

A2 HISTORY: DIFFERENT AMERICAN WESTS

INTRODUCTION TO HISTORIOGRAPHY



Introduction to Historical Controversies

Why does historical controversy arise?

- The historian's personal view of society and the past
- The influence of the present social/ political/ cultural climate on the historian
- The historical method used by the historian (e.g. reconstructive, analytical)
- The historical approach of the historian (e.g. Marxist, feminist, cultural)
- The different types of evidence used and how they have been interpreted by the historian
- Incomplete/ contradictory evidence
- The questions asked by the historian

Historical evidence

The problem that every historian confronts is that the evidence they rely on is likely to be fragmentary, incomplete or contradictory. As a result, each historian's conclusions are influenced by the evidence they have *selected* from what is available and how they have *interpreted* that evidence.

Each generation of historian has access to a different range of evidence – some existing evidence may have been lost and some new evidence may have been discovered. This means that historians will never know everything that happened in the past.

Historical questions and approaches

Historians approach evidence with their own agenda: they don't all ask the same questions of the same evidence. For example, a gender historian will ask different questions on the evidence for witch – hunting in early modern Europe than a religious historian, because they are looking for different things.

Their approach to the evidence is also influenced by who the historian is as a person – i.e. their gender, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs – and by the age in which they live.

Examples of historical approaches:

- Political
- Social
- Economic
- Cultural
- Gender
- Local
- Comparative
- Total
- Class relations
- History 'from above'/ 'from below'
- History of mentalities

All historians want to make sense of the past but, because life in the past was so complex, they often try to simplify things by categorising the past artificially (e.g. it was a 19thC Danish museum curator who 'invented' the terms Stone/ Bronze/ Iron Age to help him sort out his ancient artefacts).

The periods in which the history of Western Europe has been divided have also been invented for the convenience of historians – e.g. stating that the ‘medieval’ period ended at Bosworth Hill (the death of Richard III and the beginning of the Tudor Age) is a gross over – simplification, but helps give some shape to the otherwise amorphous past.

Dividing the past into centuries is problematic, as ‘ages’ often straddle these time divisions:

- Were the late 1490s (medieval) really so different from the early 1500s (early modern)?
- Some historians would say that the 19thC really began in 1793 and that the 20thC didn’t start until 1914
- Was 1991 (ending of communism) more of a turning point than 2000?

Historians also label the peoples of the past, as well as the periods – e.g. ‘peasant’, ‘radicals’ or ‘Protestants’. However, this suggests that all people in that group had the same outlook, values or life experiences, when that plainly will not be true.

Whig History

This term is often used to denote a triumphalist view of the past, linked to the notion of progress. It developed in Britain in the 19th century, and is linked with historians such as Macauley.

‘Whig’ comes from the term ‘whiggamore’, who were Protestant supporters of William and Mary during the ‘Glorious Revolution’ (1688).

This view of history celebrates the creation of the institutions of modern Britain (e.g. parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, constitutional monarchy) through a series of struggles and triumphs over time. This way of looking at the past was influenced by Darwin’s Evolution of Species.

Whig historians would see the English Civil War and its aftermath as part of a heroic struggle for political and religious liberty, whereas more recent historians would see it as a desperate attempt by the old rural elite to restore their former status.

The Whig view of history has also been adopted by some historians of the American West, who see the ‘conquest’ of the West by white Americans as part of the country’s ‘Manifest Destiny’.

What is History?

G. R. Elton (leading Tudor historian of 1950s/60s; uncle of Ben):
A search for truth

Keith Jenkins (leading historian on belief and superstition in early modern England):
A collection of views about the past

‘History’ could be said to be simply *historiography* = the history of history writing

Historians encounter, analyse and revise the interpretations of their predecessors, which build up like layers of sediment:

The present
'Counter –revisionist' interpretations
'Revisionist' interpretations
Traditional/ orthodox interpretations of those events
The past (i.e. the actual events)

Historical interpretations

Postmodern theorists would say that to attempt to search for objective truth about the past is misguided (we can't know what happened in the past because we don't have the same mind-set/ mentality as those who lived through it), and historians should instead focus on the process by which written history is created.

