**HSIE – Modern History  
Exam preparation transcript**

(Duration 28 minutes:24seconds: )

Welcome to the HSC hub presentation for Modern History. This presentation will take approximately 30 minutes. Before we begin, I would like to pay my respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of all of the lands on which we're meeting and also pay respect to elders both past and present.

Welcome to this HSC hub video created by the HSIE team in the Learning and Teaching Directorate. This video is aiming to support you in your preparation for the Modern History HSC exam. We'll have an introductory look at the layout and structure of the exam, some tips on preparing for the exam before the big day and a deeper look at the exam section by section with some discussion of specific past paper questions and feedback from the marking centre. The key message we can send you to help you prepare for the exam is that to prepare well, you need to have a strong grasp of the key content and concepts and you need to spend a lot of time practicing the ways to respond to different types of questions. Cramming or studying just before the exam will not be as effective as a long term study approach and at the end of the day, you need to know a lot about the Modern History topics that you've studied to be able to write about them in an exam setting. So, wide reading and engaging with the content deeply is a key to success.

Before the exam day, please download the HSC timetable and highlight all of your exams. The 2020 examination timetable has already been released and can be found on the NESA website. The Modern History exam, as you can see in the red circle on the screen, will be held on day eight, which is Thursday the 29th of October at 9:25am. Make sure you manage your time and travel so that you can arrive with plenty of time to be seated before the exam begins. You should plan your revision schedule to match up with your exams. Have a regular study routine that you're following to keep up with coursework. Continue to study and revise each of your subjects. However, in the days before the exams, you may need to give a little more emphasis to the exams you will complete first. As you complete exams, the time you would have spent on those subjects can then be allocated to exams yet to come.

Also, it's very important that you get a good night's sleep before each exam. Late nights will harm your performance. Last minute cramming is okay but not at the expense of sleep. Your brain needs time to rest and you'll be able to engage better with the questions if you're not physically and mentally exhausted. It might seem obvious, but eat some breakfast. Studies have shown that eating a healthy high protein breakfast and remaining hydrated will help improve your examination results. On days where you may have an afternoon exam, a healthy lunch will also help with concentration.

Finally, make sure you have all of your equipment ready. Pack it up in a clean pencil case or plastic sleeve the night before so you aren't rushing and then forget something on the morning of the exam. What can you bring into your exam? NESA allows the following items for all HSC examinations. Black pens, make sure you bring a spare. Black is important as exam papers are scanned to allow on screen marking. Lighter coloured pens make reading your response quite difficult, so please make sure you do bring a black pen. A ruler. These are allowed in all exams, as are highlighters, which may be helpful in identifying directive verbs or key terms in the question. You can also bring in 2B pencils or a sharpener. Also, you can bring in a bottle of water in a clear water bottle. Please make sure this bottle does not have any markings on it. All of these items can be found relatively cheaply at stationery stores or even newsagents. Don't wait until the last minute to find these items. You should be using them throughout your course and while you're studying.

In Modern History, the exam consists of four sections. Section one, Power and Authority in the Modern World 1919 to 1946. This section contains three or four short and long answer questions ranging from three marks to 15 marks. There'll be a source booklet to accompany this section. Section two is the National Study. This section requires you to write an essay on your chosen national study from a possible two question options. This response is worth 25 marks. Section three is the Peace and Conflict study. This section requires you to write an essay on your chosen peace and conflict from a possible two question options. This response is also worth 25 marks. Section four is the Change in the Modern World section. This section requires you to answer one question with multiple parts about your chosen change in the modern world option. There will be three or four parts to the question in this section. The parts will vary in weighting with one part worth between 10 and 15 marks.

You'll have five minutes to read the paper. During this time, you will not be able to write. Use the reading time to ensure that you have each of the sections and that no pages are missing. You should also ensure that you have a copy of the source booklet and any writing booklets that you'll use for your essays. A source booklet is provided which contains multiple sources that will be referred to specifically in section one. The three hours of writing time. During this time you are to complete the paper to the best of your ability. You must remain in the examination room for a minimum of one hour and you will not be permitted to leave in the last 30 minutes. This is to minimize disruption at the end of the exam period. Once you leave the exam room, you will not be permitted to re-enter. So we strongly advise that you remain for the duration of the exam period. Now we will go through the exam section by section.

