office (1979–90). However, by 1997, at the end of 18 years of conservative government, most agree that politics and economics had become more conservative while social and cultural challenges continued apace.

Indeed, the arguments surrounding the role of public services, banking practices, moral values and national identity today can all be found in the controversy of the 1980s and the challenges brought about by the events of the twentieth century.

1. Reading List

The literature on 20th century British History is vast. The resources below are suggestions although at this stage there is no 'right' or 'wrong' book to read.

Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Twentieth Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction (Kenneth O. Morgan)• Hope and Glory, Britain 1900-2000 (Peter Clarke)• The Making of Modern Britain (Andrew Marr)• A History of Modern Britain (Andrew Marr)• White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties 1964–1970 (Dominic Sandbrook)• When the Lights Went Out: Britain in the Seventies (Andy Beckett)• Rejoice! Rejoice!: Britain in the 1980s (Alwyn W Turner)• Bloody Foreigners: A History of Immigration to Britain (Robert Winder)• The Prime Minister: The Office And Its Holders Since 1945 (Peter Hennessy)• Thatcher and Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts (Simon Jenkins)• The Downing Street Years (Margaret Thatcher)
Websites and online articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Archives website has a range of interesting original documents from throughout the 20th century - http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education• The BBC 'On This Day' page has an interesting archive of past events - http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday
Film Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Iron Lady (2011)• Numerous documentaries on aspects of 20th century British history are available on YouTube

2. Independent Research

- 1) Create a profile of the following people: John Lennon, Barbara Castle, Enoch Powell, Ellen Wilkinson, David Bowie, John Reith, Beryl Gilroy, Roy Jenkins
- 2) Create an information sheet, with facts and images, of the following events:
 - a. The General Strike (1926)
 - b. The Abdication Crisis (1936)
 - c. The creation of the NHS (1948)
 - d. The Suez Crisis (1956)
 - e. The three day week (1973-4)
 - f. The Miner's strike of 1984 (1984)
- 3) Create an A3 information sheet, with facts and images, of the following British prime ministers (feel free to include more if you have time): Lloyd George, Stanley Baldwin, Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, Harold Wilson, Margaret Thatcher

3. The first 3 weeks...

Note: To gain an understanding of the start of the course and the content that we will be covering in the first three weeks, focus your independent research on the period in Britain following World War One. Researching Lloyd George and the General Strike (1926) will help you with this.