Medieval historians said that God caused everything. However, after the Enlightenment (late 18thC), 'reason' replaced superstition and so new explanations for why things happened had to be found. There are two real alternatives:

1. Everything is the product of chance/ random circumstance
2. Create new determinist theories (i.e. historical events are predetermined by certain forces)

A.J.P Taylor (historian of the Second World War) would agree with the first alternative. He famously stated that history is simply a series of accidents and blunders.

Others find theoretical explanations for events dangerous and/ or misleading, because they remove the power of human agency and can allow individuals to avoid blame for the consequences of their actions (e.g. saying the Holocaust was caused by the popularity of 'Social Darwinism' in post – WWI Europe absolves Hitler of any censure).

It is also undeniable that chance plays some role in history – e.g. natural disasters (the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull that erupted in the 1780s led to a series of bad harvests that caused high bread prices and, eventually, the French Revolution) or epidemic diseases (the Black Death led to a shortage of labour in England, which meant that the survivors could charge a higher rate for their work, and eventually to the end of feudalism).

Examples of deterministic theories of history:

1. Intentionalist = history is driven by human agency (e.g. Hugh Trevor – Roper would argue that WWII was the result of Hitler's master – plan as set out in 'Mein Kampf')
2. Structuralist = history is the result of 'base structures', such as the economy or the environment; above these are 'super – structures' such ideas/ institutions/ events

Historical determinism

Whilst 19thC historians would say that history is shaped by 'great men' (e.g. kings and prime ministers), many modern historians tend to look instead for the (non – human) dynamic forces that have shaped history, the underlying trends/ structures.

Examples:

1. Marxism
2. Frederick Jackson Turner's 'Frontier Thesis' of American history

Marxism:

This is the most influential deterministic theory of history. Marx argued that the force that leads to all historical change is the struggle between social classes. This struggle is caused by an unequal economic relationship between two classes. Eventually, the oppressed class (the proletariat – industrial working class) will rise up against the oppressing class (the bourgeoisie – the owners of the means of production) and usher in a communist society. This would mark the 'end of history', as there would be no more struggles in a classless society.

Marx and Engels identified 3 stages through which all human societies must pass before they develop a communist economic structure and therefore end class conflict:

- Stage 1: Ancient (slave – driven economies; e.g. Rome)
- Stage 2: Feudal (lord and serf system of obligations tied to land)
- Stage 3: Bourgeois (modern capitalist economy)

Communism would emerge from the overthrowing of the capitalist system and the destruction of the concept of class by giving producers communal ownership of everything they produced; until this stage, the mode of production was bound to lead to conflict. Marx, therefore, challenged the view that the ideas/ actions of men and women shaped their destinies.

Turner's Frontier Thesis:

The drive to extend the frontier of white settlement was the underlying cause of America's expansion into the west during the 19thC (e.g. it wasn't the result of a decision taken by the government or by individuals' groups)

Both these interpretations are examples of a 'metanarrative' – a text/ principle/ myth used by a society to explain its past and present, to help unite that society in a common purpose. Examples of metanarratives are the Bible, the Communist Manifesto and witchcraft.

In recent years, Marxist interpretations have fallen out of favour, following the collapse of the USSR, as well as increasing living standards in Western countries, meaning that 'class conflict' is seen as no longer relevant.

Modern historians are also much less convinced that history is the story of human progress. For example, Whig historians would have seen the Renaissance and Reformation (which replaced feudalism and superstition) as marking the start of a lasting period of progress. However, modern historians would point out that there were a series of crises during the 17thC that arguably led to a period of stagnation/ regression (e.g. the Thirty Years' war; the English Civil War).

Introduction to Different American Wests

What is the 'West'?

One of the first issues to think about when studying the American West is 'what is "the West"?' For example, does it start at the Mississippi River or the Rocky Mountains? Does it include the Pacific coast? At the start of the 19thC, the 'West' was anywhere beyond the Appalachian Mountains. However, few Americans would recognise this definition today.

What is the 'Frontier'?

Another issue to confront is the concept of the 'Frontier'. In one sense, the 'Frontier' is a geographical term – it refers to the dividing line between land which has been settled by Americans and that which has not. However, Frederick Jackson Turner defined it as a meeting – point between civilisation and savagery, which inevitably led to conflict and conquest. Others see it as a place where cultures met and assimilated peacefully, leading to a new multi – layered culture.

