

Syllabus

Cambridge O Level History 2147

Use this syllabus for exams in 2029 and 2030.

Exams are available in the June and November series.

This syllabus is **not** available in all administrative zones.

Please check the syllabus page at www.cambridgeinternational.org/2147 to see if this syllabus is available in your administrative zone.



Version I

For the purposes of screen readers, any mention in this document of Cambridge IGCSE refers to Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education.

Why choose Cambridge?

We work with schools worldwide to build an education that shapes knowledge, understanding and skills. Together, we give learners the confidence they need to thrive and make a positive impact in a changing world.

As part of the University of Cambridge, we offer a globally trusted and flexible framework for education from age 3 to 19, informed by research, experience, and listening to educators.

With recognised qualifications, high-quality resources, comprehensive support and valuable insights, we help schools prepare every student for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Qualifications that are recognised and valued worldwide

From the world's top-ranked universities to local higher education institutions, Cambridge qualifications open doors to a world of opportunities.

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With over 160 years of experience in delivering fair, valid and reliable assessments to students worldwide, we offer a global, recognised performance standard for international education.

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Our trusted baseline and diagnostic assessments, together with our insights and evaluation service, help schools turn data into knowledge and actionable insights, to inform teaching decisions and improve learner outcomes.

Bringing together a community of experts

We bring together the collective knowledge of experts and our diverse community of educators worldwide, supporting them to learn from one another and share ideas and information.

Tackling the climate crisis together

We believe that education is key to tackling the climate crisis. Together with Cambridge schools, we can empower young people with the skills and knowledge to take action on climate change, helping them be ready for the world.

School feedback: 'We think the Cambridge curriculum is superb preparation for university.'

Feedback from: Christoph Guttentag, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Duke University, USA

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Important: Changes to this syllabus



The latest syllabus is version 1, published September 2026. There are no significant changes which affect teaching.

Any textbooks endorsed to support the syllabus for examination from 2024 are still suitable for use with this syllabus.

1 Why choose this syllabus?

Key benefits

Cambridge O Level is typically for 14 to 16 year olds and is an internationally recognised qualification. It has been designed especially for an international market and is sensitive to the needs of different countries. Cambridge O Level is designed for learners whose first language may not be English, and this is acknowledged throughout the examination process.

Our programmes promote a thorough knowledge and understanding of a subject and help to develop the skills learners need for their next steps in education or employment.

Cambridge O Level History offers students the opportunity to study world history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It encourages learners to raise questions and to develop and deploy historical skills, knowledge and understanding in order to provide historical explanations. Learners explore history from a diversity of perspectives, including social, economical, cultural and political.

Our approach in Cambridge O Level History encourages learners to be:

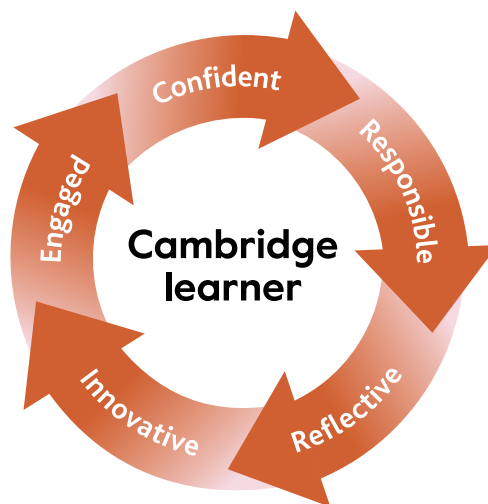
confident, exploring historical concepts such as cause and consequence, change and continuity, and similarity and difference

responsible, appreciating historical evidence and how to use it

reflective, gaining a greater understanding of international issues and inter-relationships

innovative, learning how to present clear, logical arguments

engaged, developing an interest in and enthusiasm for learning about and understanding the past.



School feedback: ‘Cambridge O Level has helped me develop thinking and analytical skills which will go a long way in helping me with advanced studies.’

Feedback from: Kamal Khan Virk, former student at Beaconhouse Garden Town Secondary School, Pakistan, who went on to study Actuarial Science at the London School of Economics

Qualifications that are recognised and valued worldwide

Cambridge qualifications prepare and equip learners with the skills they need to thrive at university and beyond. The world's best higher education institutions recognise our qualifications and value the critical thinking skills, independent research abilities and deep subject knowledge that Cambridge learners bring.

We continually work with universities and colleges in every part of the world to ensure that they understand and accept our qualifications. Cambridge O Level provides a springboard to the Cambridge Advanced stage, as well as other post-16 routes. The combination of knowledge and skills in Cambridge O Level History gives learners a solid foundation for further study. Candidates who achieve grades A* to C are well prepared to follow a wide range of courses including Cambridge International AS & A Level History.

Many universities require a combination of Cambridge International AS & A Levels and Cambridge O Levels or equivalent to meet their entry requirements.

Learn more at [**www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition**](https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition)

Supporting teachers

We believe education works best when teaching and learning are closely aligned to the curriculum, resources and assessment. Our high-quality teaching support helps to maximise teaching time and enables teachers to engage learners of all backgrounds and abilities.

