

Historiographical terms for use at IB Level

Observations: Leopold von Ranke's Historicism movement in the late 19th Century laid the framework for modern historiography. From the scientific methods of source analysis it promoted, historians quickly moved from describing "what" happened and towards a consideration of "why". In the late 20th Century, however, the postmodernists argued that Historicism was fundamentally flawed: all historical sources were both biased and incomplete so it was impossible to reach any valid conclusions. This created "The Crisis of History" which has called into question the whole validity of the discipline.

"Sources CAN be used to reconstruct the past"	Historicism (late 19thC)	Leopold <i>von Ranke</i> pioneered a scientific approach to the study of history based on the objective analysis of primary sources. In this way he hoped to show History "as it really was" (<i>als es eigentlich gewesen</i>).	Free Will "The people of the past were in control of their own destinies"	Positivism Embraces human agency in historical affairs. Embraces the potential of historical sources to provide an accurate and complete vision of the past. Embraces an <i>empathetical</i> approach towards the people of the past.
From this approach, what can we detect as being the main driving force of historical change?	Accidentalist	<u>Accidents</u> are the main driving force of historical change: a mosquito bite prevented Trotsky being fit enough to seize control of the USSR; a change in wind direction blew William the Conqueror to England.	Chaos Theory "Lessons cannot be drawn from history, because it has no particular path"	Narrative - Chronology The conviction that random events can change the course of history was popularised by <i>AJP Taylor</i> and remains highly popular in TV series and cinema dramatisations.
	Intentionalist	<u>Key individuals'</u> intentions and personalities are the main driving force of historical change. Sometimes known as the <i>intentionalist</i> position.	Teleology "Lessons <u>can</u> be drawn from history, because it has a path which we can choose to follow or to change"	Biography - Hagiography This "Great Man" approach produces chronological narratives: works of biography, <i>hagiography</i> (=highly positive biographies) and <i>psychohistory</i> .
	Hegelian	<u>Intellectual movements</u> are the main driving force of historical change. <i>Georg Hegel</i> studied the <i>History of Ideas</i> .		Dialectics - Analysis Change occurs by the clash of the old (<i>orthodox thesis</i>) against the new (<i>revisionist antithesis</i>) to produce a <i>synthesis</i> . This synthesis becomes the new thesis (or " <i>paradigm</i> ") and then the process of clashes (" <i>dialectics</i> ") repeats.
	Marxist	<u>Economic forces</u> are the main driving force of historical change. <i>Karl Marx</i> adopted a <i>cliometric</i> approach: a reliance upon statistics.		
	Structuralist	<u>Political and military structures</u> are the main driving force of historical change. Sometimes known as the <i>functionalist</i> position.	Determinism "Lessons cannot be drawn from history, because it has a path which we cannot change"	Meta-Narrative – Total History Works of the <i>Annales school</i> are characterised by a multi-layered approach which seek to integrate long-term, mid-term and short-term factors together in a massive narrative of " <i>total history</i> ". The most famous example is <i>Braudel's Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II</i> .
	Annales	<u>Geography</u> is the main driving force of historical change (e.g. access to and debates over natural resources, climate change).		
"Sources CANNOT be used to reconstruct the past"	Postmodernism (late 20thC)	Foucault argued that because historical sources are biased, incomplete, and language itself has no fixed meaning, the past will always be essentially unknowable.	Philology Postmodernists focus on the study of language (<i>philology</i>), in particular, <i>inter-textual deconstructionism</i> – pulling texts apart to highlight ambiguities, contradictions and omissions.	Negativism Rejects human agency in historical affairs. Rejects all sources as being incomplete and biased. Rejects an <i>empathetical</i> approach (the possibility of understanding people from the past on their own terms)