

# **HISTORY SYLLABUS**

## **Pre-University**

### **H1**

Implementation starting with  
2023 Pre-University One Cohort



Ministry of Education  
SINGAPORE

© 2023 Curriculum Planning and Development Division.

This publication is not for sale. Permission is granted to reproduce this publication in its entirety for personal or non-commercial educational use only. All other rights reserved.

# CONTENTS

---

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	
• Value of History	2
• A-Level History Curriculum	2
• Syllabus Aims and Key Learning Outcomes	4
• Nurturing the Desired Outcomes of Education Through A-Level History	7
• Developing 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Competencies Through A-Level History	7
 <b>2. CONTENT</b>	
• Key Features of the H1 History Syllabus	9
• H1 History Syllabus Content	12
 <b>3. PEDAGOGY</b>	
• Inquiry-based Learning in the A-Level History Classroom	19
 <b>4. ASSESSMENT</b>	
• Learner-centred and Balanced Assessment	21

# 1. INTRODUCTION

---

## 1.1 Value of History

History education in Singapore prepares students to thrive as citizens in a fast-changing world by developing their:

- identity as Singaporeans**, as they gain an understanding of how Singapore and our communities have evolved over time, and of Singapore's place in the world;
- ability to participate actively in a globalised world**, as they learn to make sense of ambiguous and complex global developments, appreciate local contexts and engage with different cultures and societies sensitively; and
- critical thinking and ability to make informed judgements in a digital age**, as they inquire into the past and understand the nature of historical knowledge, and analyse multiple perspectives and weigh evidence to construct historical accounts.

### 1.1.1 Qualities of a History Learner

Figure 1.1a shows the qualities that the History curriculum aims to develop.



Figure 1.1a: Qualities of a History learner

## 1.2 A-Level History Curriculum

### 1.2.1 Curricular Aims

A-Level History develops students' depth in historical understanding. Disciplinary understanding is the foundation on which new knowledge is built and enables inter-disciplinary thinking. The curriculum focuses on developments and issues that are important for Singapore students to know, preparing them to navigate and respond to these developments as informed, concerned and participatory citizens.

The A-Level History curriculum reflects the value placed on the study of history and the development of the DOE and 21CC by:

- developing the dispositions to be curious about the past and open to multiple perspectives;
- engaging learners in historical inquiry to develop confident, self-directed, critical and reflective thinkers;
- equipping learners with an understanding of historical concepts, methods and processes to make informed judgements of the past and to better understand the present;
- equipping learners with historical knowledge and understanding to develop local, regional and global awareness and cross-cultural skills; and
- enhancing learners' appreciation of the past to develop their sense of identity and cultivate confident, responsible and concerned citizens.

### 1.2.2 Curriculum Shape

The A-Level History Curriculum Shape (see **Figure 1.2a**) encapsulates the key features of the A-Level History syllabuses and guides curriculum implementation. The shape:

- emphasises the importance of developing historical understanding;
- highlights the elements necessary to achieve historical understanding;
- describes the focus of syllabus content; and
- outlines the intended teaching and learning experiences.



**Figure 1.2a: The A-Level History curriculum shape**

**Historical understanding** (core) is the key goal of learning history. It is achieved through the development of **historical thinking** and **historical knowledge** (innermost ring). Historical thinking comprises the disciplinary processes of constructing history, while historical knowledge refers to the substantive knowledge of history.

The development of historical thinking and knowledge is undertaken through the learning of **historical and content concepts** and the acquisition of **historical inquiry and skills** (middle ring). Historical and content concepts provide the conceptual lens for thinking and knowing, while historical inquiry and skills are the disciplinary tools.

The development of these concepts and skills is contextualised in the study of **local, regional and global developments and their interconnections**, and the role of **historical agency** in these developments (outermost ring). The curriculum provides students with sufficient breadth and depth of content to facilitate their development of historical understanding.