We aim to provide the following support for each Cambridge qualification:

- Syllabus
- Specimen question papers and mark schemes
- Specimen paper answers
- Schemes of Work
- Example candidate responses
- Past papers and mark schemes
- Principal examiner reports for teachers.

These resources are available on the School Support Hub at <https://schoolsupporthub.cambridge.org>, our secure online site for Cambridge teachers. Your exams officer can provide you with a login.

Additional teaching and learning resources are also available for many syllabuses and vary according to the nature of the subject and the structure of the assessment of each syllabus. These can include ready-built lesson materials, digital resources and multimedia for the classroom and homework, guidance on assessment and much more. Beyond the resources available on the School Support Hub, a wide range of endorsed textbooks and associated teaching and learning support are available from Cambridge at www.cambridge.org/education and from other publishers. Resources vary according to the nature of the subject and the structure of the assessment of each syllabus.

You can also contact our global Cambridge community or talk to a senior examiner on our discussion forums.

Sign up for email notifications about changes to syllabuses, including new and revised products and services, at www.cambridgeinternational.org/syllabusupdates

Professional development

Find the next step on your professional development journey.

- **Introduction courses** – An introduction to Cambridge programmes and qualifications. For teachers who are new to Cambridge programmes or new to a specific syllabus.
- **Focus on Teaching courses** – These are for teachers who want to explore a specific area of teaching and learning within a syllabus or programme.
- **Focus on Assessment courses** – These are for teachers who want to understand the assessment of a syllabus in greater depth.
- **Marking workshops** – These workshops help you become more familiar with what examiners are looking for, and provide an opportunity to raise questions and share your experiences of the syllabus.
- **Enrichment Professional Development** – Transform your approach to teaching with our Enrichment workshops. Each workshop focuses on a specific area of teaching and learning practice.
- **Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications (PDQs)** – Practice-based programmes that transform professional learning for practising teachers. Available at Certificate and Diploma level.

For more information visit www.cambridgeinternational.org/support-and-training-for-schools

Supporting exams officers

We provide comprehensive support and guidance for all Cambridge exams officers. Find out more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide



2 Syllabus overview

Aims

The aims describe the purposes of a course based on this syllabus.

The aims are to enable students to develop:

- an interest in and enthusiasm for learning about the past
- knowledge and understanding of individuals, people and societies in the past
- knowledge that is rooted in an understanding of the nature and use of historical evidence
- an understanding of key historical concepts: cause and consequence, change and continuity, and similarity and difference
- an understanding of international issues in history
- historical skills, including investigation, analysis, evaluation and communication skills
- a sound basis for further study and the pursuit of personal interest.

We are an education organisation and politically neutral. The contents of this syllabus, examination papers and associated materials do not endorse any political view. We endeavour to treat all aspects of the exam process neutrally.



Content overview

All candidates study Core content in **either** Option A **or** Option B.

Either:

Option A

The nineteenth century: the development of modern nation states, 1848–1914

The content focuses on the following key questions:

- Were the revolutions of 1848 important?
- How was Italy unified?
- How was Germany unified?
- Why was there a civil war in the United States and what were its results?
- Why, and with what effects, did nations gain and expand their overseas empires in the nineteenth century?
- What caused the First World War?

or:

Option B

The twentieth century: international relations since 1919

The content focuses on the following key questions:

- Was the Treaty of Versailles fair?
- To what extent was the League of Nations a success?
- How far was Hitler's foreign policy to blame for the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939?
- Who was to blame for the Cold War?
- How effectively did the United States contain the spread of communism?
- How secure was the USSR's control over Eastern Europe, 1948–c.1989?

In addition, all candidates must also study **at least one** of the following depth studies:

- A The First World War, 1914–18
- B Germany, 1918–45
- C Russia, 1905–41
- D The United States, 1919–41
- E The Second World War in Europe and the Asia–Pacific, 1939–c.1945

Assessment overview

All candidates take three components. Candidates will be eligible for grades A* to E.

All candidates take:

Paper 1

2 hours

Structured Questions

55%

60 marks

- Candidates answer **two** questions from Section A (Core content) and **one** question from Section B (Depth studies).
- All questions are in the form of structured essays, split into three parts: (a), (b) and (c).

Externally assessed

and:

Paper 2

1 hour 45 minutes

Document Questions

45%

40 marks

- Candidates answer **one** question on **one** prescribed topic taken from Section A (Core content).
- Candidates are presented with a range of source materials relating to each prescribed topic.
- The prescribed topics change in each exam series – see section 4.

Externally assessed

Information on availability is in the **Before you start** section.

Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

AO1

An ability to recall, select, organise and deploy knowledge of the syllabus content.

AO2

An ability to construct historical explanations using an understanding of:

- cause and consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference
- the motives, emotions, intentions and beliefs of people in the past.

AO3

An ability to understand, interpret, evaluate and use a range of sources as evidence, in their historical context.

Weighting for assessment objectives

The approximate weightings allocated to each of the assessment objectives (AOs) are summarised below.

