

Sixth Form History – Summer tasks:

A Level

The syllabus for your 16th Century English history course starts in 1547, the beginning of the reign of Edward VI. It would be really valuable to get a sense of the Early Tudors before studying the Mid Tudor period. Read a biography of Henry VIII, whether it be merely his entry in Wikipedia (following the embedded links to associated topics) or a full biography such as Scarisbrick, J. J., *Henry VIII* or the relevant sections in Guy, J., *Tudor England*, a text which will be useful throughout the course. Make a diagram of his life following the pattern of a timeline, adding notes on important events and issues. Focus particularly on his married life, succession issues and what Wolsey did for him. This will help you to gain a sense of the period and give you some context when studying the reign of his young son Edward VI. Write out a series of provisional questions that you have. These could range from simplistic factual questions (When was the battle of...?) to more demanding conceptual questions (In Tudor times what was their understanding of...what explanations can I give for this?)

A Level and IB Standard/Higher

Read a biography of Stalin, at least the entry in Wikipedia (following the embedded links to associated topics) or a full biography such as Service, R., *Stalin: A Biography* or parts of it. (Read the intelligent ‘customer review’ comments on the Amazon website about this biography before buying). Make a diagram of his life following the pattern of a timeline, adding notes on important events and issues. Focus particularly on his path to power and how far you could describe his policies as successful bearing in mind that many people see him as the biggest killer in world history. It would also be very useful to read a general overview of the Cold War such as: *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* by Robert J. McMahon (ISBN – 139780192801784); this will help you to get a feel for the different periods, key events and flashpoints and the reasons for changes in policy and superpower relations. Look into why views about the Cold War have changed. Did historians in the 1950s have the same views about the origins of the Cold War as those in the 1990s? What explanations can you give for the differences? What does this show about the discipline of history?

IB Higher

Also read a biography of either Cavour (e.g. by Denis Mack Smith) or Bismarck (e.g. by Jonathan Steinberg). Make a diagram of his life following the pattern of a timeline, adding notes on important events and issues. The two men were famous for their leadership of Piedmont (Cavour) and Prussia (Bismarck) in taking over surrounding states to create new large modern states – Italy and Germany (though Cavour was dead before Italy was fully unified). Research nationalism: what is it? What explains its growth in the nineteenth century? You could also read some short stories by Guy de Maupassant and Chekhov, and poetry by Schiller and Heine to get a feel for the period.

Sixth Form History – Further Reading for a head start:

1. The ‘What is history?’ question

Whether you are taking A Level or IB History, it will be helpful to understand the discipline of history better than ever before. The syllabuses do not include the question of what history is, but success demands you to understand what you aiming to achieve and during the course we will find ourselves bumping into the question regularly. If you have doubts about having chosen History or, alternatively, you already think you may wish to take the subject further as a degree course or part of a degree, it will be helpful to read an introduction to what history is. Our top recommendation is:

 Arnold, John *History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford Very Short Introductions series) Oxford University Press, 2000. Paperback, £6.99. 156 pp. ISBN-10: 019285352X. ISBN-13: 978-0192853523.

You might not find this book easy. None of the books on this topic are. But this one is relatively short and readable. It will enlarge your view of what history is. It may even catch your imagination and inspire you in new ways about history.

2. General history

Wider reading in history will help prepare you for success in the Sixth Form and decide on further study of history. Sit by the history shelves in a library or bookshop for a while exploring, seeing what takes your fancy. Read some modern British history for example, whether political, economic, cultural, labour, feminist, local, diplomatic or general, as there is very little modern British in our Sixth Form courses. Consider what you might specialise in for a personal coursework or Extended Essay.