### **1.3 Syllabus Aims and Key Learning Outcomes**

#### **1.3.1 Syllabus Aims**

To support the attainment of the curricular aims, the H1 History syllabus encourages students to:

- develop interest in and curiosity about the past;
- develop historical understanding through
  - acquiring a sound knowledge of local, regional and global developments and their interconnections, the role of historical agency and relevant content concepts
  - applying historical concepts in examining historical issues and events
  - examining different interpretations of historical issues and events
  - using historical inquiry and skills
  - appreciating the nature and variety of historical sources;
- think independently and make informed judgements of historical issues and events;
- communicate balanced and substantiated arguments and judgements on historical issues and events in a clear and well-structured manner;
- develop empathy with people living in diverse places and at different times; and
- enhance their sense of identity and be confident, responsible and concerned citizens.

#### **1.3.2 Key Learning Outcomes**

The learning outcomes outline the goals that students are expected to attain at the completion of their A-Level History education.

##### ***Knowledge and Understanding***

Students are able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the following:

- **Nature of historical knowledge.** History is constructed from evidence. Interpretations of the past differ based on the questions historians ask about the past and their interpretation of sources.
- **Historical concepts.** These concepts (see **Section 2** for details) problematise the study of historical developments and issues, providing the basis for critical thinking and historical inquiry.
- **Key characteristics of the periods studied.** These include the main individuals, groups, forces, events and ideas that characterised the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and their historical contexts.
- **Connections between the past and present.** An appreciation of the relationship between the past and present surfaces trends and patterns that allow for an understanding of present-day developments in context and develop their ability to navigate the future.

### ***Skills***

Students are able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding by employing the following skills:

- Asking meaningful questions about the past
- Unpacking the requirements of an inquiry question, including determining the key historical concept(s) relevant to the inquiry and the approach to responding to the inquiry question
- Interpreting and acquiring information and evidence derived from various sources of information in a variety of media to support an inquiry
- Analysing sources as evidence by engaging in sourcing, contextualisation and corroboration
- Identifying and synthesising evidence and multiple perspectives to make informed judgements and construct balanced and persuasive arguments
- Communicating historical interpretations and arguments in a clear and well-structured manner
- Reflecting on the strategies and methods used in historical inquiry

### ***Values***

In developing historical understanding, students demonstrate 21CC core values as they:

- demonstrate **respect** by showing sensitivity to how people's views and perspectives shape their interpretations of events, issues or developments in any specific time and space, and empathising with people from different social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds;
- demonstrate **resilience** by managing ambiguity and asking useful questions to uncover and understand the past;
- show **integrity** by modifying and adapting their thinking according to multiple sources of information, perspectives and different circumstances, underpinned by sound moral values; and

- value **harmony** by embracing the connections between themselves and the larger community, realising that their actions impact others.

## 1.4 Nurturing the Desired Outcomes of Education Through A-Level History

History education seeks to nurture in students the attributes outlined in the DOE by the time they complete their formal education. Children schooled in the Singapore education system embody the DOE. They should possess:

- a good sense of self-awareness;
- a sound moral compass; and
- the dispositions, skills and knowledge to take on the opportunities and challenges of the future.

They should also be:

- **confident persons** who have a zest for life, have a strong sense of right and wrong, are adaptable and resilient, know themselves, are discerning in judgement, think independently and critically, and communicate effectively;
- **self-directed learners** who take responsibility for their own learning, are curious, reflective, and persevering in the lifelong pursuit of learning, driven by their passion and purpose;
- **active contributors** who are empathetic and open-minded to collaborate effectively in teams, exercise initiative, have courage to take risks responsibly, are innovative, and strive for excellence; and
- **concerned citizens** who are rooted to Singapore, have a strong civic consciousness, are responsible to their family, community and nation and take active roles in improving the lives of others.

A-Level History nurtures the DOE in students by deepening their understanding of local, regional and global developments, and engaging them in an examination of historical issues through inquiry-based learning experiences.