Section one of the exam will be focused on the core study. Power and Authority in the Modern World 1919 to 1946. All students will answer the same questions relating to this topic. This section is worth 25 marks and you should allow approximately 45 minutes. The questions can range from three to 15 marks, including one long question that will be between 10 and 15 marks. You'll be expected to explicitly incorporate sources into questions that refer to the source booklet. Keep in mind that some of the questions in this section may not require explicit reference to sources. It is very important that you read each question carefully to determine whether explicit use of the source booklet is required. The marking criteria for this section advises that you'll be assessed on how well you, one, demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding relevant to the question, two, communicate ideas and information logically and three, use historical terms and concepts appropriately. To ensure you give the best possible response to each question, you should take a moment to consider and plan your response even for the questions that are in the lower range of marks. This doesn't have to be a long or complicated process and could be as simple as noting the verb and key words of the question before putting pen to paper. By identifying clearly what the question is asking with the marking criteria in mind, you'll set yourself up for writing a high quality response.

One of the most important things to keep in mind from the marking criteria for this section is demonstrating historical knowledge and understanding relevant to the question. The key to achieving well in this section of the exam is to be precise in your responses and to be very clear that you're explicitly answering the question that has been asked. Notes from the 2019 NESA marking centre for section one of the Modern History exam said that students should understand the key words of the question and integrate relevant historical terminology into their responses. To be able to do this, you should spend time in your exam preparation making yourself familiar with the variety of verbs that are regularly used in the questions. A link to the NESA terminology page is included in the supplementary resource for this video, as well as the key terms specific to the content of this topic, integrating historical terms in an accurate and relevant way is a way to ensure your response addresses the marking criteria and showcases your historical understanding.

The marking centre also noted that students should use the reading time effectively to plan their responses and to ensure they answer the questions rather than giving a pre prepared response. This is particularly important to note and is valid across all sections of the Modern History exam. Pre prepared responses are very easy to spot in the marking centre, because they did not clearly link to the question through relevant historical terms. Finally, they were very clear that there were areas for improvement in the 2019 cohort regarding source based questions. When a question in this section requires the use of a source, make sure that you're refer to source explicitly in your response, even highlighting it to remind yourself as much as to signal the marker. Sources should be used in a cohesive way in your response though, not just tacked on at the end. By integrating the source into your response or argument, you can show the marker that you have a deep understanding of the content and can identify the various ways in which sources can contribute to your understanding.

Let's have a look at an example from the 2019 Modern History exam. This is the very first question from the exam and it was a nice one to ease into the writing process. The question was, describe three features common to dictatorships that emerged after World War One. We'll break the question down using the key words in a moment but first, it's worth having a look at the feedback from the marking centre. Students were able to get higher marks in this question when they were accurate in their descriptions and when they used enough detail, rather than simply listing three features of dictatorships. This highlights the importance of understanding the key verbs being used in the HSC questions. Even though three marks may not seem like a big deal, every mark counts when they're tallied at the end. NESA's website defines describe as provide characteristics and features.

The next part of the question that needs to be considered is the specific knowledge that's being addressed. In this case, the question is asking you to think about features that were common to dictatorships. The word common is a signal that tells you to consider more than one dictatorship when deciding which features you will include. You should make sure they fit all or most of the dictatorships that you've studied as part of the core, not just Nazi Germany. It might seem to be stating the obvious but taking note of the number three is also very important. The question is not asking for any more than three features. So anytime spent on adding extras just in case will be time wasted as the marker can only give three marks maximum regardless of how much detail or how many extras you add. Stick to the parameters of the question to give yourself the best chance at marks in the most efficient way.