What explanations are there for westward expansion during the 19th century?

Empirical approach:

- Westward expansion motivated by the mass migration of European settlers
- Part of the mid – Victorian urge to explore/ discover new lands (e.g. British Empire)
- Result of individual action
- Stresses the role of 'heroic' individuals such as Daniel Boone and 'Buffalo Bill' Cody

Psychological approach:

- The urge to move westwards was not to do with the actions of governments or corporations, but resulted from the basic human desire for change, novelty, freedom etc.
- This was especially pronounced in the American spirit, which is permanently restless

'Manifest Destiny':

- US institutions (such as the government) or individuals (President James K. Polk) generated the will to move west in order to fulfil America's destiny to oversee all of the territory between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts

'Top – down' approach:

- The mechanics of establishing a US presence in the West was a political process, driven by the federal government
- Example: Indian Removal Act 1830
- Example: Oregon treaty (agreement with Great Britain)
- Example: Homestead Act 1862

Other factors:

- Discovery of minerals
- The West was a 'safety – valve' for the industrial East
- The American Civil war

Schools of Historiography	View on Sources	View on Role of History	Methods of Creating History
HISTORICIST (LATE C19TH) <i>A scientific approach to history pioneered by von Ranke/ Based on the objective study of primary sources. Believed that the study of such sources would allow a reconstruction of history “wie es eigentlich gewesen ist” – as it actually was.</i>	Sources can and should be used to reconstruct the past.	FREE WILL People in the past were in full control of their own destinies – lessons can be drawn	POSITIVISM Embraces human agency in history. Uses sources to provide and accurate and complete vision of the past. Also embraces and empathetic approach towards people in the past.
ACCIDENTALIST <i>Believe that accidents are the driving force of historical change: a mosquito bite prevented Trotsky being fit enough to seize control of the USSR; a change in wind direction prevented the Spanish Armada from arriving in England etc.</i>	Use of sources not the main focus – more of a focus on why things happened rather than what happened	CHAOS THEORY Lessons cannot be drawn from the past as there is no path to history	NARRATIVE - CHRONOLOGY The creation of narratives of the past – analysis plays less role as the role of accidents is most important. AJP Taylor used this approach in series on Russia.
INTENTIONALIST <i>Intentions and personalities of key individuals drive historical change eg. Hitler’s master plan created and caused the Holocaust</i>		TELEOLOGY Lessons can be drawn from history because it has a path which we can choose to follow or change	BIOGRAPHY - HAGIOGRAPHY The “Great Men” method which creates chronological narratives. Often look at the agency of one individual in history.
HEGELIAN <i>Intellectual movements and the progress of ideas are the driving force in historical change. Hegel saw history as a constant progression towards true freedom. Studies of ideas such as the Renaissance are often Hegelian in character.</i>		DIALECTICS - ANALYSIS Theses are created which become orthodoxies. New theses then arrive to challenge these – revisionism – and a synthesis is produced from the old and the new. The synthesis becomes the new thesis or paradigm and the process of clashes (dialectics) repeats.	
MARXIST <i>Economic forces are the main driving force in historical change. Karl Marx relied heavily upon statistical data to show that exploitation and class conflict drove history. Eg. Studies of the Peasants’ Revolt which focus on prices of bread and declining wages.</i>		DETERMINISM Lessons cannot be drawn from history because it has a path which cannot be changed	META-NARRATIVE – TOTAL HISTORY Works of the Annales school are characterised by a multi-layered approach which seek to integrate long-term, mid term and short term factors in a “total history”. There is an effort to explain large amounts of human history through the application of theory and social sciences. Comparative studies of similar events in disparate places
STRUCTURALIST <i>Political and military structures are the main driving force of historical change. Also known as a functionalist position. Eg. The city states of the Italian Renaissance and the absence of Church allowed the Renaissance to flourish.</i>		PHILOLOGY The study of language is used to pull apart texts to highlight ambiguities – no lessons	NEGATIVISM Rejects human agency in historical affairs. Rejects all sources. Rejects the possibility of empathetic understanding of the past.
ANNALES <i>Named after Annales d’histoire économique et sociale and pioneered by historians such as Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. Heavy use of social sciences in historical explanation rather than looking at political structures etc. A downplaying of short term events and a focus on the longue duree. Belief that environment and culture shape history over the long term and that history defies categorisation. Eg. A long term study of the belief that the kings of France could cure Scrofula.</i>		POSTMODERNIST (LATE C20TH) <i>Foucault argued that all historical sources are biased, incomplete and that the language has no fixed meaning. He therefore suggested that the past was unknowable. A belief that all interpretations of history are equally valid...</i>	Sources cannot be used in reconstructing the past.