## 1.5 Developing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies Through A-Level History

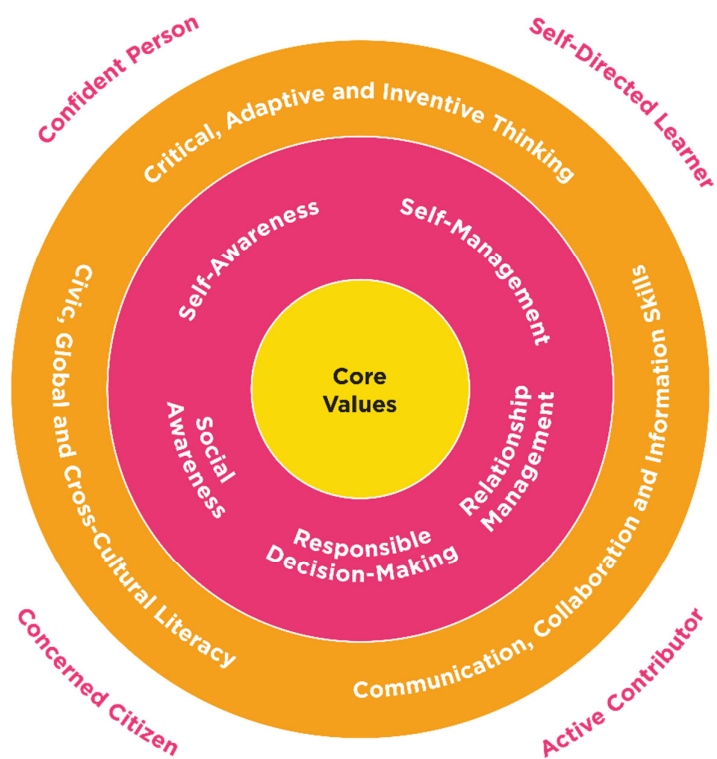
### 1.5.1 21CC

The Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies and Student Outcomes (“21CC Framework”) shows how Core Values, Social-Emotional Competencies, and Emerging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies support the realisation of MOE’s DOEs (see **Figure 1.5a**). 21CC underpins the holistic education that schools provide to help students thrive in a fast-changing world by equipping them to face challenges and seize new and exciting opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For further information on the Framework for 21CC and Student Outcomes and the Learning Goals and Developmental Milestones for Emerging 21CC, please access the MOE 21CC website through the link <https://intranet.moe.gov.sg/21CCO/Pages/21st-Century-Competencies.aspx>





©2023 Ministry of Education, Singapore

**Figure 1.5a: MOE 21CC Framework**

## 2. CONTENT

---

### 2.1 Key Features of the H1 History Syllabus

#### 2.1.1 Understanding the Past and Its Connections to the Present

The H1 History syllabus focuses on the key forces and developments that shaped the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, providing students with the necessary historical context to understand key contemporary geopolitical and economic shifts. The syllabus equips students with breadth and depth of knowledge in global, regional and local developments and their interconnections, as well as the agency of diverse historical actors, with the Cold War as the overarching narrative framework.

Each theme is framed by two inquiry questions to ensure that students develop a comprehensive understanding of key historical issues. The inquiry questions highlight key historical debates to facilitate inquiry-based learning and concurrently develop students' knowledge of historical content and concepts.

Each theme also features a list of content concepts (also known as first-order or substantive concepts). These concepts provide students with organising frames for making sense of historical details and developments. Students also need to understand how these concepts manifest in a particular historical context.<sup>2</sup>

#### 2.1.2 Historical Concepts

Historical concepts (also known as second-order or syntactic concepts) provide students with an understanding of how historians work and how historical knowledge is constructed. They form the framework for historical thinking and reveal the problems inherent to the process of constructing history.<sup>3</sup> The H1 History syllabus features six historical concepts: *accounts*, *chronology*, *historical empathy*, *evidence*, *cause and effect* and *change and continuity* (see **Table 2.1a**).

