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PART I

THE IB HISTORY IA GUIDE

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY IA

If you have decided to open up, and read this book, it is likely that you fall within the following spectrum: You either know exactly what you want your IB History Internal Assessment (IA) to look like, and just want guidance, or you have no idea where to begin. Either way, you will find something useful within the content of these pages. Aside from seven, outstanding and high scoring History IAs that you may use as models or inspiration, this Guide will also include an introductory section containing a multitude of tips from deciding your topic to citing sources that will help maximise your score.

Now, more than ever, scoring highly on the IA is imperative for any IB student aiming for a 6 or a 7 in IB History, and a high overall score of 37+. Noticeably, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, students' overall performance in the International Baccalaureate became ever more reliant on how they scored on their IAs. Whether students took the exam or non-exam route, the straits of asynchronous, or online learning, inevitably hindered students ability to absorb the already-dense content of IB History, and other subjects too. Hence, for many, the Internal Assessment really became the determining factor of whether a student fell within one markband or the next.

As such, the History IA should not be overlooked, as it really can be the difference between a 4 and a 5, or a 6 and a 7. Yet this should not stun nor discourage you. In fact, it should serve as inspiration. Why? Because *You* are in control of your IA - from the beginning to the end. We all have had those moments in exams where our nerves tip over, our minds go blank, and it can be difficult to truly show all we know on the exam paper, even if we have studied hours at a time. But this is not something you should fear with the IA, especially having this Guide, because you have the power to make it the best it can be.

So, let us begin by answering the most basic question of them all: What exactly *is* the History Internal Assessment?

In essence, the History IA is an investigation of a historical topic of your choosing, in which you will learn how to tackle historical inquiries like a professional historian and reflect on the skills you employed. It is a completely self-guided investigation, meaning that although you must meet the structural guidelines of the IA, it can be on any historical topic you would like; you may even choose to do it on a topic that you have not directly studied in class. Although, I will later discuss how you should decide on whether you write your IA on a topic you have already been studying or not. In reality, the only requirement regarding the topic of the IA is that it should fall under a timeframe, which you should confirm with your teacher.

The IA should be **no longer than 2,200 words**, and it is divided into three sections. Section A is the identification and evaluation of sources, it should be around 500 words long, and it is where you will evaluate the values and limitations of two historical sources you utilised in your research, with reference to each source's origin, purpose, and content. Section B, the investigation, is approximately 1,300 words long, and is where you will attempt to answer your research question by employing evidence and integrating it with very clear critical commentary that leads the reader to an evidence-based conclusion. Lastly, Section C is your reflection, it should be roughly 400 words long, and this is where you will discuss how you faced the methodological challenges professional historians face, whilst writing your investigation, and how you overcame them. Later in this Guide, we will go over each section individually, and some specific pointers on how to maximise your marks in each.

The structure of the IA is exactly the same for HL and SL students, as both are worth 25 marks, with an available 6 marks for Section A, 15 for Section B, and 4 for Section C. However, the IA is worth 25% of the final grade for SL students and 20% for HL students, meaning that it is a significant portion of students' final grade. It is also worth noting that although the grade boundaries shift around from year to year, if you are striving for a level 7 in your IA, you should aim for at least 20/25 marks to ensure that you are well within the markband. As previously stated, the IA is a hefty portion of HL and SL students' final mark, which is why successfully securing a high score in it will place you on a good path to achieve a high overall mark in the subject.

Finally, it is also crucial to stress that writing the history IA is an intense, time consuming process, and that your final grade will amply be a reflection on the amount of time you dedicate to researching, writing, and improving it. In reality, the IBO recommends that at least 10 hours should be allocated to the Internal Assessment at both SL and HL. This estimate, however, mainly accounts for in-class time that your teacher will allot to explain the IA, review preliminary outlines, answer questions, and even to allow you to research and write. Still, it is worth keeping in mind (and this is perhaps my first advice) that you will, and should dedicate an additional 5-10 hours of your own time to writing your IA - especially if you are aiming for high marks. It is crucial that you understand this early on in the process so you may begin preparing, afterall, more hours dedicated to your IA are less hours you could be spending revising for another subject, taking a well-deserved break, or even writing another IA. Yet, do not let this startle you, and just remember: time management is key! As we move through this guide, you will find more tips to help you organise your time effectively, and ensure that you are working on your IA as much as you possibly can.

