Regional depth: the HL option

IB DP History HL Paper 3: regional depth, historiography, Japan and China 1853-1912

Regional depth: the HL option

- explain what Paper 3 asks for and what "depth" means in a regional essay;
- use **historiography**: name a **historian** or school, state the view and judge it with evidence;
- know the four regions and their commonly taught sections;
- explain why Japan and China responded so differently to Western pressure, 1853–1912.

What "depth" means

- Paper 2 asks about the world; Paper 3 asks about one region in more detail.
- Compare two answers about Japan's reforms:
- Use the same essay plan as Paper 2: a thesis, three argued paragraphs with evidence, a counter-argument and a judgement.
- Spend about 45 minutes on each essay, with 5 minutes to plan.

Historiography

- **Historiography** is the study of how historians have written about the past.
- Historians disagree because they use different sources, ask different questions, and write at different times.
- In a Paper 3 essay:
- 1.

The four regions

- Each region's 18 sections cover a long span of modern history, so a school picks a small part of a long story.
- Choose one region and learn three of its sections well enough to write a full essay on each: in the exam you answer three questions, and you may not find one on every section you studied.

Worked depth: Japan and China, 1860–1912

- **The "impact–response" model.** John K. Fairbank and others in the 1950s and 1960s saw China's history after 1840 mainly as a response to the Western impact. China responded slowly because its traditional institutions and ideas resisted change; Japan responded fast.
- **The China-centred approach.** Paul Cohen (*Discovering History in China*, 1984) argued that this model made China passive. Many changes came from inside China (population growth, local reformers, the provinces) and were not just reactions to the West.

Worked depth: Japan and China, 1860–1912 (historians)

- **Modernisation theory and its critics on Japan.** Some historians writing in the US in the 1960s presented Meiji Japan as a model of successful modernisation. Marxist historians in Japan (the Kōza school, from the 1930s) saw the Restoration as an incomplete revolution that created an authoritarian state and led to militarism. Later historians stressed that Tokugawa Japan already had high literacy and strong markets before 1868.
- For each view, ask what evidence supports it and what it leaves out.

Sources for this lesson

- International Baccalaureate, *History guide* (first assessment 2017), Paper 3 and the Asia and Oceania option.
- J. K. Fairbank and S. Y. Teng, *China's Response to the West* (1954).
- P. A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China* (1984).
- M. B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (2000); J. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (3rd edition, 2013).

Common errors

- Writing general statements ("Japan modernised quickly") without names, laws, dates and numbers.
- Naming a **historian** without stating the view or explaining why historians disagree.
- Using **historiography** as decoration at the end instead of inside the argument.

Common errors (2)

- Comparing Japan and China with a list of events instead of the factors that explain the difference.
- Treating China's reforms as having failed completely; the **Self-Strengthening Movement** built arsenals, shipyards and schools.
- Running out of time: three essays in 2 hours 30 minutes is 50 minutes each.

Key terms

- **Depth**: precise regional detail: names, laws, dates and numbers.
- **School of thought**: a group of historians who share an approach or **interpretation**.
- **Impact–response model**: Fairbank's view that modern Chinese history was mainly a response to the impact of the West.

Key terms (2)

- **China-centred approach**: Cohen's view that change in China came largely from inside Chinese society.
- **Meiji Restoration**: the return of power to the Japanese emperor in 1868, which began rapid modernisation.
- **Hundred Days' Reform**: the Guangxu Emperor's reform programme of 1898, ended by a conservative coup.

Check yourself

- 1.
- How many essays, marks and minutes does Paper 3 have, and what share of the HL grade? 2.
- Rewrite as a depth statement: "Japan built a modern army." 3.
- What are the four steps for using **historiography** in an essay? 4.