**Table 2.1a: Historical concepts in H1 History**

##### **Accounts**

- Accounts are reconstructions of past events, which reflect the focuses and points of view of their authors (e.g., eyewitnesses, historians). Different accounts of the same event exist because they:
  - may answer different questions about the event;
  - are influenced by the sources available; and/or
  - are subject to their authors' interpretations of the event.

---

<sup>2</sup> Peter J. Lee, "Putting Principles into Practice: Understanding History", in *How Students Learn: History, Mathematics and Science in the Classroom* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2005), 61–62.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Seixas and Tom Morton, *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts* (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013), 2–3.

- Students understand that there can be no single or complete account of the past, and are able to ask good questions about the account to uncover the author's focus, point of view and context.
- 

### **Chronology**

- Chronology is the listing of events in the order that they occurred. Historians rely on dates and sequences of events to write their accounts of the past.
  - Students recognise the importance of developing a sense of period and are able to construct a chronological framework of historical periods to situate new knowledge within its proper historical context.
- 

### **Historical Empathy**

- Historical empathy is the disposition of acknowledging and understanding the perspectives of people who lived in the past, as opposed to imposing present-day values and attitudes.
  - Students appreciate the value of taking on the perspectives of historical actors, and recognise the need to become familiar with the latter's ideas, values, beliefs and attitudes to make sense of past events.
- 

### **Evidence**

- Evidence is derived from the interrogation of historical sources and is used by historians to support their interpretations of the past.
  - Students are able to engage in sourcing, contextualisation and corroboration to determine the value of sources as evidence, so as to verify, support or substantiate claims made about the past.
- 

### **Cause and Effect**

- Historians examine causation in history to understand the reasons why events happened and why they happened the way they did. Different events in history can have different effects on people, political systems, economies and geography over time.
- Students recognise that there are multiple short- and long-term causes and consequences, and that their interrelationships are complex. There is a need to establish a hierarchy of causes because historical events result from the interplay of the actions of historical actors and the conditions of the time – not all of the causes have equal importance. Likewise, students understand that events can lead to multiple consequences, which may be intended or not.

**Change and Continuity**

- Historians use change and continuity to describe, compare or evaluate developments in societies over time.
  - Students understand that change and continuity can exist together, and that change is a process. They understand the need to analyse the varying pace of change and patterns in historical developments, and to identify any turning points. They also understand that periodisation organises their thinking about change and continuity, and the need to use relevant criteria to decide the events and developments that constitute a period of history.
-

## **2.2 H1 HISTORY SYLLABUS CONTENT**

### **2.2.1 The Cold War and the Modern World (1945–1991)**

The H1 History syllabus examines the key interactions between local, regional and global developments through a study of the Cold War and its impact on international, regional and local forces. Superpower rivalry transformed the security order in the European theatre of the Cold War and the rest of the world. In particular, Asia emerged as a second front, where the Cold War contestation played out differently than in Europe. While superpowers were involved in the Cold War developments in Asia, the extent of their influence was counterbalanced by the interests and actions of regional and local actors. Their actions in turn shaped the manifestation of the Cold War in this part of the world. Through this study, students will acquire an understanding of the impact of the Cold War across different contexts and time periods, and of the legacies of the Cold War.