2. FINDING AND CHOOSING A SUITABLE TOPIC

Ensuring that you select a good, rich, and plentiful topic is crucial to writing an excellent IA. This, however, can be a stressful activity, given that the topic can truly "make or break" the IA. Yet, in this section I will provide a variety of tips that will help you select the perfect topic for you, and will reduce some of the anxiety of getting it right. Specifically, I will be covering how to balance between passion and availability of information, and how to potentially integrate the IA with other assessments you have to complete during the IB, through a concept I call "overlapping research".

As aforementioned, according to the IBO's guidelines for writing the IA, you are expected to come up with your IA topic by yourself. However, your topic must fall within a stipulated time frame set by the IBO. With that said, I would advise you to steer away from choosing topics that fall too close to the extremities of this timeline - topics that are too ancient, or very recent. This is mainly because you will likely face a lot of challenges with effectively finding credible and useful sources for your research, either because many have been lost through time, or are yet to be revealed. For instance, if you choose to write your IA on ancient Egypt,

3200-3000 BCE, whilst you might be able to find an array of secondary sources, you will most definitely have a hard time finding strong primary sources to employ in your work, as the few writings that have been uncovered from that period are hard to interpret, even by professional archeologists and historians. This can damage your IA, as you would fail to balance between primary and secondary sources. Similarly, if you decide that your topic will be the 2001 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA, you will find that many valuable government archives that could have enriched your research are still classified, and thus out of your reach. Hence, look for topics that comfortably fall within this timeline, as these will be where you will most definitely find a range of sources to explore.

Being mindful of this, you should also remember that the IA is your opportunity to explore any historical topic you like, and you should definitely take advantage of this. We all know what it is like to study our favourite topic in class, and to be extremely excited to learn more about it. Yet, we also know how dull and boring some topics can be, so much so that flipping the next page of the textbook can be a challenge in itself. So, you should strive to find a topic more like the former than the latter. Remember, your topic does not have to be something that you have covered in class as part of your IB History curriculum, meaning that this is your chance to write on something you are truly passionate about. Take me as an example: Although I was fond of the topics I was covering in class, which mainly orbited around European history, I saw the IA as my chance to explore other areas of history that I never had the chance to study in an academic setting. Consequently, being a huge fan of "Hamilton: An American Musical" by Lin Manuel Miranda, I decided to write my IA on the political foundations of the United States, even though I had never explored the topic beyond the musical. This truly made the IA writing process more engaging, and motivating, as I managed to turn the laborious process of writing a 2,200 word investigation into an intellectual endeavour. If you can find a topic that excites you to a similar degree, you will definitely be able to overcome the struggles of writing with more ease, as you will not feel like you have to write the IA - you will want to.

Having said that, whilst I wholeheartedly believe that finding a topic that you are passionate about is crucial for your success, you must also be pragmatic with your topic selection by effectively balancing between passion with the availability of information. For instance, if you

write on a topic that you are extremely passionate about but has poor availability of information, you will find that you will be driven to find and analyse new sources, yet this will quickly fade, as you will become increasingly frustrated with spending hours online or at the library, just to find few, mildly useful sources. On the contrary, if you opt for a topic that possesses a lot of information but does not interest you at all, you will find yourself mindlessly reading dozens of tedious articles, and books, whilst being unmotivated to write your work. Evidently, these are just a couple of the hindrances you will face if improperly balancing passion and efficacy, but they truly highlight the importance of selecting a topic that is interesting enough for you, but that also gives you a range of sources, and historians to work with.

