

Introduction to History A Level at GCH

Welcome to History A Level. You have made a great choice!

I am sure that you will really enjoy studying history at GCH. We cover a broad range of study, encompassing British, European, African and world history. A full overview of the content and assessment of the course can be found on the school website. A Level history is a very highly respected qualification and can open doors to a very wide range of different university courses and future careers. You are likely to be very successful taking this course, the A Level results in history at GCH are outstanding.



You will find information and instructions about the A Level History transition work in this document. Completing this work will help you to learn about the background to the two History modules you will study in Year 12 and will get you prepared for the start of the course. There is a reading list at the end, it is optional but strongly recommended to read something from this list for each of the two modules.

Task 1 - The History of South Africa

This work will introduce you to the South Africa course and help to understand some of the important history of the country. There are three parts to this task, please write your answers on paper and bring this work in to the first lessons in September.

Part 1

Watch the video 'The History of South Africa (3000BC - 1879AD)':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOP-oimArag> - start 1.14 mins into the video and watch until the end (ignore the random Dutch music in the middle!).

Answer the following questions as you watch and write down your answers:

- Who were the first people to enter South Africa?
- Who displaced the Khoisan?
- Who were the first Europeans to see South Africa?
- Who founded the first permanent settlement at Cape Town in 1652?
- Who were the 'Boers'?
- Who were the next Europeans to arrive in South Africa?
- What happened in 1805?
- Which tribe emerged in 1818 as the dominant tribe in South Africa, causing the 'great displacement'?
- What aroused British interest in these two regions?
- Why did tension grow between the Zulus and the British?

Part 2

Watch the video 'A Brief History of The Boer Wars':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fr8AqCxBOJ8>

Answer the following questions as you watch and write down your answers:

- Why did the Dutch establish a base in South Africa?
- Why was there was tension between the Boers and the British (ignore the misspelling of slavery on the video!)?
- What was 'The Great Trek' (1835)? Explain briefly what it was.
- As the Boers moved inland, which two republics did they establish?
- What started the fighting between the British and the Boers (known as the First Boer War)?
- Who won the First Boer War (which ended in 1881)?
- Why did the British try to end the independence of the Boer republics (the start of the Second Boer War)?
- What tactics did the British use to defeat the Boers?
- Who won the Second Boer War (which ended in 1902)?

Then watch this excellent video about the Zulu Nation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVW6GpjSSgl>

Part 3

Research the different languages and ethnic groups of South Africa by reading the information below. Make a list of languages and ethnic groups.

Until 1991, South African law divided the population into four major racial categories: (1.) Black Africans. Black population accounts 75% of the South Africa's entire population. (2.) Whites, who account for about 13% of the population. (3.) Indians, who account for around 3% and (4.) Coloureds (this a racist term in some countries, such as the USA, but not in South Africa where it is used to define a specific ethnic group), who are mixed White and Black descent and account for 9% of the population. Although the South African law of racial categories has been abolished, many South Africans still view themselves according to these categories.

The black population consists of several groups: Khoi-San, Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Sotho, Shangaan and Venda, just to name a few. The biggest groups are Zulus (21 %), Xhosas (17 %) and the Sotho (15%). Next smaller minorities are the Tswana, Venda, Ndebele, Swasi, and Pedi, among others. The Khoi-Sans are originally hunter-gatherers who have inhabited the land for a long time. Many political leaders, Nelson Mandela among them, come from the Xhosa.

The first Europeans to reach the Cape of Good Hope were Portuguese, arriving in 1488. However, permanent white settlement did not begin until 1652, when the Dutch East India Company established a provisioning station on the Cape. In subsequent decades, many Dutch, and Germans, began to settle in the Cape. They are called Afrikaners and speak Afrikaans, a language closely related to the Dutch language. The majority of the white population, about 60 percent, are Afrikaners and most of the remaining 40 percent are of British descent.

The province of Natal is home to about one million Indians, whose forefathers came to South Africa from India to work on the sugarcane plantations. They were brought to South Africa by the British in the 19th century. A smaller group of Indians came voluntarily to engage in trade.