Language of Historians (F985/F986)

Orthodox	Older interpretations of historical events and developments, which tend to become established until challenged by newer, alternative interpretations or approaches.
Top-down approach	Focuses on central developments and decisions, and those with power and influence, i.e. 'History from above'. Tends to see politics as very important, and contrasts with 'bottom-up' approaches.
Bottom-up approach	Focuses on ordinary people and their experiences, organisations and actions – as a counter to 'top-down' approaches, which are written from the point of view of those who benefit from historical changes and developments. Tends to see social and economic issues and the local situation in individual towns and villages as very important.
Historical context	What was happening, or what was/was not known at the time/period the source was written/produced, e.g. were certain documents not available when a historian was writing? Was a writer's, or a historian's, view coloured by a significant contemporary event?
Structuralist/functionalist	Explains historical developments by reference to a state's/party's organisation (<i>structures</i>), or the economic and social conditions operating at the time, i.e. developments/actions as a <i>function</i> of such circumstances/structures.
Intentionalist	Focuses on human agency and the role of individuals in historical events, i.e. that such developments were deliberately <i>intended by an individual leader</i> .
Marxist	Historians/historical interpretations that see economic structures and developments as being the main determining (objective) factors behind historical developments and changes. Such approaches/methods are based on the ideas of Karl Marx (d. 1883), who stressed the significance of class struggles in such changes; though he did not see history unfolding in a pre-determined/inevitable way, some cruder variations did. Marxist historians also see human agency (subjective factors) as playing a role, but this is considered to be less important than the objective factors.

Human agency	Stresses the significance of the role of individuals in explaining historical change and developments, i.e. individuals are seen as having choices, and as making conscious decisions. Such interpretations tend to conflict with structural and Marxist approaches.
Whig approach	Developed in the nineteenth century. Tended to 'read' History backwards from the present, i.e. based on a belief that the 'past was working to the present'. Such an approach was developed by Victorian historians on, for instance, the Norman Conquest and on Britain's seventeenth-century crises. Tends to focus on political or constitutional developments, and to see History 'progressing' to the present.
Interpretation	A particular historical view of a period or issue in History, often in opposition to previous interpretations of the past, based on particular methods and types of evidence. Some historians argue that it is difficult to arrive at an objective historical 'truth' – the best that can be achieved is a series of differing interpretations (such as Marxist, feminist, postmodern, etc).
Motives	Reasons/interests which are seen as explaining why people took certain decisions/actions in the past, e.g. economic, political, social, religious, ambition, etc.
Empirical	Focuses on reconstructing the past, and assessing other interpretations, via a study and use of the evidence/facts, rather than taking a theoretical approach.
Synthesis	Interpretation/approach/method that combines elements of earlier, sometimes opposed, interpretations, in order to arrive at a new interpretation.
Factors	Aspects that influence/determine decision-making and historical developments/events, e.g. gender, social, economic, political, religious, etc.
Thesis	An explanation/interpretation put forward by an historian when attempting to explain why certain developments/changes took place. Actually a hypothesis and tentative, needing further research and confirmation.
Continuity	Focuses on the relative impact of certain historical events/developments and the degree of change or continuity with past practices/situations. Assessments of relative change/continuity can be affected by whether a top-down or bottom-up approach is adopted.