Assessment objectives as a percentage of the qualification

Assessment objective	Weighting in O Level %
AO1	28
AO2	36
AO3	36
Total	100

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	Weighting in components %	
	Paper 1	Paper 2
AO1	33	20
AO2	67	0
AO3	0	80
Total	100	100

3 Subject content

This syllabus gives you the flexibility to design a course that will interest, challenge and engage your learners. Where appropriate you are responsible for selecting resources and examples, topics and subject contexts to support your learners' study. These should be appropriate for the learners' age, cultural background and learning context as well as complying with your school policies and local legal requirements.

All candidates study Core content in either:

Option A **The nineteenth century: the development of modern nation states, 1848–1914**

or:

Option B **The twentieth century: international relations since 1919.**

In addition, all candidates must also study at least one of the Depth studies.

The Core content and Depth studies are structured around a series of key questions, focus points, and specified content:

- Key questions define the over-arching issues.
- Focus points identify the issues that enable candidates to gain an understanding of the key question.
- Specified content provides guidance on what needs to be studied for each key question.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the key questions using knowledge of relevant historical examples.

Core content: Option A

The nineteenth century: the development of modern nation states, 1848–1914

The Core content in Option A focuses on six key questions:

- 1 Were the revolutions of 1848 important?
- 2 How was Italy unified?
- 3 How was Germany unified?
- 4 Why was there a civil war in the United States and what were its results?
- 5 Why, and with what effects, did nations gain and expand their overseas empires in the nineteenth century?
- 6 What caused the First World War?

1 Were the revolutions of 1848 important?

Focus points

- Why had liberalism and nationalism grown in influence by 1848?
- Why were there so many revolutions in 1848?
- Did the revolutions have anything in common?
- Why did most of the revolutions fail?
- Did the revolutions change anything?

Specified content

- The nature of revolutions in 1848 and the influence of liberalism and nationalism
- Causes, events and results of revolutions in:
 - France
 - Italy
 - Germany
 - the Austrian Empire
- Reasons for the failure of the revolutions

2 How was Italy unified?

Focus points

- Why was Italy not unified in 1848–49?
- How important was Garibaldi's contribution to unifying Italy?
- Did Cavour help or hinder the unification of Italy?
- How important for other European countries were moves towards Italian unification?

Specified content

- Austrian influence over Italy
- Italian nationalism and the role of Mazzini
- Events of 1848–49
- Victor Emmanuel II and Cavour: the agreement of Plombières, war with Austria in 1859
- Garibaldi and the invasion of Sicily and Naples
- The creation of the Kingdom of Italy, completion of unification by 1870

3 How was Germany unified?

Focus points

- Why was Germany not unified in 1848–50?
- How did Bismarck bring about Austria's defeat of 1866?
- How did Bismarck bring about France's defeat of 1870?
- How far was Bismarck responsible for the unification of Germany?

Specified content

- German nationalism
- The Zollverein
- The 1848 revolution in Prussia
- The setting up and eventual failure of the Frankfurt Parliament
- Re-establishment of Austrian influence in Germany by 1850
- Bismarck as Prussian Minister-President
- Bismarck's foreign policy to 1871:
 - Schleswig-Holstein
 - the Austro-Prussian War and its consequences
 - relations with France
 - the Spanish Succession and the Franco-Prussian War
 - the creation of the German empire

4 Why was there a civil war in the United States and what were its results?

Focus points

- How far did slavery cause the Civil War?
- What was the significance of Lincoln's election as president?
- Why was the North able to win the war?
- Did the war change anything?

Specified content

- Causes and consequences of the American Civil War, 1820–77:
 - differences between North and South
 - slavery, slave states and free states, abolitionism
 - the 1860 election and secession of the Southern states
 - reasons for the North's victory and the South's defeat
 - the role of Lincoln
 - reconstruction and the extent of its success

5 Why, and with what effects, did nations gain and expand their overseas empires in the nineteenth century?

Focus points

- What were the motives behind European and US imperialism?
- How varied were the impacts of European imperialism on Africans?
- Why, and with what effects, did Indians resist British rule?
- Why, and with what effects, did the United States gain former Spanish colonies?

Specified content

- Reasons for imperialism: economic, military, geopolitical, religious and cultural motives
- Europeans in Africa: case studies of French, British and Belgian imperialism, and their impacts on Africans:
 - the French model of assimilation and direct rule; Faidherbe and Senegal
 - the British model of indirect rule; Lugard and Nigeria
 - the Belgians and private imperialism; Leopold II and the Congo
- The British in India: the events of 1857 and the changes they brought to British rule
- Wars of independence in the Philippines and Cuba, the Spanish–American War and the Treaty of Paris:
 - the debate in the USA over US imperialism
 - the Philippines; consequences of American control on the Filipinos
 - American intervention in Cuba to 1906

6 What caused the First World War?

Focus points

- Did the Alliance System and global diplomacy make war more likely or less likely?
- How far did colonial problems create tensions between the Great Powers?
- Why were problems in the Balkans so difficult for the Great Powers to solve?
- How did the assassination of Franz Ferdinand lead to war?

