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".

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".
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".

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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".
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".

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".
**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"

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**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"
**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"

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**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"
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"

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"
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"

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"
**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*"

**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"
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"

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"
**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"

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**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"
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"

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"
**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."

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**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**."