Indigenous peoples	Local inhabitants already living a place before outsiders arrived. Especially relevant to studies of British imperialism, the Crusades and the American Wests.
Constructing the past	The way historians constantly develop and write new histories of a particular period or issue, by building on previous interpretations, using new evidence, materials and techniques, and creating new interpretations. The tendency is to see History as being a collection of changing views of the past, and responses to these previous interpretations, rather than the 'actual' past, or even as just 'historiography'.
Reconstructing the past	The way historians attempt to re-create what the past was like, by basing themselves on the surviving evidence; or by focusing on the 'mentalities' of people in the past, possibly using aspects of sociology, anthropology or psychology.
Methodology	The methods used by historians which contribute to and shape the historical interpretations they produce. These methods may be based on a scientific methodology (such as forming a hypothesis and then testing it against the evidence, and trying to establish certain causal 'laws') in order to establish the truth of the past, or on a close study of primary sources in different regions to see whether experiences varied significantly from place to place.
Narrative history	A method of writing History which is concerned to describe the main and most critical developments in a chronological way, so that an overall picture of the past can emerge. Such histories can be micro- or meta-narratives.
Analytical history	A method of writing History which is more concerned with a focus on themes and the relative importance of causes or trends than 'mainly telling the story'. Such an approach often leads to the emergence of specific interpretations.

Schools of American West History

Turnerian			New Western history
First Phase: 1890 – 1920	Second Phase: 1920 – 1960	Third Phase: 1960 – Present	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frederick Jackson Turner – “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” 1893 ▪ “Frontier Thesis” The whole American experience was defined by the advancing frontier westward. The American character is shaped by the battle between savagery and civilisation at the frontier. ▪ The Frontier according to Turner was finished by 1890. ▪ Turner’s front shaped the people of the West and defined the American drive to succeed, fuelled the American Dream and so on... ▪ Would go on to dominate all textbooks on the West until the 1960s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 1920s saw the second phase of Turnerian models begin to be employed. ▪ Historians retained the idea that the frontier was important but began to add new processes of study for example urbanisation. ▪ Beginning of questions being asked about the Turnerian model. Many began to look at more regional studies of the West and questioned the notion that the frontier might have had such a large and formative impact on people. ▪ People also questioned how the 20th Century West should be treated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Began to focus more on issues of race, class, gender and environment. ▪ Began to show no-Marxist tendencies to tell the story of the West as a conflict between classes and imperialists. ▪ Many challenged the Turnerian interpretation however many were producing micro histories of the West and therefore no grand theories were coming to the fore. ▪ Begin to start to develop new theses. ▪ Richard White: “The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment and Societal Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees and Navajos” (1983) ▪ William Cronon: “Changes in the Land” (1985) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Patricia Limerick: “The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West” (1987) ▪ Main theme of American history was not the struggle at the frontier but the ongoing conquest by White settlers. ▪ No clear consensus on what is meant by a New Western History ▪ Definition of the West as a place – the area west of the hundredth meridian. ▪ Do not accept the concept of frontier or that it had a start and end date. Talk more in terms of colonisation, conquest, exploitation and development as shaping the western area of America. ▪ Elimination of the “progress” narrative which stigmatised the history of the West. ▪ Criticised by Gerald Nash who said that the New Western Historians were motivated by a totalitarian, leftist agenda to show the horrors of White Anglo Saxons and their crimes against the land and people of the Americas. ▪ Others noted the heavy anti-capitalist bias and deliberate iconoclasm. ▪ Many also accused of presentism – applying contemporary concerns to the actions of those in the past be it Native Americans, environment issues or gender. Notion that we should learn from the past.