THEME I	THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COLD WAR (1945–1991)	
	How did the Cold War develop? How did the Cold War impact global developments after 1945?	
OVERVIEW		MAKING CONNECTIONS
<p>In this theme, students will study the Cold War which resulted from the USA and USSR emerging as ideologically-opposed superpowers after the Second World War. While they never had a direct military confrontation, the two superpowers used varied strategies and allies to discredit and weaken each other. Students will also examine how the Cold War extended beyond Europe to other parts of the world. The Cold War, intertwined with other forces such as nationalism, profoundly influenced how people led their lives, culminating in popular movements and leaders' actions to end the Cold War.</p>		<p>Today's multipolar world is shaped by the legacy of the Cold War. Despite these key shifts in the international order, the Cold War continues to feature as the backdrop for the current state of international affairs. Many present-day challenges to international stability, such as terrorism, civil strife and ongoing wars, were shaped by the Cold War. Cold War worldviews also continue to shape the decision-making of world leaders, particularly those who experienced it. Understanding the Cold War provides students with insights into the key relationships that shape today's evolving world order.</p>
CONCEPTS (Students understand:)	CONTENT (Students study:)	LEARNING OUTCOMES (Students are able to:)
<b>Historical Concepts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accounts</li> <li>chronology</li> <li>evidence</li> <li>historical empathy</li> <li>cause and effect</li> <li>change and continuity</li> </ul> <b>Content Concepts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideology</li> <li>security</li> <li>Cold War</li> <li>alliance</li> <li>balance of power</li> </ul>	<b>Emergence of the Cold War After the Second World War</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Causes of the emergence of tensions between the USA and USSR</li> <li>Manifestations of emerging tensions: Yalta and Potsdam conferences, Sovietisation of Eastern Europe, Churchill's Iron Curtain speech, Kennan's Long Telegram, Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, Berlin Blockade, NATO and Warsaw Pact</li> <li>Historical interpretations of the origins of the Cold War: traditional, revisionist, post-revisionist, post-Cold War</li> </ul> <b>Manifestations of the Global Cold War</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Korean War (1950 – 1953), Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increased bipolar competition between the USA and USSR</li> <li>superpowers' search for ideological and strategic allies</li> <li>successes and limitations in sustaining allies</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>* Questions set will not require candidates to compare the Korean War and Cuban Missile Crisis.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluate the causes of the Cold War;</li> <li>evaluate the manifestation of the Cold War conflict across different contexts over time; and</li> <li>evaluate the causes for the end of the Cold War.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>End of the Cold War</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The USA's policy of renewed confrontation and containment: USA's role in arms control negotiations, Strategic Defense Initiative programme, Reagan Doctrine</li> <li>• Decline of the USSR and shifts in Soviet foreign policy: economic problems, Gorbachev's "New Thinking", Sinatra Doctrine</li> <li>• Eastern European movements and revolutions in the 1980s: Poland and East Germany</li> <li>• Historical interpretations of the end of the Cold War: Western triumphalist, Soviet initiative and "People Power" debates</li> </ul>	
--	--	--

**Note:** The source-based case study will be set on Theme I and may be centred on any issue arising from the theme. Separate essay questions will NOT be set on this theme.

THEME II	THE COLD WAR AND EAST ASIA (1945–1991) How did the Cold War play out in East Asia? What role did East Asia play in the Cold War?		
OVERVIEW	MAKING CONNECTIONS		
<p>In this theme, students will examine how the Cold War impacted developments in East Asia, through the lens of two key regional actors – China and Japan. While the European theatre of the Cold War reflected the clear East-West divide, East Asia served as a second front where superpower relations with China and Japan revealed a more complex interaction in light of regional developments. In addition, through their foreign policies towards the superpowers and other Asian countries, China and Japan sought to influence the Cold War for their benefit, with varying outcomes. By analysing these developments, students will come to appreciate the Cold War through a multi-polar lens.</p>	<p>Today, China and Japan remain key in shaping political and economic developments in East Asia. Beyond their political influence as regional players, both are also recognised as major powers globally. Much of their global influence today can be traced to the Cold War period, and their relations with the two superpowers. Relations between China, Japan and the USA are pivotal to understanding regional stability and economic growth today. The study of this theme provides students with the essential historical context to understand the complex relationships and the legacy of the Cold War in shaping today's geopolitical and economic landscape in East Asia.</p>		
CONCEPTS <i>(Students understand:)</i>	CONTENT <i>(Students study:)</i>		LEARNING OUTCOMES <i>(Students are able to:)</i>
<p><b>Historical Concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accounts</li> <li>chronology</li> <li>evidence</li> <li>historical empathy</li> <li>cause and effect</li> <li>change and continuity</li> </ul> <p><b>Content Concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cold War</li> <li>cooperation</li> <li>security</li> <li>ideology</li> <li>diplomacy</li> </ul>	<p><b>China and the Cold War (1950 – 1991)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of Sino-Soviet relations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sino-Soviet cooperation: Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance (1950), Korean War (1950-1953)</li> <li>worsening Sino-Soviet relations: Romanian Workers' Party Congress (1960), Sino-Soviet border conflict (1969)</li> <li>Sino-Soviet rapprochement and normalisation of relations: Sino-Soviet Summit (1989)</li> <li>factors shaping Sino-Soviet relations: security interests, ideology, developments in superpower and Sino-American relations</li> </ul> </li> <li>Development of Sino-American relations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sino-American confrontation: Korean War (1950-1953), USA's support for Taiwan</li> <li>Sino-American rapprochement and normalisation of relations: Nixon's visit to China (1972), establishment of diplomatic relations (1979)</li> <li>factors shaping Sino-American relations: security interests, ideology, developments in superpower and Sino-Soviet relations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluate the development of China's and Japan's relations with the superpowers during the Cold War;</li> <li>evaluate the factors that shaped China's and Japan's relations with the superpowers during the Cold War; and</li> <li>evaluate the responses of China and Japan to the development of the Cold War.</li> </ul>