Specified content

- The origins of the First World War, 1890–1914:
 - the Alliance System and the European diplomatic system
 - the 1902 Anglo–Japanese Alliance
 - the arms race
 - colonial rivalries
 - developments in the Balkans
 - the crisis of June–July 1914 and the outbreak of war

Core content: Option B

The twentieth century: international relations from 1919

The Core content in Option B focuses on six key questions:

- 1 Was the Treaty of Versailles fair?
- 2 To what extent was the League of Nations a success?
- 3 How far was Hitler's foreign policy to blame for the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939?
- 4 Who was to blame for the Cold War?
- 5 How effectively did the United States contain the spread of communism?
- 6 How secure was the USSR's control over Eastern Europe, 1948–c.1989?

1 Was the Treaty of Versailles fair?

Focus points

- What were the motives and aims of the Big Three at Versailles?
- Why did the victors not get everything they wanted?
- What was the impact of the Treaty on Germany up to the end of 1923?
- Could the Treaty be justified at the time?

Specified content

- The roles of Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George in the peacemaking process
- The terms of the Treaty
- Social, economic and political impact of the Treaty in Germany to the end of 1923
- Contemporary opinions about the Treaty

2 To what extent was the League of Nations a success?

Focus points

- How far did weaknesses in the League's organisation and membership make failure inevitable?
- How successful were the League's attempts at peacekeeping in the 1920s?
- How important was the League's humanitarian work?
- How far did the Depression make the work of the League more difficult in the 1930s?

Specified content

- The structure, aims and membership of the League
- Successes and failures in peacekeeping during the 1920s:
 - Vilna 1920
 - Åland Islands 1920–21
 - Corfu 1923
 - Bulgaria 1925
- The League's humanitarian work:
 - refugees
 - health
 - working conditions
 - slavery
- The League in the 1930s:
 - causes, events and consequences of the Manchurian crisis and of the Abyssinian crisis

3 How far was Hitler's foreign policy to blame for the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939?

Focus points

- What were the long-term consequences of the Treaty of Versailles?
- What were the consequences of the failures of the League of Nations in the 1930s?
- Was the policy of appeasement justified?
- How important was the Nazi–Soviet Pact?
- Why did Britain and France declare war on Germany in September 1939?

Specified content

- Hitler's foreign policy aims
- Rearmament
- The Saar
- Remilitarisation of the Rhineland
- The Rome–Berlin Axis and the Anti-Comintern Pact
- German and Italian involvement in the Spanish Civil War
- Anschluss with Austria
- The crisis over Czechoslovakia and the Munich Agreement
- The Polish crisis and the outbreak of war

4 Who was to blame for the Cold War?

Focus points

- Why did the US–Soviet alliance begin to break down in 1945?
- How had the USSR gained control of Eastern Europe by 1948?
- How did the United States react to Soviet expansionism?
- What were the consequences of the Berlin Blockade?
- Who was more to blame for starting the Cold War: the United States or the USSR?

Specified content

- The origins of the Cold War:
 - the 1945 summit conferences and the breakdown of the US–Soviet alliance in 1945–46
 - Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe to 1948, and American reactions to it
 - the occupation of Germany and the Berlin Blockade
 - NATO and the Warsaw Pact

5 How effectively did the United States contain the spread of communism?

Focus points

This key question will be explored through case studies of the following:

- The United States and events in Korea, 1950–53
- The United States and events in Cuba, 1959–62
- American involvement in Vietnam, 1955–75

Specified content

- Case studies of:
 - American reactions to North Korea's invasion of South Korea, the involvement of the UN, the course of the war to 1953
 - American reactions to the Cuban Revolution, including the Missile Crisis and its aftermath
 - American involvement in the Vietnam War, including reasons for involvement, tactics and strategy, reasons for withdrawal

6 How secure was the USSR's control over Eastern Europe, 1948–c.1989?

Focus points

- Why was there opposition to Soviet control in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and how did the USSR react to this opposition?
- How similar were events in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968?
- Why was the Berlin Wall built in 1961?
- What was the significance of Solidarity in Poland for the decline of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe?
- How far was Gorbachev personally responsible for the collapse of Soviet control over Eastern Europe?

Specified content

- Soviet power in Eastern Europe:
 - resistance to Soviet power in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968)
 - the Berlin Wall
 - Solidarity in Poland
 - Gorbachev and the collapse of Soviet control over Eastern Europe

Depth studies

Candidates must study at least one of the following Depth studies:

- A The First World War, 1914–18
- B Germany, 1918–45
- C Russia, 1905–41
- D The United States, 1919–41
- E The Second World War in Europe and the Asia–Pacific, 1939–c.1945

Depth study A: The First World War, 1914–18

1 Why was there stalemate on the Western Front?

Focus points

- Why did the Schlieffen Plan fail?
- Why did a defensive war emerge by the end of 1914?
- What was living and fighting in the trenches like?
- How important were new methods of warfare?
- What was the significance of the Battles of Verdun and the Somme?