Overview of Differing Interpretations on Key Topics in the American West

Key Topic	Old Western Interpretation	New Western Interpretation	Other Interpretations?
Why did the Native Americans and the US army come into conflict? What were the consequences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natives were occupying key land needed for Westward expansion. Natives often caused problems to travellers and therefore needed to be moved both for the safety of pioneers and themselves. Army was instrumental in protecting pioneers from Natives and therefore its presence in the West was necessary. “Indian Problem” removed – some apology for this in later work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natives did not understand the processes by which Whites attempted to claim the land. Natives were duped and lied to and were subdued by an aggressive army connected to an expansionist and racially motivated government. Natives were not recognised as having a culture and therefore not seen as “human” in the same way. Native culture survives –wrong to portray them as simply victims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Micro histories looked at individual cases of conflict – lots written on Wounded Knee and Little Bighorn. Natives in this sense in the wrong place at the wrong time
Who were the settlers and what were their motives for moving west?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early pioneers “blazed a trail” this included caricature trappers, gold miners with a thirst for profit and cattle ranchers seeing opportunity. Settlers were a nation of farmers who set out to seek an idyllic life farming in the West following in the footsteps of the early pioneers. West was a pressure release valve for overcrowded cities in the East, people left the cities, were reformed by the journey west and became Americans. Big business followed the popular settlements and eventually began to “ruin” the West. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settlers were a rag bag of immigrants, farmers, slaves, Hispanics, criminals, women and others who were both pushed and pulled East depending on their individual circumstances. Few people came from the cities. Many in fact travelled into them. Big business and government drove a lot of people Westward by providing vast amounts of support which settlers could draw on. Many were escaping old lives and hoping for better profits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feminist histories in particular look at women being dragged West by their husbands, demonstrating the power relations of the time.

Key Topic	Old Western Interpretation	New Western Interpretation	Other Interpretations?
What role did Native Americans play in the West? What was their culture like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natives were another geographical obstacle to be overcome, nothing more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natives have a rich and diverse history and culture stretching back well before the European chapter and continuing to the present. Natives were one of a group of different settlers who have come the Americas. Native culture was not homogeneous but rather varied from tribe to tribe and went beyond the geographical boundaries of North America. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early romantic interpretations saw the Natives as primitive but important representations of “true nature”. They were equated with the animals and general landscape Micro histories tended to focus on native rituals and puberty rites. Avatar!!!
What contribution did women make to the West?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women played almost no major role in the West other than as prostitutes, trappers’ “Indian wives”, missionaries, moralisers who held on to their Eastern ways or deviants sent to pull men astray. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women have a much greater and more varied role in Western history. Women helped to keep their Eastern culture and traditions alive in difficult circumstances. Took on many traditionally male roles during the journey but quickly reverted back once reaching the West. Were shaped by their interactions with other cultural groups on journeys Westward, helped to create a new type of culture. Influential in winning voting rights and moving politics forwards. A greater focus on the roles played by minority women – Chinese prostitutes etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feminist historians stress the importance of the roles done by women and show the male roles taken on by them. They also identify them as having been brought to the West against their will.

Key Topic	Old Western Interpretation	New Western Interpretation	Other Interpretations?
Were the American frontier and American democracy unique? Was 1890 really the end of an era?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The frontier is the process which creates American systems. The presence of an area of free land and the nature of that land creates the conditions required for change and the constantly Westward moving frontier evolves the European “germ” into the American one. By 1890, the population along the frontier removes the variable of free land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frontier is too simplistic – frontiers is more accurate as there are more than one existing concurrently at any one time. Frontier is not unique as it is just an extension of the European frontier. Others exist in other countries eg. India, Canada, South America etc. Frontier does not create the American character as for the most part Eastern culture is simply transplanted, the changes can be explained by cultural integration. No end to the frontier either seeing as a geographical area or looking at the approach of a Mexican frontier moving Northwards today. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
How important were the roles of the federal government, business and industry in the West?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal government followed where the people of the US led them. Their only real role was in creating the initial purchase of Louisiana and sponsoring the Lewis-Clark expedition. Manifest Destiny encouraged those travelling Westward that they were in the right. Industry moved in after the frontier and destroyed the ideal societies being created. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal government drove the Westward movement but made it appear to be a popular one. Initially involved in looking for profit but later became a tool for controlling Congress over the slavery issues. Manifest Destiny allowed the assertion of cultural dominance and the excuse to remove problematic rivals such as Britain and Mexico from the continent. Treaties with Natives allowed the government to seize greater amounts of land but settlement enthusiasm lagged behind, hence the need for incentives such as the Homestead Act. Demand for commodities encouraged businesses to expand Westwards pulling a workforce with them and encouraging Western dominance. Desire to increase power of central government meant a longer control of territories and the appointment of corrupt and business oriented officials. Gave the US president greater powers than ever to interfere at a state level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Key Topic	Old Western Interpretation	New Western Interpretation	Other Interpretations?
How far was individualism the key to success or were communities important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Rugged Individuals” built the West through pioneering spirit and sheer grit and determination. Many examples such as the Pony Express or the typical “cowboy” character. Even the 49er was an example of someone making their fortune off their own back. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families were massively important units. Until the homesteaders arrived no-one really settled the West for extended periods of time. • Group and communal action allowed people to travel to the West in the first place. • Many of the original “pioneers” were broken by the demands of operating solo in the West. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
What kind of society was established in the West? Was it a “new” society?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A “brand new” America created in the West built by the environmental conditions and the European Germ evolving. • Communities began basic but quickly began to grow and develop. • Democracy developed through hard fought trial and error. • Law and order eventually developed thanks to hard work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The society in the West was essentially transplanted into the East – architecture, political and social structures, religion, values were all transplanted. • Non-conformist views such as those of the Mormons were crushed to make way for the European hegemony. • The multi-ethnic nature of the new society was played down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