	<p><b>Japan and the Cold War (1952 – 1991)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of Japan-USA relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Japan-USA alliance and tensions: Japan-USA security alliance, Japan's share of defence burden, economic relations (aid, trade and market access)</li> <li>- factors shaping Japan-USA relations: Japan's economic status, Japan's domestic politics (differences over Japan's alliance with the USA and role of Japan's security forces, consensus on nuclear weapons in Japan), Japan's perceptions of the Communist threat, USA's Cold War strategy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Japan's other responses to the Cold War <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- political responses: impact of Japan-USA relations, engagement of China</li> <li>- economic responses: impact of Japan-USA relations, engagement of China and Southeast Asia</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>* Questions set will not require candidates to compare China and Japan.</i></p>	
--	---	--

THEME III	THE COLD WAR AND SOUTHEAST ASIA (1945–1991) How did the Cold War play out in Southeast Asia? What role did Southeast Asia play in the Cold War?		
OVERVIEW	MAKING CONNECTIONS		
<p>In this theme, students will examine how the Cold War shaped developments in Southeast Asia through selected case studies on regional Cold War conflicts and Southeast Asian actors' responses to Cold War developments. They will analyse the causes of the outbreak of Cold War conflicts in Southeast Asia. In particular, they will examine how the involvement of forces external to Southeast Asia influenced regional developments and Southeast Asian actors' responses to the development of the Cold War. They will understand that while Southeast Asian countries were not always able to directly influence Cold War developments in the region, they were able to actively respond to Cold War developments as they sought to achieve national and/or regional objectives.</p>	<p>Today, Southeast Asia has transformed into a stable and economically vibrant region that is well-integrated with the international system. The USA and China continue to be key external actors in the region with significant security and economic interests in their relations with Southeast Asian countries. The study of this theme provides students with the essential historical context to understand changes and continuities in the role of major powers in the region and Southeast Asian countries' responses to their involvement. The agency of the region, as reflected in the interactions between the global Cold War and local realities, continues to be an important lens to understand developments in a region that is located at the crossroads of major powers.</p>		
CONCEPTS (Students understand:)	CONTENT (Students study:)		LEARNING OUTCOMES (Students are able to:)
<p><b>Historical Concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accounts</li> <li>chronology</li> <li>evidence</li> <li>historical empathy</li> <li>cause and effect</li> <li>change and continuity</li> </ul> <p><b>Content Concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cold War</li> <li>cooperation</li> <li>security</li> <li>sovereignty</li> <li>diplomacy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Manifestation of the Cold War in Southeast Asia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Factors shaping the Second Indochina War (1959 – 1975)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cold War developments</li> <li>role of North and South Vietnam</li> <li>role of the USA, the USSR and China</li> </ul> </li> <li>Factors shaping the Third Indochina War (1978 – 1991)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>historical animosities and Cold War developments</li> <li>role of Vietnam and Cambodia</li> <li>role of China, the USSR and the USA</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>* Questions set will not require students to compare the Second and Third Indochina Wars.</i></p> <p><b>ASEAN and the Cold War (1967 – 1991)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ASEAN's responses to Cold War developments in Southeast Asia: regional cooperation during the Second Indochina War, Bali Summit (1976), regional cooperation during the Third Indochina War</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluate the factors that shaped the development of Cold War conflicts in Southeast Asia;</li> <li>evaluate ASEAN's responses to the development of the Cold War in Southeast Asia; and</li> <li>evaluate Singapore's responses to the development of the Cold War in Southeast Asia.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factors shaping ASEAN's responses to the development of the Cold War: ASEAN's objectives, member states' national interests, Cold War developments</li> </ul> <p><b>Singapore and the Cold War (1965–1991)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singapore's responses to Cold War developments in Southeast Asia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relations with the USA, the USSR and China</li> <li>- responses to the Third Indochina War</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Factors shaping Singapore's responses: national interests, regional and Cold War developments</li> </ul>	
--	---	--