Among the non-white peoples, the second largest group is the Coloured community. These are people of mixed race, they are mainly living in the Cape region. They originate from Dutch sailors intermarrying with the Khoi-San in the 17th century.

One of the main characteristics of ethnicity is language. In South Africa, there are at least 35 indigenous languages and, currently, ten official languages. IsiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati and isiNdebele are Nguni languages. Sepedi (Northern Sotho), Sesotho (Southern Sotho) and Setswana (Tswana) are Sotho-Tswana languages. Venda and Tsonga are two other official languages in South Africa. English and Afrikaans are also official languages spoken in South Africa.

Task 2 - An introduction to Nelson Mandela

Watch this video of little-known stories about the life of Nelson Mandela:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSeqrFa9Oqc>

Questions to consider (you do not need to write down your answers to these questions):

1. This video is from a series about little known stories in history - do you think that it is important to learn about little known stories when studying the past?
2. The video ends by drawing a connection from what happened to Mandela to a point about education that the narrator thinks we can learn for the present day - do you think that studying history is useful for teaching us about the present?
3. Nelson Mandela is sometimes used as an example of an individual whose own actions and decisions directly caused major changes in history. Think about the history you have studied up to now, can you think of any examples of individuals who have shaped the course of history?

Task 3 - The Wars of the Roses, who's who

Watch the documentary 'Death of a Dynasty'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNE77fWTUg>

The events of this documentary begin in the 1370s, the period historians refer to as the Middle Ages. It explains the events surrounding the reigns of four English monarchs (Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI). The reigns of these kings are a backdrop for the conflicts known as the Wars of the Roses, which we study in Year 12. Aim to answer the questions below as you watch. Don't worry if you miss some of the answers or lose track of who is who – it can be confusing. Just see how many you can answer, no need to get them all.

Glossary

Usurpation: to seize and occupy the throne

Nobility: of noble birth, usually ranked immediately under royalty

Abdication: giving up the throne

- Who was king of England in 1370?
- Who became heir to the throne on the death of his father, the Black Prince, in 1376?
- Who was the most powerful Duke in England at his time?
- Who rebelled in 1380? Were they supportive of the young king or rich landowners?
- Why were the nobility so powerful at this time? Were they more powerful than the king himself?
- What happened to King Richard in December 1387? How was the kingdom going to be ruled?
- In 1397 King Richard II got his revenge, what did he do to the nobility, Henry Bolingbroke in particular?
- What happened to king Richard II after he was captured by Henry Bolingbroke?
- What happened at Westminster hall in September 1399?
- What did Henry IV do to Richard II in 1399?
- Which powerful noble family were now the biggest threat to Henry IV?
- Who became king after Henry IV?
- How did the new king treat his former enemies at the start of his reign?
- What was King Henry V's main project?
- Which country did Henry V lay claim to parts of?
- What famous battle happened in 1415 and how did Henry V prove himself?
- How did Henry V die in 1422?
- How old was Henry V's son Henry VI?
- Who ruled on his behalf?
- How was Henry VI different from his father?
- What sort of policy did Henry VI want to follow?
- Which two important nobles quarrelled?
- What happened to Henry VI's health shortly before his son Edward was born in 1453?
- Who ruled on the king's behalf?
- Why was this man so powerful?
- What happened to him?
- What happened to prince Edward of Lancaster at the Battle of Tewkesbury in 1471?
- What happened to Henry VI in 1471?

Task 4 - Henry V: the cruel king

Instructions: Read the article below carefully and answer the questions at the end, on lined paper, to be brought in for your first History lesson in September. Please print out a copy of this article too to bring to the lesson.

Few English monarchs enjoy a loftier reputation than the 'hero' of Agincourt. Yet, says Ian Mortimer, the real Henry V was a cold, aloof man, prone to acts of breath-taking cruelty and arrogance.

The heavy artillery had damaged the town walls and the moat had been filled with bundles of sticks, ready for the final onslaught. But still the inhabitants of Caen refused to surrender. By 4 September 1417 Henry V and his army had been besieging the Norman town for 17 days. It only remained for the king to launch an all-out attack.