A Basic Timeline of American West Historiography

	Pre 1890	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000+
Romantic	Early romantic interpretations based on ideas of the West as a ideal of America. Wilderness an important element, an area of savage nature to be "tamed"												
						After the Depression of the 1930s the West comes to symbolise something pure from the past. Here the romanticism centres on the "nation of farmers" concept & rugged individualism. Now white western culture is as much part of the romanticism as the "wilderness".							
"Old Western"	Turnerian histories based on Turner's thesis stress the impact of landscape and inherent Anglo-Saxon characteristics in explaining the westward expansion. Germ theory which explain the development and break from Europe to create an unique America.												
						For Hollywood Turner's ideas now become the bedrock of a love affair with the Western. Turnerian ideas are brought to the masses. Germ theory and individualism win the day.							
						Billington and the pro-Turner school return to Turnerian ideas after victory in WW2 – a more buoyant mood meant a triumphant West was popular again. Engaging stories of "rugged individuals" make this an enduring interpretation – especially for the film industry.							
						Increasing focus on previously neglected groups such as natives or women leads to an explosion in "micro-histories". Many approaches for example see the plight of the Native Americans across the history of the West. For the most part however, these still see their topics in terms of Turner's frontier – especially true of early feminist studies which follow almost the same "grand theory". Others lack a "grand theory" at all and don't seek to explain the American West.							
Revisionist	Turner's theories are widely discredited after they are published. Historians such as Pierson heavily criticise Turner's vague use of evidence and try to show that frontier as a process is nowhere near as neat as Turner himself has suggested. This is spurred on by a general feeling that America is in a bad place due to the Depression of the 1930s – Turner's West was not the Zion America had been hoping for.												
						A disparate group of people begin rewriting Western history without reference to a single, all powerful frontier element. It is suggested that frontier might not be unique, more an extension of colonialism. Questions raised over concept of "free land" and its implicit dismissal of Native Americans							
						Economic historians such as North begin to look at how Westward expansion can be explained by economic means – Marxist historians also take this approach.							
						New Western History seeks to bring together many of the micro histories and revisions of Turner and begin the process of redefining and re-examining the West for a new age. Often accused of not bringing anything "new" to the table and, due to a wide range of cross-disciplinary work, of not writing "history".							

Queen Elizabeth I

Elizabeth I faced more difficulties as a monarch than any other Tudor. Born the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn on 7 September 1533, Elizabeth's right to rule as queen of England never went unchallenged. Protestants (notably John Knox) initially claimed female rule was unnatural or monstrous, while Roman Catholics judged Elizabeth as a bastard since they refused to recognise her father's marriage to her mother. Unlike her father and brother, whose legitimacy was never questioned, Elizabeth had to confront dynastic challenges at her accession which continued almost until her death.

Another difficulty for Elizabeth was that she inherited a realm ill at ease with itself. The religious persecution under her sister, Mary, had divided communities and traumatised English Protestants and their sympathisers. The economic recession, dreadful harvests and devastating epidemics of the mid – 1550s created uncertainties and shattered the lives of many ordinary people. The humiliating French capture of Calais (England's last continental possession) in January 1558 punctured confidence in England's military power and international prestige.