### 3. PEDAGOGY

---

#### 3.1 Inquiry-based Learning in the A-Level History Classroom

As reflected in the curriculum shape, historical understanding is achieved through the development of historical thinking and historical knowledge. In order to develop students' historical thinking and historical knowledge, historical inquiry and conceptual understanding are crucial to providing students with insights into how historians organise and make meaning of the past.

Constructivism refers to the theory that describes learners as actively constructing knowledge rather than just passively taking in information. As learners experience the world and reflect on those experiences, they build their own representations and incorporate new information into their pre-existing knowledge. Constructivist theory has the following implications for how we view student learning:

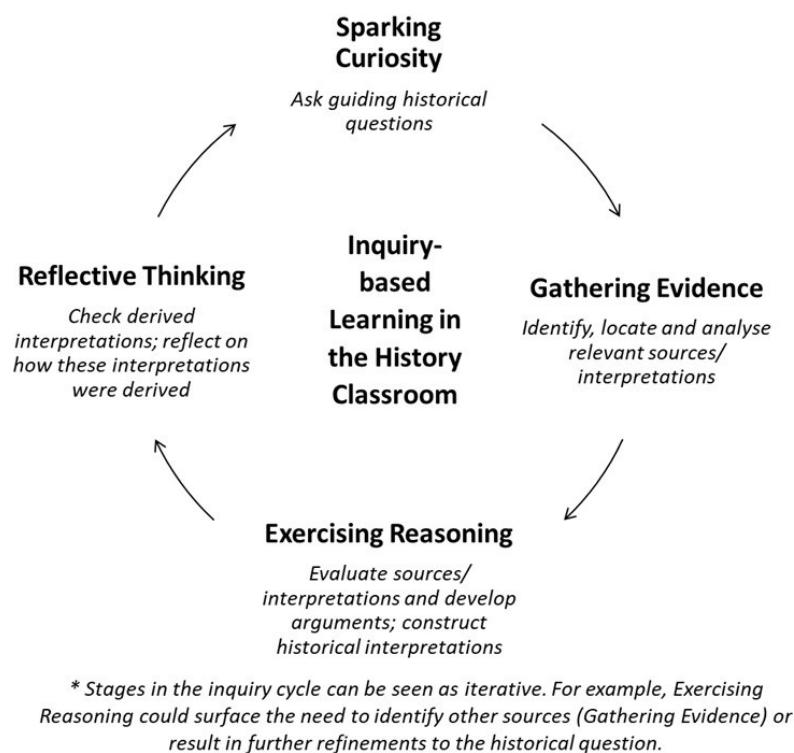
- Students learn best when engaged in learning experiences rather than passively receiving information.
- Learning is inherently a social process because it is embedded within a social context as students and teachers work together to build knowledge.
- Because knowledge cannot be directly imparted to students, the goal of teaching is to provide experiences that facilitate the construction of knowledge.