You are probably wondering: How do I balance between passion and the availability of information? Well, this is a valid question, and the answer will shift from student to student. Yet, perhaps the most valuable answer to it comes with a rather upsetting truth: there is no such thing as the "perfect" topic. Frankly, understanding this is the first step to effectively finding a topic that is most suitable for you, depending on the type of student you are. Broadly speaking, if you are a student who truly enjoys studying history (considering it one of, if not your favourite subject), you might be better off choosing a topic that extensively excites you, whilst slightly lacking information. This is mainly because, although you will have to work harder to find useful, informative, and credible sources, you will be able to keep yourself motivated throughout the entire process; more so than if you had chosen a topic you find dull, but that gives you a lot to work with. Being a history buff myself, I trailed this very path, as even though the topic I chose was fascinating to me, there was a limited amount of relevant information on it. Yet this did not frustrate nor dishearten me, as my curiosity was a drive in itself. But not everyone considers history one of their favourite subjects, and if that applies to you, perhaps being more pragmatic and selecting a topic that possesses a lot of information, but only somewhat interests you might be best. Realistically, if you are going to find the process of writing the history IA tiresome anyway, you might as well ensure that you are at least writing it on a topic that you will not struggle to research. Doing such may reduce some of the stress of writing the IA, hopefully allowing you to move through it a little more easily. Still, I must stress, by no means should any student completely sacrifice passion for the

availability of information or vice-versa, as finding the sweet spot between these two concepts is key for your motivation, and the writing of a well-researched history IA.

Now that I have covered what you should be mindful of prior to selecting your topic, let me provide you with some tips on how you should go about researching topics. Unsurprisingly, the first important step is to brainstorm potential topics, and you can easily do so by recalling areas of history that have caught your attention in the past, but also by recollecting movies you have watched, and books you have read. Remember, your first understanding of what topics you might want to do the IA does not have to be very deep, you can just jot down ideas and keep them in mind. Referencing back to my example, I decided to write my IA on the political foundations of the United States after watching a musical, which is proof that inspiration may really bloom from anywhere. Try to think of 5-10 topics you would like to explore, and try to diversify these across a wide range of fields in history, so you have different ideas to draw upon.

Next, start doing some preliminary research around the topics you have selected. Read articles, chapters of books (often the introductions and conclusions provide valuable nuggets of information), YouTube videos, movies, and any other medium that may enhance your understanding of a given topic. At this point you can start thinking of historical themes, issues, people, and events that spark your curiosity, and could potentially lead to a solid topic. This preliminary research is also of great importance for two main reasons. Firstly, you will get a sense of what topics truly interest you, and by doing research, you will begin to be mindful of how much information there is available on that topic - this helps with the "balance" discussed above. Secondly, you will be able to slowly increase the specificity of your topic, as you will have started from a large idea but will now look at what exactly interests you within that topic, which will help you come up with a research question later on. Make sure to keep track of the sources you come across as you do your preliminary research because if you end up choosing that topic, you will not need to scramble through the internet trying to find those sources again.

3. EXAMPLE THREE (24/25)

Name: 'Was the 30th of September Movement instigated by the PKI (Communist Party of Indonesia) or officials within the Army?'

Author: Anonymous

Session: November 2020

Level: HL

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Section 1: Identification & Evaluation of sources

This investigation will explore the question: **Was the 30th September Movement instigated by the PKI (Communist Party of Indonesia) or officials within the Army?**

The sources to be evaluated are Brigadier General Supardjo's analysis "*Some factors that influenced the defeat of the "September 30th Movement" as viewed from a Military Perspective*",¹ written in 1966 and Benedict R. Anderson and Ruth T. McVey's book "*A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia*",² published in 1971. The two sources are relevant since the first suggests that the PKI was directly involved while the second source suggests the movement was purely an internal army affair.³

The first source is valuable based on its origin. The author, Brigadier General Supardjo, was a conspirator present at Halim Air Base⁴ on the day of the movement and had written his analysis for colleagues before his arrest⁵ on January 12, 1967,⁶ providing a valuable first-hand account. The purpose of the document is also valuable since as a post-mortem analysis, it reveals all the participants of the coup, showing the PKI's complicity in the affair.⁷ Its content is also valuable since it asserts PKI involvement and

¹ Brigadier General Supardjo, "Some Factors That Influenced the Defeat of "the September 30th Movement" as Viewed from a Military Perspective, Jakarta, 1966," in *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'état in Indonesia*, ed. John Roosa (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 227.

