World history topics

IB DP History SL Paper 2 and the world-history topics full package

1. Paper 2 at a glance

Paper 2 at a glance

IB History SL Paper 2 (shared with HL): two essays [22] from the twelve world-history topics, each through two case studies from different regions, with every question centred on cause, effect and change.

Must-know: thesis-led structure with named evidence, a conceded counter-case and a weighing judgement; the command terms decoded (discuss and evaluate, compare with connectives in every paragraph, examine the assumptions); timing 45 plus 5; the three worked topics - authoritarian states, 20th-century wars, the Cold War - with their classic pairings.

2. The essay craft

The essay craft

A direct answer in the first two sentences; three body paragraphs each arguing one leg of the thesis with named evidence (the Enabling Act (March 1933) beats a vague claim of consolidated power); a counter-case paragraph that concedes and answers; a judgement that weighs rather than repeats.

Command terms: discuss and evaluate want a case weighed to a verdict; compare wants direct comparison in every paragraph, never two parallel stories; examine puts the claim's own assumptions on the table. Timing: 45 minutes an essay, five to plan. The classic failures: narrative, single-case comparisons, evidence-free assertion.

3. The topic menu

The topic menu

Authoritarian states (the most taught): rise through crisis, ideology and violence; rule through consent and coercion - Hitler with Castro, Mao with Mussolini. 20th-century wars: long, short and trigger causes; political, economic and social effects - the First World War with the Second. Cold War: origins, crises from Berlin to Cuba, the end 1989-91, with one regional case (Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan).

The rest kitted: society and economy 750-1400 and dynasties 750-1500; societies in transition 1400-1700 and early modern states 1450-1789; early modern wars 1500-1750; industrialization 1750-2005; independence movements 1800-2000 (India with a Latin American case); democratic states 1848-2000. Each supplies the same skeleton: two regions, one big question.

Check yourself

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The four structural parts of the [22] essay; named evidence in every paragraph; the command terms decoded; timing discipline.

Authoritarian states: rise, rule, and the propaganda-terror system with both pairings.

Wars: long, short, trigger; three effect families. Cold War: origins, crises, end with a regional case.

The nine kitted topics with one classic pairing each.