Finally, you need to check the timing that's referred to in each question. In this example, the question clearly specifies, after World War One, you should consider this when deciding which features of dictatorships that you'll be including. Some examples of features that could be described in response to this question are nationalism, militarism, propaganda, one party states and a single ruler amongst many others. The key to getting the full three marks will be to ensure you give more detail of each feature, for example, connecting the details to specific dictatorships in Japan, Germany, the USSR and Italy.

Moving on to section two of the Modern History exam, which focuses on the National Study. The most important first step is to make sure which national study you will be responding to. As tempting as some the question options may be on the day, please make sure you respond to the option that you've been studying in class with your teacher. Each option will have an a and b question choice, you're only required to respond to one of those, note the or between them on the paper. Your response will be in the form of an essay. So it's very important that you spend some time planning your response before you write it. You should set aside approximately 45 minutes for this section with the planning time as part of that 45 minutes.

The marking criteria for the section of the exam states that you will be assessed on how well you, one, demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding relevant to the question, two, use relevant evidence and interpretation to support your response. Three, communicate ideas and information using historical terms and concepts appropriately and four, present a sustained logical and cohesive response. This section will allow you to showcase the depth of your knowledge and how you can connect what you know to the question being asked. Pre prepared responses are not a good idea as they will not allow you to show your understanding in a way that is relevant to the question. Notice that the word relevant features in the marking criteria for each section of the exam. It is essential that your response to each question takes this into account.

The notes from the 2019 marking centre for the Modern History exam, advise that students should spend time making sure they can recognize the different requirements of the directive verbs and words that may come up in the questions. For example, understanding the difference between explain, assess and evaluate and knowing where something like to what extent or how, might fit into that mix. One way to prepare for this is to look at a wide range of past papers and question samples to get a feeling for the types of questions asked in this section of the exam. The marking centre also encourages students to use a plan to guide their responses. Jotting down a quick thesis and a plan to guide your essay could save you valuable time as it will keep your writing on track and help you to keep the question at the front of your mind.

A specific piece of feedback from the marking centre was that students need to sustain their judgments throughout the response, rather than simply adding a sentence with a judgment at the end of each paragraph. The key to sustaining clear judgments that are relevant to the question is to spend the time planning and to have a strong thesis for your essay before you begin writing. This should guide all of your responses, not just the concluding sentence to each paragraph. This cohesion is how you can shift from band four to five, or five to six.

Okay, let's have a look at a specific example from section two. For this section, I will discuss Option G: USA 1919 to 1941. But the breakdown of the question is relevant to all options as I'll be talking about how to unpack the question, not the specifics of the content. When you find your studied option, remember, choose the option you did in class. The first thing you need to do is decide which question choice you're going to focus on. You should do this during the reading time if possible, as you want to make the most of your writing time. Most students find the choices will give them a clear preference but take a moment to think through what you will include in your essay for each option. What would your thesis be? And what examples and evidence have you got at first glance to support that thesis? As a note, when I'm talking about your thesis, in simple terms, I mean, your answer to the question. It is very useful to be able to sum up your answer to the question in a sentence before you begin writing your essay. This answer will guide your writing and make sure you're responding explicitly to the question on the paper.

So for the purposes of this video, I've chosen option a. How significant was the impact of consumerism on US society in the period 1919 to 1941? Now that I've chosen, my next step is to break this question down and unpack all of the things that the question is asking me to do. First, the content focus of the question is the impact of consumerism on US society. To respond well to this question, I will need to have a strong understanding of what consumerism is, what it looked like in the USA and what the impact of consumerism was on US society, ideally across a range of areas. Next, it's very important to make a note of the time period that is specified in the question. In this instance, the time period 1919 to 1941 takes in the entire topic boundaries. However, that will not always be the case in this section. Some questions will be very specific and may only require you to discuss a short time period. You may be tempted to venture outside the specified years but you will not get marks for doing so. When questions ask for the broad range of time that this one does, be mindful that you need to address the entire period. In your planning, consider the exam pools that you'll use to showcase this.