Historical inquiry, a form of constructivist inquiry-based pedagogy, is the recommended pedagogy for the A-Level History curriculum. It reflects the process of “doing history”, providing an authentic way to inquire into, organise and explain historical developments that happened in a period. This approach to learning History, through applying historical skills and processes reflected in the historian’s craft, can strengthen students’ historical understanding. To engage students in historical thinking and develop historical understanding, **how students learn is as important as *what* they learn.**

Historical inquiry is a cyclical and iterative process that contains several stages of inquiry (see **Figure 3.1a**).

- **Sparking curiosity.** Students begin the process by identifying and posing historical questions about a historical issue or development. These questions are usually anchored in historical concepts such as cause and effect, change and continuity and accounts.
- **Gathering evidence.** To address the historical questions identified, students gather evidence from a range of primary and secondary sources that reflect multiple perspectives of the historical questions being inquired into.

- **Exercising reasoning.** To make sense of the evidence gathered, students analyse and evaluate sources vis-à-vis the historical questions to be answered. Here, they exercise historical skills in placing sources in their historical context and evaluating their reliability and utility as historical evidence, and/or evaluate the validity of different interpretations. They then select and synthesise relevant sources to form evidence-based historical explanations and interpretations, in response to the historical question.
- **Reflective thinking.** Students reflect on the cognitive process through which their historical explanations and interpretations are derived. This builds their metacognition of how knowledge is constructed, and sensitises them to the assumptions and biases they may have carried through the inquiry process.



**Figure 3.1a: Inquiry-based Learning in the History classroom**

Historical inquiry is an effective pedagogy in supporting the development of conceptual understanding. By “doing history”, students develop a deeper awareness and understanding of how historical knowledge is constructed and the historical concepts that undergird their inquiry into the past.

## **4. ASSESSMENT**

---

### **4.1 Learner-centred and Balanced Assessment**

Assessment is an integral part of the learning process and must be closely aligned with curricular objectives, content and pedagogy. Assessment is learner-centred when it uses assessment information to support learning and gives students opportunities to be involved in their own assessment so that they develop as self-directed learners. To check if learning is taking place as intended, assessment serves the central function of getting the best possible evidence of what students have learnt. For learning to be effective and developmentally appropriate, teachers use such evidence to adapt their teaching pace, approaches and assessment practices. Teachers also use assessment to help students understand that by thinking about their own thinking, they can monitor, assess and improve their learning. Assessment should thus be designed with clarity of purpose and to provide learners and teachers with feedback to address learning gaps and improve teaching practices.

A balanced assessment system comprises both formative and summative assessment. Whether implemented in the classroom or as national examinations, all assessment should support and lead to meaningful learning.

Formative assessment usually takes place during the instructional process – whether in the form of in-class questioning, group discussion, project work, quizzes, written assignments or topical tests. Effective formative assessment hinges on the provision of timely, relevant and specific qualitative feedback from teachers or peers so that students will be able to self-monitor, self-regulate and improve their own learning.

Summative assessment is used to evaluate student learning at the end of the instructional process (e.g., to complete an instructional unit or a course of study) by comparing it against a set of standards or benchmarks. This provides data to reflect students' achievement of learning. Examples of summative assessment are school-based preliminary and promotional examinations and the A-Level national examination at the end of Pre-University education. The planning for school-based summative assessment for History should take reference from the A-Level H1 History assessment objectives and scheme of assessment, and ensure that the assessment is appropriately pitched in relation to what students have learnt. Please refer to the A-Level H1 (8838) History Examination Syllabus on the SEAB website for details on the A-Level History assessment.