That morning Henry heard three masses in his pavilion and ordered the advance. The army assaulted the town on three sides, using scaling-ladders to climb the walls. As the trumpets blared and the troops rushed forward, the inhabitants fought desperately, throwing down rocks, boiling water and burning oil from the battlements, and shooting bows and crossbows, before reaching for their swords and taking up the hand-to-hand struggle.

Their efforts were in vain. The king's brother, the Duke of Clarence, broke the resistance of the townsmen on his side of Caen, and the fighting moved into the streets. When the struggle was over, Henry ordered that every male over the age of 12 be killed – or so claimed a Venetian chronicler. Eighteen hundred men and boys were put to death. A Dominican friar demanded of Henry how he could justify such killing. Henry replied in perhaps the most chilling tones imaginable: "I am the scourge of God sent to punish the people of God for their sins".

For most English readers, this depiction of Henry V in action is difficult to accept. Surely Henry was a good man, and a great king? He was the Prince Hal in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays, as well as the charming, wooing, gracious and triumphant monarch in *Henry V*. He founded monasteries, piously heard several masses every day, went on pilgrimages and contributed to the completion of Westminster Abbey. He was an English hero in his own lifetime – and a legendary figure in later years.

The influential 20th-century academic KB McFarlane described Henry as "the greatest man who ever ruled England". Hence the modern patriot instinctively argues that, if there was a massacre at Caen, there must have been a reason for it, and that attempts to condemn Henry for ordering the killing are simply a failure to understand the circumstances.

The fact is that the massacre at Caen is just one of many bloody events that mark out Henry V as one of the cruellest and most cold-hearted kings that England has had. Caen was not his first massacre – that had taken place at Agincourt in 1415, when he had ordered 200 English archers to cut the throats of a large number of French prisoners. Nor was it his last.

Similarly, ruthless acts of brutality against the French took place at Pontoise (1419), Melun (1420), Rougemont (1421) and Meaux (1422). At the siege of Rouen in the autumn and winter of 1418–19, the women and children who were sent out of the town during the siege found themselves trapped in the town ditch. Henry forced them to stay there, without food or shelter, despite the harshness of the weather. As far as he was concerned, they were the responsibility of the starving townsmen. Like the people of Caen, it was right that they should suffer for their countrymen's 'sins'.

How did such a man come to be a national hero? And how come historians have maintained him in the position for so long? In order to answer these questions, I decided to write a book eschewing traditional forms of biography and to concentrate on the man himself in comprehensive detail. It seemed to me that, if we arrange everything we know about Henry over the course of a single year,

we might get a sufficiently precise view of his character in relation to all the challenges he faced – and so we might understand why he issued such extreme commands. In this way we might be able to look beyond the propaganda of the time and the post-Agincourt eulogies of his greatness, and see the evidence of Henry's activities laid out in relation to each other.

Henry was never a Prince Hal character. He was never easy-going. He was serious and pious. When he won a battle against the rebellious Welsh prince, Owen Glendower, at Grosmont in 1405, he insisted that his men give the credit not to him but to God. In this we can see how he took on his father's philosophy that divine will may be tested by battle. If God had not wanted the Lancastrians to be kings of England, Henry and his father would have been defeated and killed at the battle of Shrewsbury (1403). Instead it was their enemies – Henry 'Hotspur' Percy and his uncle the Earl of Worcester – who were defeated and killed. As far as the Lancastrians were concerned, God had spoken.

Not everyone was convinced. Henry IV's reign was marred by a string of conspiracies against him. But Henry V saw an opportunity to end that cycle of rebellion by taking the model of Shrewsbury a step further, and proving himself victorious in France. If he could show that it was God's will that he be king of France no one could doubt his claim to be the rightful king of England. Besides, if he could demonstrate his prowess in war against the French, few Englishmen would readily take up arms against him. They would be intimidated by his martial skill and united in their hatred of the French. The numerous conspiracies against his dynasty would finally end.

