# 3.1 The historical investigation

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 25 marks**

**KEY WORDS** historical investigation • reflection

## The historical investigation

### Objective

Form a narrow, answerable, debatable question, plan the research, evaluate two sources in depth with OPVL, and structure the investigation and reflection (the internal assessment).

### 1 Key knowledge and worked examples

> **Investigation toolkit.** At most 2,200 words (bibliography not counted), 25 marks in three sections. Section 1, criterion A [6]: the question, and two sources identified, their relevance explained and analysed with OPVL relative to the question. Section 2, criterion B [15]: an organised, critical investigation from a range of evidence, weighing historians' views, ending in a reasoned conclusion. Section 3, criterion C [4]: reflection on historians' methods and their difficulties, tied to the investigation. Question: narrow, answerable, debatable. Worked example: the Hoare–Laval Plan, December 1935.

### 2 Practice

**2.1** State the three tests a good investigation question must pass. [3]

**2.2** Improve this question: "Why did the League of Nations fail?" [2]

**2.3** Name the three things a research plan must state. [2]

**2.4** Give one value and one limitation of a published cabinet minute, for a question about ministers' motives. [2]

**2.5** Distinguish reflection from conclusion. [2]

### 3 Exam-style questions

**3.1** *(Planning.)* A student proposes: "How far was the Hoare–Laval Plan (December 1935) the decisive blow to the League's credibility?" Draft the research plan: the method (which kinds of sources) and a two-item mini-bibliography, and justify the question against the three tests. [6]

**3.2** *(Section 1, criterion A style.)* Evaluate Samuel Hoare's memoir *Nine Troubled Years* (1954) for this investigation: origin, purpose, one value, one limitation. [4]

**3.3** *(Section 3, criterion C style.)* Write the reflection paragraph the worked investigation needs: name one source you could not use, one missing voice, and one thing the evidence could not settle, and say what each shows about how historians work. [4]

## Solutions

**2.1** Narrow (a person, decision, event or policy – not a war); answerable (the evidence exists and is accessible); debatable (historians disagree, or the answer is not in the textbook) (3).

**2.2** Any defensible narrowing with a debatable frame: e.g. "How far was the Hoare–Laval Plan (1935) the decisive blow to the League's credibility?" or "How far did the Manchurian crisis (1931–33) destroy the League's enforcement credibility?" (2 for narrow + debatable).

**2.3** The question; the proposed method (which kinds of sources, which archives or editions); a mini-bibliography (2 for two of three).

**2.4** Value: it records what ministers actually decided and said in the room – contemporaneous and authoritative on positions taken (1). Limitation: it records what was minuted, not what was thought; motive must be inferred, and minutes are drafted for the record (1).

**2.5** The conclusion ends section 2: it answers the question directly and states the judgement's grounds (1). The reflection is section 3: it discusses what the investigation showed about historians' methods and their difficulties (1).

**3.1** Method: published British and French cabinet collections for the decision; the contemporary press (the leak's vehicle) for its reception; the historiography from 1936 to the present for the debate (2). Mini-bibliography: e.g. Documents on British Foreign Policy (relevant series volume) for the pact's text and cabinet context; a standard monograph on interwar diplomacy (e.g. a survey of appeasement-era Britain) for the debate (2). Justification: narrow (one plan, one month), answerable (the text, the press and the scholarship are all published), debatable (historians divide between structural League failure and the self-inflicted credibility wound) (2).

**3.2** Origin: the memoir of the British foreign secretary who made the plan and resigned over it, published in 1954, nearly twenty years later (1); purpose: to explain and defend his decisions to the public and to history (1). Value: the only first-hand account of his own motives and of the pressures he says he faced (1). Limitation: written with hindsight by a man defending his reputation, so its account of his motives needs checking against the records of 1935 (1).

**3.3** Model reflection: "I could read only English-language sources, so the French side rests on British records and later historians; a historian's language skills shape which archives they can use (1). Workers' and colonial voices are absent from the sources used: the press sampled is metropolitan and elite, and the pact's Ethiopian victims appear only through others' accounts (1). Finally, the evidence could not settle whether the pact's withdrawal destroyed credibility more than its terms – a counterfactual the documents cannot close; the judgement therefore rests on the pattern of subsequent crises, with that limit owned (2)."

Local review guidance: the plan names KINDS of sources, not titles alone; (R1 3.2) value and limitation must attach to THIS question; (R1 3.3) reflection is about historians' methods, tied to this investigation, not a list of personal feelings. Authored classroom guidance.