The final thing we need to do when unpacking this question is to look at the directive verb or statement at the beginning. In this case, how significant was. In Modern History, questions often shift away from the typical directive verbs of evaluate, analyse and assess and often we find ourselves with a question like this one, or a to what extent to question. This may feel more difficult but in actual fact, the word significant gives a strong push to guide your writing and helps you to stay on track as you progress through your essay. The key is to make sure you decide, before you begin writing, just how significant the impact of consumerism was. Very? Somewhat? Mildly? Not at all? This is your essay. Each paragraph that you write needs to support your answer to that question and thus the word significant should feature in every paragraph in some way as should the other keywords and phrases we've identified.

In general, the feedback from the marking centre in 2019 highlighted that this section was done best when students showed clear evidence of planning and their essays were logical, well-structured and coherent as well as demonstrating a strong knowledge of the syllabus and the ability to link that syllabus content knowledge directly to the question in a relevant and meaningful way. Responses that engage clearly with the question asked and made a judgment in relation to that question were better than responses that were narrative and descriptive, simply retelling the events that happened.

An interesting note in the marking feedback from NESA was that students could improve in this section by recognizing that the syllabus does not require the use of historians' views. This isn't to say that historians' views are not useful when they are relevant and explicitly linked to the question and when they are being used to support the judgment and argument being made by the student. However, referring to historians in a way that's not contextual and not connected to the arguments that you are making will not get you any marks and it's not necessary to use historians in order to get full marks.

Moving on to section three of the Modern History exam, which focuses on the Peace and Conflict study, and is structured very much in the same way as section two, in that each topic will have an a and a b question choice, and you're only required to respond to one of those. Again, your response will be in the form of an essay, so it is very important that you spend some time planning that response. You should set aside approximately 45 minutes for this section. With the planning time as part of that 45 minutes. Like section two, please make sure you know which option you'll be responding to and respond to the option that you've been studying in class with your teacher.

The marking criteria for this section of the exam states that you'll be assessed on how well you, one, demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding relevant to the question, two, use relevant evidence and interpretation to support your response, three, communicate ideas and information using historical terms and concepts appropriately, and four, present a sustained logical and cohesive response. You might notice that sounds very similar to the criteria for section two and that is because they are the same. The expectations for this section are similar in regards to format, to style and structure. It is the content and focus that will be different. Thus, the same advice applies. Prepare well by making sure a lot about your topic and use the syllabus dot points as a starting point to guide this knowledge. The questions will be formed from the content points and the key features and issues for your chosen topic. Make sure these well and understand the kinds of questions that may be asked.

The general feedback from section two applies to this section as well. Planning is vital and pre prepared responses are just not a good idea. The 2019 markings centre into notes made a point of encouraging students to use historical evidence well. Many students used historical evidence to sit alongside their argument rather than in a cohesive way that supported their argument. Making sure you integrate your evidence to support the points that you're making and your overall argument is something to consider as you study for this section. Another note from the marking centre around section three was the importance of making a clear and coherent judgment in relation to the specific question and sustaining that judgment throughout the essay.

The specific feedback for the options in this section contain a clear message that students need to demonstrate broad, comprehensive and specific knowledge of the topic that they're discussing. It's essential that you make sure you know a lot about your chosen topics because to write a logical, sustained and high quality essay, you need to know a lot. The approach to unpacking your question in section three is the same as in section two but with a clear difference in the focus of the questions. Because of this, I won't look at a specific example from this section.

Finally, we'll look at section four of the Modern History exam which focuses on the change in the modern world study and has a different structure to the previous two sections. Like sections two and three, you'll need to select the option that you've studied before beginning your response. So please make sure you know which option you've been studying in class. Once you've chosen your option, there will be three or four parts of the question that you need to answer. You must answer all of the parts. When you add the marks up alongside each other, that will make 25 total marks for this section. There'll be one part of the question that will be a longer response which is worth between 10 and 15 marks. You should set aside approximately 45 minutes for this section including the planning time.