2 To what extent was it a world war?

Focus points

- How important was the role of troops from the British Empire on the Western Front?
- What was the contribution of Indian and South African troops in Africa?
- What was the contribution of Japan to the Allied victory?
- How important was the Arab Revolt?

3 How important were other fronts?

Focus points

- Who won the war at sea?
- Why did the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915 fail?
- How important was the Eastern Front?
- What was the impact of war on civilian populations?

4 Why did Germany ask for an armistice in 1918?

Focus points

- What was the importance of America's entry into the war?
- Why was the German offensive of 1918 unsuccessful?
- Why did revolution break out in Germany in October 1918?
- Why was the Armistice signed?

Specified content

- The Schlieffen Plan and how it worked in practice:
 - the German advance through Belgium and the impact of the British Expeditionary Force
 - the effect on the western front of Russian mobilisation
- The battles of Mons and the Marne, the race to the sea and the First Battle of Ypres:
 - the reaction to the stalemate: trenches and the development of a war of attrition
- The nature and problems of trench warfare
- The use and impact of developments such as tanks, machine guns, aircraft and gas
- The impact of the battles of Verdun and the Somme:
 - the leadership and tactics of Haig at the Battle of the Somme
- The role and experiences of British Empire troops on the Western Front:
 - Case study: Indian troops
 - Case study: Canadian troops
- The war in Africa:
 - Case study: German East Africa
 - Case study: South West Africa
- Contribution of Japan in Asia:
 - the siege of Tsingtao
 - naval assistance in securing the sea lanes
- The Arab Revolt
- The war at sea:
 - the Battle of Jutland and its consequences
 - the use of convoys and submarines and the U-boat campaign
- The reasons for, and results of, the Gallipoli campaign
- Events on the Eastern Front and the defeat of Russia
- The impact of war on civilian populations
- The German offensive of 1918 and the Allied advance:
 - the impact of American entry into the war
- Conditions in Germany towards the end of the war:
 - the Kiel Mutiny and German Revolution
 - the abdication of the Kaiser
- The Armistice

Depth study B: Germany, 1918–45

1 Was the Weimar Republic doomed from the start?

Focus points

- How did Germany emerge from defeat at the end of the First World War?
- What was the impact of the Treaty of Versailles on the Republic?
- To what extent did the Republic recover after 1923?
- What were the achievements of the Weimar period?

2 Why was Hitler able to dominate Germany by 1934?

Focus points

- What did the Nazi Party stand for in the 1920s?
- Why did the Nazis have little success before 1930?
- Why was Hitler able to become Chancellor by 1933?
- How did Hitler consolidate his power in 1933–34?

3 The Nazi regime

(a) How effectively did the Nazis control Germany, 1933–45?

Focus points

- How much opposition was there to the Nazi regime?
- How effectively did the Nazis deal with their political opponents?
- How did the Nazis use culture and the mass media to control the people?
- Why did the Nazis persecute many groups in German society?
- Was Nazi Germany a totalitarian state?

(b) What was it like to live in Nazi Germany?

Focus points

- How did young people react to the Nazi regime?
- How successful were Nazi policies towards women and the family?
- Did most people in Germany benefit from Nazi rule?
- How did the coming of war change life in Nazi Germany?

Specified content

- The Revolution of 1918 and the establishment of the Republic
- The Versailles Settlement and German reactions to it
- The Weimar Constitution, the main political divisions, the role of the army
- Political disorder, 1919–23:
 - threats from the left and the right
 - economic crises and hyper-inflation
 - the occupation of the Ruhr
- The Stresemann era:
 - economic achievements
 - foreign policy achievements
- Cultural achievements of the Weimar period
- The early years of the Nazi Party:
 - Nazi ideas and methods
 - the Munich Putsch
 - the roles of Hitler and other Nazi leaders
- The impact of the Depression on Germany:
 - political, economic and social crisis of 1930–33
 - reasons for the Nazis' rise to power
 - Hitler takes power
 - the Reichstag Fire and the election of 1933
- Nazi rule in Germany:
 - the Enabling Act
 - the Night of the Long Knives
 - the death of Hindenburg
 - the removal of opposition
 - methods of control and repression
 - use of culture and the mass media
- Economic policy including rearmament
- Different experiences of Nazi rule:
 - women and young people
 - anti-Semitism
 - persecution of minorities
 - opposition to Nazi rule
- Impact of the Second World War on Germany:
 - the conversion to a war economy
 - the Final Solution

Depth study C: Russia, 1905–41

1 Why did the Tsarist regime collapse in 1917?

Focus points

- How well did the Tsarist regime deal with the difficulties of ruling Russia up to 1914?
- How did the Tsar survive the 1905 Revolution?
- How far was the Tsar weakened by the First World War?
- Why was the revolution of March 1917 successful?

2 How did the Bolsheviks gain power, and how did they consolidate their rule?

Focus points

- How effectively did the Provisional Government rule Russia in 1917?
- Why were the Bolsheviks able to seize power in November 1917?
- Why did the Bolsheviks win the Civil War?
- How far was the New Economic Policy a success?