Immediately after his accession Henry began collecting weaponry, armour, cannon, gunpowder, bows and arrows ready for the conflict. In 1414 he sent an embassy to demand restitution of all the rights settled on his great-grandfather, Edward III, in 1360. It was certain that the French would refuse, as this amounted to the sacrifice of half the kingdom of France. Henry anticipated this: indeed, the French refusal was to be his cause for war. So conciliatory were the French, however, that Henry was forced to send back a second embassy in 1415 to continue negotiations. If the French were willing to compromise – and he was not seen to negotiate – there was a danger that Henry might be viewed as fighting an unjust war.

Henry had absolutely no intention of settling for peace. As a day-by-day examination shows, he asked parliament and both convocations of the church (Canterbury and York) to agree to pay subsidies towards the forthcoming war even before the second embassy set out. He consulted with his privy council about the forthcoming campaign before the ambassadors had even met their counterparts in France. No one forced the war on him – on the contrary, it was a deliberate policy of warmongering on Henry's part.

Having seen off a last-minute attempt to stage a coup in the name of the Earl of March, Henry sailed to Normandy with 15,000 men, including at least 11,200 soldiers, mostly archers – in August 1415. First, he besieged the fortified town of Harfleur, bombarding it day and night. It surrendered on 22 September. Despite losing between 1,370 and 1,900 soldiers at the siege from dysentery, he decided to march to Calais as planned, and moreover to tell the French where he was going so they could meet him in battle.

Most of his fellow commanders considered his judgement suspect, if not plain wrong. Nevertheless, they followed him. They did so on account of his remarkable leadership skills, his pious devotion to God, and because Henry gave them little choice: as the chronicler Jean de Waurin noted, even a whiff of dissent caused him to have men executed. And though the march to Calais was beset by bad judgements, their faith in him was ultimately justified as he led them to victory at the battle of Agincourt on 25 October 1415.

It is in the detail of the year that Henry's cruelty becomes apparent. One of the reasons why the Earl of March saw fit to take part in the attempted coup in July 1415 was that Henry had arbitrarily decided to fine the earl 10,000 marks (£6,666 13s 4d) for marrying Anne Stafford without his permission. As the earl himself arguably had a better right to the throne than Henry, and as this was a disproportionately high fine for the crime of marrying without royal permission,

it is not surprising he was discontented and joined the plotters. This itself suggests Henry's autocratic style was extremely divisive.

Stripped and beheaded

Worse, one of Henry's great friends and a trustee of his estates, Lord Scrope, had met the plotters in an attempt to find out what they were planning. Even though Scrope had tried to dissuade them, Henry had him stripped of his membership of the Order of the Garter and beheaded. He also confiscated all his lands and property. This, coupled with the fines he later levied on widows for remarrying without permission, suggests a greedy streak in Henry which was both distasteful to his contemporaries and unfair. In later years he accused his stepmother Queen Joan of witchcraft and locked her up in Pevensey Castle in order to seize her revenue.

As for the men whom Lord Scrope was investigating, false charges of conspiracy to kill the king were raised against them in order quickly to bring about their executions. Merely discussing the legitimacy of the dynasty was not actually treason, as defined by Edward III. Plotting to kill the king was, and so this became the charge. It is in this light that we can begin to understand the character of the man who organised the massacres of men at Agincourt and Caen. The key to it all was his religious fundamentalism – that through war he could demonstrate God's approval of his kingship. Repeatedly he threatened the French with the law of Deuteronomy, punishing them with death for resisting him.

Henry's vision of his own position was that of an autocrat. His ships in 1415 bore the motto "une sanz plus" ("one and no more"). The phrase comes from a medieval French version of Homer's Iliad, and its arrogance is quite breathtaking: "d'avoir plusieurs seigneurs aucun bien je n'y vois / qu'un sans plus soit le maistre et qu'un seul soit le roi" ("As for having several lords, I see no good therein / let one and no more be the master, and that one alone be the king").