The marking criteria for this section states that you will be assessed on how well you one, demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding relevant to the question, two, communicate ideas and information logically and three use historical terms and concepts appropriately. For the shorter questions, the 2019 marking centre notes highlighted that students with strong responses supplied detailed historical information that was relevant to the question being selective about the information that they included to account for the length of the response needed. They're also able to make clear relationships between different elements in the question where relevant. One area where students could have improved on the shorter responses was being succinct and clear in their response. Being aware of the weighting of the question you're answering and the key verb in the question will help you to keep your answers to an appropriate length.

For the longer response in the 2019 exam, the feedback for the marking centre pointed out that the better responses used the source provided for information, not commenting on reliability or usefulness as that would have been outside the scope of the question. This is further proof of the importance of carefully reading the question, especially when there are sources involved. Some source questions may ask for analysis of the source but others will ask for the source to be used to provide evidence. Being able to determine between these types of questions will be very useful for you in the exam. Another positive of the better responses noted by the marking centre was clear, logical paragraph structure for the longer question. This doesn't need to be a full essay but having a clear structure will allow the marker to follow the logic and flow of your response. An area to improve on the longer responses was in the explicit referencing of the source when students were using it as evidence. This is as simple as stating in source a, or paraphrasing source a, or putting source a in brackets after you've used information from the source. This signposting allows the marker to see clearly and easily that you've integrated the source smoothly into your response.

Let's take a look at an example from section four as this is the newest section of the syllabus and the exam. As such, there are not that many examples that you'll find to practice this section. So it might be a useful section to spend some time creating your own questions, which can be a really powerful study technique. And who knows, you may even predict the question you come across on your exam paper. For this video, I'll be looking at question 23 option a, which is the nuclear age, 1945 to 2011. The whole question as it appears on the exam is on this slide but I’ll only focus on one part of it in unpacking the question requirements. The part of this question that I'll be looking at for section four is part c. Evaluate the social and environmental effects of the nuclear age. In your answer include references to source J. I've included source J on the slide which is a short excerpt from a section that featured in the book "The Cold War: Turning Points in World History." The excerpt is by Tom Engelhardt and refers to the impact of radioactive material on the milk that cows produced thousands of miles away from the testing sites. An important thing to note when addressing this question is that it explicitly asks you to include reference to the source, in this case, source J. This could take the form of direct quotes from the source but paraphrasing the source is also an acceptable way to do this and it's often a more appropriate way of referencing the source as it showcases your writing skills and engagement with the question. This question is quite broad but it contains some nice signposts to help you structure your response.

The key content that you need to address here are the social and environmental effects of the nuclear age. Already, the question helps you by giving you two categories within which you can sort and structure your knowledge and this will help you to plan your response. You should give equal weight to each category to ensure a balanced response and it would be useful to think of multiple examples of each category to support your answer. The directive verb in this question is evaluate. According to NESA, evaluate means to make a judgment based on criteria or determine the value of. In this case, the judgment based on criteria is most appropriate. So you need to come up with some criteria by which to judge the social and environmental effects of the nuclear age in order to respond to this question. Once you have your criteria, then you need to make the judgment about the social environmental effects of the nuclear age. This may include positives and negatives. The notes from the marking centre said that the better responses to this question had clear logical paragraph structures with the supporting point for the judgment and they integrated the source with their own knowledge to respond to the question. They also noted that better responses used the source carefully for its content, rather than focusing on the reliability or usefulness of the source. Again, highlighting the importance of carefully reading the question.

This video has been a short introduction to the Modern History HSC exam and should be used as a starting point only. Your teacher is best placed to support you in your preparation for the exam and is an expert in both the specific topics that you've been learning about and how to teach them to your class. If you have any questions about the exam, your topics in Modern History or where to next, have a chat with your teacher about the websites that you can use to help you study and how to access the range of past papers available. Please note that the current Modern History syllabus is quite new so any exams on the NESA website that have dates prior to 2019 will be for the old syllabus. So you should take the advice of your teacher on how to use those papers in your preparation. Good luck with your exams.

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