3 How did Stalin gain and hold on to power?

Focus points

- Why did Stalin, and not Trotsky, emerge as Lenin's successor?
- Why did Stalin launch the Purges?
- What methods did Stalin use to control the Soviet Union?
- How complete was Stalin's control over the Soviet Union by 1941?

4 What was the impact of Stalin's economic policies?

Focus points

- Why did Stalin introduce the Five-Year Plans?
- Why did Stalin introduce collectivisation?
- How successful were Stalin's economic changes?
- How were the Soviet people affected by these changes?

Specified content

- The main features of Tsarist rule and Russian society before the First World War:
 - the 1905 Revolution and its aftermath
 - attempts at reform
- The First World War and its impact on the Russian people
- The March Revolution of 1917
- The Provisional Government and the Soviets, the growing power of revolutionary groups
- Reasons for the failure of the Provisional Government
- The Bolshevik seizure of power, the role of Lenin
- The main features of Bolshevik rule, the Civil War and War Communism, and reasons for the Bolshevik victory
- The Kronstadt Rising and the establishment of the New Economic Policy
- Lenin's death and the struggle for power
- Reasons for Stalin's emergence as leader by 1928
- Stalin's dictatorship:
 - use of terror
 - the Purges
 - propaganda and official culture
- Stalin's economic policies and their impact:
 - the modernisation of Soviet industry
 - the Five-Year Plans
 - collectivisation in agriculture
- Life in the Soviet Union:
 - the differing experiences of social groups
 - ethnic minorities and women

Depth study D: The United States, 1919–41

1 How far did the US economy boom in the 1920s?

Focus points

- On what factors was the economic boom based?
- Why did some industries prosper while others did not?
- Why did agriculture not share in the prosperity?
- Did all Americans benefit from the boom?

2 How far did US society change in the 1920s?

Focus points

- What were the 'Roaring Twenties'?
- How widespread was intolerance in US society?
- Why was Prohibition introduced, and then later repealed?
- How far did the roles of women change during the 1920s?

3 What were the causes and consequences of the Wall Street Crash?

Focus points

- How far was speculation responsible for the Wall Street Crash?
- What impact did the Crash have on the economy?
- What were the social consequences of the Crash?
- Why did Roosevelt win the election of 1932?

4 How successful was the New Deal?

Focus points

- What was the New Deal as introduced in 1933?
- How far did the character of the New Deal change after 1933?
- Why did the New Deal encounter opposition?
- Why did unemployment persist despite the New Deal?
- Did the fact that the New Deal did not solve unemployment mean that it was a failure?

Specified content

- The expansion of the US economy during the 1920s:
 - government policies
 - mass production in industries for cars and other consumer goods
 - the fortunes of older industries
 - the development of credit and hire purchase
 - the decline of agriculture
- Weaknesses in the economy by the late 1920s
- Society in the 1920s:
 - the 'Roaring Twenties'
 - film and other media
 - Prohibition and gangsterism
 - restrictions on immigration, the 'Red Scare', religious intolerance
 - discrimination against Black Americans
 - the Ku Klux Klan
 - the changing roles of women
- The Wall Street Crash and its financial, economic and social effects
- The reaction of President Hoover to the Crash
- The presidential election of 1932; Hoover's and Roosevelt's programmes
- Roosevelt's inauguration and the 'Hundred Days'
- The New Deal legislation, the 'alphabet agencies' and their work, and the economic and social changes they caused
- Opposition to the New Deal:
 - the Republicans
 - the rich
 - business interests
 - the Supreme Court
 - radical critics like Huey Long
- The strengths and weaknesses of the New Deal programme in dealing with unemployment and the Depression

Depth study E: The Second World War in Europe and the Asia–Pacific, 1939–c.1945

1 How did the Second World War in Europe develop?

Focus points

- To what extent had Nazi Germany gained control of Europe in 1940?
- Why was Germany unable to conquer Britain?
- Why did Hitler invade the Soviet Union in 1941?
- Why was the Battle of Stalingrad a turning point?

2 How did the Second World War in the Asia–Pacific develop?

Focus points

- How did US–Japanese relationships deteriorate?
- How successful was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?
- Why were the Japanese successful in the initial stages of the war?
- Why was the Battle of Midway a turning point?

3 What was the impact of war on civilian populations in Europe and the Asia–Pacific?

Focus points

- What was the impact on civilians of the bombing of Britain (1940–41) and Germany (1943–45)?
- How did Japanese control impact on peoples' lives?
- What were the experiences of civilian populations in Nazi-occupied Europe?
- How effective were resistance movements in Europe and the Asia–Pacific?

4 How did the Allies achieve victory over the Axis powers?

Focus points

- What was the importance of the Allied advance through Italy?
- Why was Nazi Germany on the point of collapse by April 1945?
- Why were the Allies able to achieve victory over Japan?
- How did the Allies consolidate their victories in Germany and Japan?

