



Key Words

# Provenance

The **origin** of a source (when, where, by whom / for whom it was made).

Example Sentence: "In terms of **provenance**, this source is a piece of propaganda and so does not present us with the full picture"



Key Words

# Content

The **information inside** a source. What does it tell us? What does it leave out?

Example Sentence: "The **content** of this source is thorough and detailed, although it leaves out a number of important details"



Key Words

# Subjective

A source which **persuades**: a **personal viewpoint**, maybe **biased** and **opinionated**.

Example Sentence: "This witness is writing **subjectively** rather than objectively, which limits the value of his evidence to the historian"



Key Words

# Objective

A source which **informs**: it is **balanced** and **factual** rather than biased and opinionated.

Example Sentence: "This witness writes in an **objective** manner, which makes her testimony particularly useful to the historian"



Key Words

# Incomplete

**Every source** provides an incomplete picture. It is only **one piece of the jigsaw**.

Example Sentence: "Although a reliable witness, his access to information was **incomplete**"



Key Words

# Purpose

Why a source was produced. Was it to **inform** (reliable), or **persuade** (unreliable)?

Example Sentence: "The **purpose** of this witness was to persuade rather than inform; this limits his usefulness to the historian"



Key Words

# Primary

A source produced **at the time** and / or by **someone who was there**. Often **subjective**.

Example Sentence: "This is **primary** evidence, although as such it lacks objectivity"



Key Words

# Secondary

A source **after the event** or by **someone who was not there**. Often **objective**.

Example Sentence: "This is **secondary** evidence, which lacks the immediacy of primary accounts but makes up for this with objectivity"



Key Words

# Context

The **situation** in which the source was produced. Helps in deciding reliability.

Example Sentence: "Although the author praises Stalin, we must be aware of the threatening **context** in which it was produced"



Key Words

# Biased

A witness who is **one-sided**, who **takes sides**, writing to **persuade**, not to inform.

Example Sentence: "This witness is very **biased** in favour of Hitler's policies, so we need to treat their testimony with scepticism"



Key Words

# Orthodox

The established interpretation of a historical event: e.g. Hitler planned WW2.

Example Sentence: "The **orthodox** interpretation of World War Two is that Hitler was responsible and planned it from the outset"



Key Words

# Revisionist

A fresh (revised) interpretation of a historical event: e.g. Hitler did not plan WW2.

Example Sentence: "The **revisionist** interpretation of World War Two is that Hitler was not totally responsible and did not plan for it"



Key  
Words

# Anachronistic

An approach which mistakenly interprets past societies using present-day values.

Example Sentence: "It is **anachronistic** to condemn the Victorians as being racist when such concepts did not exist at the time"



Key  
Words

# Hindsight

"Hindsight Bias" treats historical events as **inevitable**; a **deterministic** approach.

Example Sentence: "With hindsight it is tempting to treat World War One as **inevitable**, but it was not widely foreseen at the time"



Key Words

# Sacrosanct

A point of view which is held to be **proven** and so above debate or criticism.

Example: "The view that Hitler was responsible for World War Two was **sacrosanct** until Taylor's *Origins of the Second World War*"



Key Words

# Iconoclastic

A **revisionist** approach which challenges **orthodox, sacrosanct** interpretations.

Example Sentence: "AJP Taylor had the **iconoclastic** view that Hitler had not planned, World War Two"





Key  
Words

# Deterministic

An approach stressing that individuals have little influence on the outcome of events.

Example Sentence: "The Annales School have the **deterministic** view that geography, not human agency, shapes the course of history"



Key  
Words

# Nihilistic

An approach arguing that **random events** determine history.

Example Sentence: "It is rather **nihilistic** to say that World War One would not have occurred had Princip not shot Archduke Ferdinand"



Key Words

# Intentionalist

A **nihilistic** approach; argues that **individuals** determine historical events.

Example: "The **intentionalist** view is that had Hitler been killed in World War One, World War Two never would have happened"



Key Words

# Structuralist

A **deterministic** approach; claims **institutional structures** determine history.

Example Sentence: "According to **structuralist** historians, Weimar Germany was doomed due to the authoritarian traditions of Germany"



Key Words

# Empathetical

An approach which tries understands the past on its own terms, not **anachronistically**.

Example Sentence: "To understand Hitler's rise to power, It is important to **empathise** with Germans who voted for him"



Key Words

# Symbiotic

A "chicken and egg" relationship between two factors which clearly influence each other

Example Sentence: "German fear of Britain, and vice versa, existed in a **symbiotic** relationship in the years before World War One"



Key Words

# Whiggish

A simplistic interpretation of history; sees events as moving towards a brighter future.

Example Sentence: "It is rather **Whiggish** to treat the development of women's rights as a story of steady and inevitable progress"



Key Words

# Paradigm

A fundamental assumption about the past upon which all other interpretations are built.

Example Sentence: "AJP Taylor's contention that Hitler was a traditional statesman, with traditional aims, was a whole new **paradigm**"