Henry had little regard for the men who actually fought for him. The bodies of the English who died at Agincourt were not given a Christian burial but were heaped in a barn and burnt. When the surviving soldiers reached Calais, they were not given food or shelter but were forced to camp outside the town and give up their hard-won prisoners in exchange for food. Many were still unpaid three years later – when Henry's own brother was among the men petitioning the king in parliament to pay their wages.

Of course, Henry was a man of his time, and as long as his contemporaries could believe that his war was a just one, and that he was genuinely favoured by God, they supported him. His morality and religious fervour undoubtedly stood him in good stead. He did nothing which could be described as self-indulgent or fun. He was widely believed not to have slept with a woman between his accession in 1413 and his marriage in 1420.

He founded two new monasteries before setting sail for France – a Charterhouse at Sheen and a Brigettine house of nuns at Syon – and regularly attended mass three times a day. And this stern, chaste, religious outlook is mirrored in his ordinances for the men on his expeditions in France: they were not to rape Frenchwomen nor thieve or pillage from churches, not to rob priests or women. One man on the 1415 expedition was caught with a stolen pyx (a container in which the consecrated bread of the Eucharist is kept) in his sleeve. Henry hanged him on the spot.

One of the most interesting aspects about Henry in the year 1415 concerns women. Not only did he not sleep with women, he seems to have avoided them. Of all the many grants he made over the course of the year, only two were to women. One of the recipients was the woman who had nursed him in infancy and the other a woman who had looked after him in childhood.

Of the 40 or more people named in the will he wrote in 1415, only two were women: his grandmother (the Dowager Countess of Hereford), and his stepmother Queen Joan – and as his later charges of witchcraft against Joan suggest, his mentioning her was merely a political nicety. As a contemporary chronicler stated, Henry respected women, but that was all.

Chroniclers noted that the 'sins' he believed he was punishing on God's behalf in France included fornication and rapes committed by Frenchmen. Meanwhile, he ordered that if any woman should come within three miles of his own army, the first time she was merely to be warned. The second time she was to have her left arm broken.

Henry's contemporaries were in awe of him. He was chaste, pious and victorious, and in that last aspect he was widely believed to be favoured by God. That is in essence why the legend of Henry as a 'great man' (as opposed to a cruel one) has lasted. Contemporaries passed their awestruck enthusiasm for his kingship on to later generations, and they in turn saw in him a victorious leader who fought for England's sake, not his own or that of God.

Shakespeare altogether smoothed the character, and made him more amenable. Historical writers in the 19th century praised the king's piety, and 20th-century writers viewed him as either the Shakespearian hero or the golden boy of the 15th century.

But an objective view of the man should leave us in no doubt that he was hugely arrogant, lacked compassion, was distant from women, was ruthless and cruel on campaign. Golden boy Henry may have been to some – but cold steel would be a more suitable metaphor for most people who met him.

Questions to answer:

1. Does this article give you the impression that Henry V was a good king?
2. What evidence can you find for *and* against this idea?
3. Explain the author's overall argument.

Reading list

It is recommended to do some advance reading to help you prepare for the course. Here are some recommendations:

1. Apartheid and Reconciliation: South African Politics 1948-1999

Reading list:

- Gail Nattrass, *A Short History of South Africa* (this would be an excellent place to start)
- Elleke Boehmer, *Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction*
- Peter Hain, *Mandela: His Essential Life*
- Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (particularly the chapters on 1948-1999)
- Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The rise and fall of apartheid* (Seminar Studies)
- Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk To Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*
- Elsa Joubert, *The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena* (historical novel)

2. Lancastrians, Yorkists and Henry VII, 1445-1509

Reading list:

- Dan Jones, *The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses and the Rise of the Tudors*
- Thomas Penn, *Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England*
- David Grummit, *A Short History of the Wars of the Roses*
- Miri Rubin, *The Hollow Crown: A History of Britain in the Late Middle Ages* (particularly the chapters on the 1400s)
- Alison Weir, *Lancaster and York: The Wars of the Roses*
- Conn Iggulden, *Wars of the Roses: Stormbird* (historical fiction)