Specified content

- Extent of German conquest of Europe 1940:
 - invasion of and surrender of France; Vichy government in France
 - Dunkirk
 - German plans to invade Britain (Operation Sea Lion)
 - the Battle of Britain and its consequences
- Operation Barbarossa and initial Nazi successes
- German defeat at Stalingrad and its impact
- The reasons for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and its consequences
- Reasons for initial Japanese military successes in Southeast Asia by early 1942:
 - Case study: Malaya and Singapore
- The Battle of Midway and its impact
- The impact of bombing on peoples' lives and morale in Europe:
 - the Blitz
 - Allied bombing of German cities
- The impact of Japanese control on people's lives:
 - Case study: Malaya and Singapore
- The impact of Nazi control in occupied Europe:
 - Case study: Poland, including circumstances leading to the Holocaust and its impact
- The methods and effectiveness of resistance movements in Malaya and in France
- The Allied invasion of Sicily and victory over German forces in Italy
- The collapse and surrender of Nazi Germany in 1945:
 - the D-Day landings and the advance to Germany
 - the Russian advance from the East
- The reasons for the defeat of Japan:
 - the battles of Guadalcanal and Okinawa
 - the US strategy of island-hopping
 - the bombing of Japan
 - the decision to use the atomic bomb and its consequences
- Consolidation of victory:
 - the Allied occupations and control of Germany and Japan
 - the war crimes trials in Nuremberg and Tokyo

Faculty feedback: 'Understanding how and why our climate is changing and providing the knowledge and skills to explore the challenges plays a key role in every student's education.'

Feedback from: Dr Amy Munro-Faure, Head of Education and Student Engagement of Cambridge Zero

4 Details of the assessment

Paper 1 – Structured Questions

Written paper, 2 hours, 60 marks

This is a compulsory component.

The paper is an externally set assessment, marked by Cambridge.

Candidates answer two questions from Section A and one question from Section B.

Section A contains eight questions. Candidates answer any **two** questions. Four questions will be set from the nineteenth century Core content in Option A and four questions will be set from the twentieth century Core content in Option B. In each option, two questions will be set from key questions 1–3 and two questions will be set from key questions 4–6.

Section B contains two questions on each of the five depth studies. Candidates answer **one** question.

All questions in Section A and Section B are in the form of structured essays, split into three parts: (a), (b) and (c).

All questions test assessment objectives AO1 and AO2.

Paper 2 – Document Questions

Written paper, 1 hour 45 minutes, 40 marks

This is a compulsory component.

The paper is an externally set assessment, marked by Cambridge.

Candidates answer **one** question on either the prescribed topic from the Core content in Option A or the prescribed topic from the Core content in Option B. Each question has five parts.

Each question includes a range of source material relating to the prescribed topic, with a maximum of seven sources per question. The five question parts are based on the source material provided.

Each question tests assessment objectives AO1 and AO3.

The prescribed topic changes in each exam series.

For examination in 2029, the prescribed topics are:

Nineteenth century Core content (Option A):

- What caused the First World War? (*June exam*)
- Why was there a civil war in the United States and what were its results? (*November exam*)

Twentieth century Core content (Option B):

- To what extent was the League of Nations a success? (*June exam*)
- How far was Hitler's foreign policy to blame for the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939? (*November exam*)

For examination in 2030, the prescribed topics are:

Nineteenth century Core content (Option A):

- Why was there a civil war in the United States and what were its results? (*June exam*)
- How was Italy unified? (*November exam*)

Twentieth century Core content (Option B):

- How effectively did the United States contain the spread of communism? (*June exam*)
- To what extent was the League of Nations a success? (*November exam*)

Command words

Command words and their meanings help candidates know what is expected from them in the exams. The table below includes command words used in the assessment for this syllabus. The use of the command word will relate to the subject context.

Command word	What it means
Describe	state the points of a topic / give characteristics and main features
Discuss	write about issue(s) or topic(s) in depth in a structured way
Explain	set out purposes or reasons / make the relationships between things clear / say why and/or how and support with relevant evidence

Additional guidance, e.g. phrases such as 'How far do you agree ...?' and 'Write an account ...?' may also be seen in the assessment for this syllabus.

5 What else you need to know

This section is an overview of other information you need to know about this syllabus. It will help to share the administrative information with your exams officer so they know when you will need their support. Find more information about our administrative processes at www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

Before you start

Previous study

We recommend that learners starting this course should have studied a broad curriculum such as the Cambridge Lower Secondary programme or equivalent national educational framework.

We do not expect learners starting this course to have previously studied History.

Guided learning hours

We design Cambridge O Level syllabuses to require about 130 guided learning hours for each subject. This is for guidance only. The number of hours a learner needs to achieve the qualification may vary according to each school and the learners' previous experience of the subject.

Availability and timetables

All Cambridge schools are allocated to one of six administrative zones. Each zone has a specific timetable. Find your administrative zone at www.cambridgeinternational.org/adminzone.

You can view the timetable for your administrative zone at www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables

You can enter candidates in the June and November exam series.

Check you are using the syllabus for the year the candidate is taking the exam.

Private candidates can enter for this syllabus. Some components are not available to private candidates. For more information, please refer to the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*.