² Benedict R. O'G. Anderson and Ruth T. McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia* (Singapore: Equinox Publishing, 2009), 1.

³ Anderson and Ruth T. McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis*, 60.

⁴ Halim Air Base was the hideout for the core organisers of the movement

⁵ John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'état in Indonesia* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 82-83.

⁶ Guy J. Pauker, "Indonesia: The Year of Transition," *Asian Survey* 7, no. 2 (February 1967): 146, under "A Survey of Asia in 1966: Part II," <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2642526> (accessed October 22, 2019).

⁷ Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*, 83-87.

leadership through explicit statements like “an operation that was led directly by the party”.⁸

However, the source is limited based on its origin. Supardjo was not a core organiser, serving a more supplementary role.⁹ His unfamiliarity with the initial planning stages could have thus hindered his analysis.¹⁰ In addition, its purpose is limited as Supardjo intended his document to explain tactical errors made by coup leaders rather than seek out those responsible for it. The document’s contents are also limited by its omission of details regarding the initial planning stages.¹¹ In Supardjo’s own words, “compared to the length of time of all the preparations, the time of my involvement was very brief”¹² and records only what he could witness, the day of the coup and the days directly before and after.¹³

The second source is valuable based on origin since both Anderson and McVey were graduate students from Cornell University studying Indonesia when they wrote their paper in 1966.¹⁴ Anderson was a political scientist and professor of international studies¹⁵ and thus has the proper credentials and academic appointment. The source is also valuable in purpose since it intends to present an alternate view of the coup being an

⁸ Supardjo, “Some Factors,” 241.

⁹ Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*, 86.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Supardjo, “Some Factors,” 228.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Sewell Chan, “Benedict Anderson, Scholar Who Saw Nations as ‘Imagined,’ Dies at 79,” *The New York Times*, December 14, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/15/world/asia/benedict-anderson-scholar-who-saw-nations-as-imagined-dies-at-79.html> (accessed May 20, 2019).

¹⁵ Patricio Abinales, “Yes, Benedict Anderson was a political scientist,” *The Washington Post*, December 21, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/12/21/yes-benedict-anderson-was-a-political-scientist/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.89620c32fa8a (accessed May 20, 2019).

internal army affair by focusing on the political volatility and complexity of the Indonesian military.¹⁶ It is valuable content wise since it is based on contemporary transcripts made by the movement, who themselves asserted that it was entirely an affair within the military.¹⁷

However, the source is limited in origin since it was first produced in 1966 and subsequently published in full in 1971. Since then, other documents have been discovered like the aforementioned Supardjo document, meaning the writers did not have the benefit of hindsight to consider multiple perspectives from an assortment of historical documents. The source is also limited by its content since it omits key circumstantial evidence, like the PKI's steadily heightening militancy and accelerating drive to power prior to the coup,¹⁸ to depict the PKI as the victim of a coup caused by the army.

528 words

¹⁶ Anderson and Ruth T. McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis*, 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 167-209.

¹⁸ Justus M. van der Kroef, "Interpretations of the 1965 Indonesian Coup: A Review of the Literature," *Pacific Affairs* 43, no. 4 (1970-1971): 563, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2754905?seq=7#metadata_info_tab_contents (accessed May 26, 2019).

5. EXAMPLE FIVE (23/25)

Name: 'To what extent did the philosophies of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X align during the Civil Rights Movement between 1954 and 1968?