Combining with other syllabuses

Candidates can take this syllabus alongside other Cambridge International syllabuses in a single exam series. The only exceptions are:

- Cambridge IGCSE History (0470)
- Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) History (0977)
- Cambridge IGCSE American History (0409) (for centres in the United States)
- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

Cambridge O Level, Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) syllabuses are at the same level.

Making entries

Exams officers are responsible for submitting entries. We encourage them to work closely with you to make sure they enter the right number of candidates for the right combination of syllabus components. Entry option codes and instructions for submitting entries are in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*. Your exams officer has access to this guide.

Exam administration

To keep our exams secure, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as administrative zones. We allocate all Cambridge schools to an administrative zone determined by their location. Each zone has a specific timetable.

Some of our syllabuses offer candidates different assessment options. An entry option code is used to identify the components the candidate will take relevant to the administrative zone and the available assessment options.

Support for exams officers

We know how important exams officers are to the successful running of exams. We provide them with the support they need to make entries on time. Your exams officer will find this support, and guidance for all other phases of the Cambridge Exams Cycle, at **www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide**

Retakes

Candidates can retake the whole qualification as many times as they want to.

Learn more about retake entries, including definitions and information on entry deadlines, at **www.cambridgeinternational.org/retakes**

To confirm what entry options are available for this syllabus, refer to the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries* for the relevant series.

Language

This syllabus and the related assessment materials are available in English only.

Accessibility and equality

Syllabus and assessment design

At Cambridge we recognise that our candidates have highly diverse linguistic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and may also have a variety of protected characteristics. Protected characteristics include special educational needs and disability (SEND), religion and belief, and characteristics related to gender and identity.

We apply accessible design principles to make our syllabuses and assessment materials as accessible and inclusive as possible. This includes reviewing the accessibility of language, layout, contexts and visual content. Using this approach means that we give all candidates the fairest possible opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Access arrangements

Our design principles aim to make sure our assessment materials are accessible for all candidates. To further minimise barriers faced by candidates with SEND, illness or injury, we offer a range of access arrangements and modified papers. This is the principal way in which we comply with our duty to make 'reasonable adjustments', as guided by the UK Equality Act 2010.

Important:

Requested access arrangements should be based on evidence of the candidate's barrier to taking an assessment and should also reflect their normal way of working. For Cambridge to approve an access arrangement, we need to agree that it constitutes a reasonable adjustment and does not affect the security or integrity of the assessment. Our access arrangement regulations can be found in section 1.3 of the *Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

Applying for access arrangements

- Details of our standard access arrangements and modified question papers are available in section 1.3 of the *Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide
- Centres are expected to check the availability of access arrangements and modified question papers at the start of the course. Check the *Cambridge Handbook*, the assessment objectives listed in the syllabus document and, where applicable, any access arrangement restrictions listed in the syllabus document.
- Contact us at the start of the course to find out if we can approve an access arrangement that is not listed in the *Cambridge Handbook*.
- All applications should be made by the deadlines published in the *Cambridge Handbook*.

After the exam

Grading and reporting

Grades A*, A, B, C, D or E indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge O Level.

A* is the highest and E is the lowest. 'Ungraded' means that the candidate's performance did not meet the standard required for grade E. 'Ungraded' is reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate.

In specific circumstances, your candidates may see one of the following letters on their statement of results:

- Q (PENDING)
- X (NO RESULT).

These letters do not appear on the certificate.

On the statement of results, Cambridge O Level is shown as GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION ORDINARY LEVEL.

On certificates, Cambridge O Level is shown as General Certificate of Education.

How students and teachers can use the grades

Assessment at Cambridge O Level has two purposes:

- 1 to measure learning and achievement
The assessment confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus.
- 2 to show likely future success
The outcomes help predict which students are well prepared for or likely to be successful in a particular course or career.
The outcomes help students choose the most suitable course or career.

Changes to this syllabus for 2029 and 2030

The syllabus has been updated. This is version 1, published September 2026.

You must read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme. We review our syllabuses regularly to make sure they continue to meet the needs of our schools. In updating this syllabus, we have made it easier for teachers and students to understand, keeping the familiar features that teachers and schools value.

There are no significant changes which affect teaching.

Any textbooks endorsed to support the syllabus for examination from 2024 are still suitable for use with this syllabus.



Syllabuses and specimen materials represent the final authority on the content and structure of all of our assessments.

With a Customer Services team available 24 hours a day, 6 days a week, and dedicated regional teams supporting schools in 160 countries, we understand your local context and are here to guide you so you can provide your learners with everything they need to prepare for Cambridge O Level.

Quality management

We are committed to providing exceptional quality. In line with this commitment, our quality management system for the provision of international education programmes and qualifications for students aged 3 to 19 is independently certified as meeting the internationally recognised standard, ISO 9001:2015. Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/about-us/our-standards/



We are committed to making our documents accessible in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 Standard. We are always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. If you find any problems or you think we are not meeting accessibility requirements, contact us at **info@cambridgeinternational.org** with the subject heading: Digital accessibility. If you need this document in a different format, contact us and supply your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.

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