Author: Anonymous

Session: May 2022

Level: HL

Section 1: Identification and Evaluation of Sources

This investigation will explore the question: To what extent were the philosophies of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X aligned during the Civil Rights Movement from 1954 to 1968? This is an important question because it challenges our ideas of civil rights figures as one-dimensional by showing the evolution of their ideas over time. The scope of this investigation focuses on the most prominent years of the Civil Rights Movement and the words and actions of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X in that time, especially as their views changed near the ends of their lives.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have A Dream*

Dr. Martin Luther King's renowned speech, *I Have A Dream*, is one primary source I examined. Its origins, being written by Dr. King himself in 1963, make it valuable to historians. Its purpose was to inspire change, while the content of the speech specifically addressed civil rights problems. These elements add value to historians by clearly defining the most significant issues of the time. However, due to time constraints and the level of publicity of the speech, the content was limited to be easily digestible to the American populus. Divisive issues wouldn't have held the focus of the speech, as it had an intention to unite people around the cause of civil rights.

In this investigation, *I Have A Dream* provides a basis of King's beliefs, which can be compared to his later beliefs. The speech contains what King considered the most valuable and impactful messages for the crowd and for the US Government to hear. These messages, which sum up the core of his philosophies, will be crucial in the investigation of the evolution of King's teachings and beliefs.

Malcolm X, *The Ballot or the Bullet*

One of the most famous orations given by Malcolm X, *The Ballot or the Bullet*, was presented at King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan, 12 April 1964. The timing of the speech is significant - it was given after his separation from the Nation of Islam (NOI), yet before his pilgrimage to Mecca. Malcolm X's views on black nationalism were noticeably changed after seeing the racial diversity in Mecca. Therefore, this speech provides an example to historians of his original, personal philosophy of black separatism and nationalism.

Malcolm X's intention in the speech was to clarify his own religious and political standing after breaking away from Nation of Islam, as well as call on African American listeners to join organizations promoting black nationalism as a means of obtaining black social and economic progression. He spoke to an African American audience, and his choices of content and rhetoric can be analyzed under that context.

The Ballot or the Bullet aims scathing criticism toward nonviolent integration efforts, but is limited in that it does not address the successes of these demonstrations. Malcolm utilizes historical examples of revolution and nationalism to support his message, but not examples of successful racial diversity. As he would see in Mecca, the aforementioned absence limits the audience's understanding of global capabilities to integrate and be universally accepting.

Section 2: Investigation and Analysis

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X are commonly known as the embodiments of two opposing ideologies during the civil rights movement. However, this satisfying and simplistic image does not capture the full extent of their individual journeys, progressions, and changes that led, ultimately, toward one another.

their own people. It is evident that Malcolm X had a firm belief in achieving freedom, justice, and equality through principles of self-determination and black nationalism.

As their ideas and the civil rights movement progressed, King's messages moved beyond civil rights to address topics such as militancy, global imperialism, and poverty before his death. In speeches such as "Beyond Vietnam" given in 1967, or "The Other America" in 1968, King's ideas are more radical, signaling a convergence with and sometimes echoing the ideas that Malcolm X had previously expressed. For example, in "The Other America", King states "The fact is that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor. It must be demanded by the oppressed - that's the long, sometimes tragic and turbulent story of history"(King, "The Other America"). We see a similar expression that a revolution, in this case a revolution more of values and legislation than bloodshed, but still markedly more intense than his earlier expressions, is being called for just as Malcolm X had called for in 1963.

After the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, historian and theologian James H. Cone writes that King took a "... radical turn away from his vision of the American dream and to gaze at the horror of Malcolm's nightmare" (Cone). The statement alludes to his earlier explanation in the real difference between the two leaders: "King saw in America a dream as yet largely unfulfilled, Malcolm X saw a realized nightmare;" (Raines). King's disillusionment with his original vision and philosophy may have been impacted by Malcolm X's death; nevertheless, we see a definite change in his belief in the moral stability of the United States and its extension of Manifest Destiny. That is, "America was no longer good because God ordained America to be such, but America had major problems - flaws it must face to be the country it claimed to be" (Johnson, "The evolution of a King"). His speech "Beyond Vietnam" is evidence of these claims,