From these problems Elizabeth emerged triumphant. She confounded her Catholic enemies, imposed her will on the political scene, turned England into a strong Protestant state, presided over a glittering court culture and died in her bed at the age of 69. Her unusual situation as an unmarried queen – the only one in British history – created a mystique around her that has survived to the present. Unsurprisingly, scholarly studies and biographies of the queen come regularly off the press, easily outnumbering those devoted to the other Tudors.

Elizabeth's dominant place in British history is above all assured by the establishment and defence of the 1559 Protestant settlement – the English Prayer Book and Thirty Nine Articles of Religion – which remains the basis of the Church of England today. Due to her determination, the Church of England remained sufficiently flexible and moderate.

Elizabeth's importance in British history is also a result of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Her victory saved England from Spanish rule and preserved the Protestant church. It also restored confidence in England's martial reputation and pointed to the future when England would become a major naval power.

Of course, Elizabeth's fame also rests on her virginity. It had two important positive results. The first is that her heir was to be James VI, who united in his person England and Scotland, a crucially important event in the development of British history. The second is it transformed the queen into a cultural icon.

Susan Doran – lecturer at Oxford University and author of *Elizabeth I and Religion 1558 – 1603* (Routledge, 1993)

QUESTIONS

1. What is Doran's overall argument about the significance of Elizabeth I?
2. What 'smaller' / contributory arguments does she use to construct her 'big' argument?
3. What evidence has she used to support her arguments, big and small?

WORKERS REVOLT: THE GREAT CAT MASSACRE OF THE RUE SAINT-SEVERIN

THE FUNNIEST THING that ever happened in the printing shop of Jacques Vincent, according to a worker who witnessed it, was a riotous massacre of cats. The worker, Nicolas Contat, told the story in an account of his apprenticeship in the shop, rue Saint- Séverin, Paris, during the late 1730s. Life as an apprentice was hard, he explained. There were two of them: Jerome, the somewhat fictionalized version of Contat himself, and Léveillé. They slept in a filthy, freezing room, rose before dawn, ran errands all day while dodging insults from the journeymen and abuse from the master, and received nothing but slops to eat. They found the food especially galling. Instead of dining at the master's table, they had to eat scraps from his plate in the kitchen. Worse still, the cook secretly sold the leftovers and gave the boys cat food, old, rotten bits of meat that they could not stomach and so passed on to the cats, who refused it.

This last injustice brought Contat to the theme of cats. They occupied a special place in his narrative and in the household of the rue Saint-Séverin. The master's wife adored them, especially *la grise* (the gray), her favorite. A passion for cats seemed to have swept through the printing trade, at least at the level of the masters, or *bourgeois* as the workers called them. One bourgeois kept twentyfive cats. He had their portraits painted and fed them on roast fowl. Meanwhile, the apprentices were trying to cope with a profusion of alley cats who also thrived in the printing district and made the boys' lives miserable. The cats howled all night on the roof over the apprentices' dingy bedroom, making it impossible to get a full night's sleep. As Jerome and Léveillé had to stagger out of bed at four or five in the morning to open the gate for the earliest arrivals among the journeymen, they began the day in a state of exhaustion while the bourgeois slept late. The master did not even work with the men, just as he did not eat with them. He let the foreman run the shop and rarely appeared in it, except to vent his violent temper, usually at the expense of the apprentices.

One night the boys resolved to right this inequitable state of affairs. Léveillé, who had an extraordinary talent for mimicry, crawled along the roof until he reached a section near the master's bedroom, and then he took to howling and meowing so horribly that the bourgeois and his wife did not sleep a wink. After several nights of this treatment, they decided they were being bewitched. But instead of calling the cure the master was exceptionally devout and the mistress exceptionally attached to her confessor they commanded the apprentices to get rid of the cats. The mistress gave the order, enjoining the boys above all to avoid frightening her *grise*.

Gleefully Jerome and Léveillé set to work, aided by the journeymen. Armed with broom handles, bars of the press, and other tools of their trade, they went after every cat they could find, beginning with *la grise*. Léveillé smashed its spine with an iron bar and Jerome finished it off. Then they stashed it in a gutter while t'he journeymen drove the other cats across the rooftops, bludgeoning everyone within reach and trapping those who tried to escape in strategically placed sacks. They dumped sackloads of half-dead cats in the courtyard. Then the entire workshop gathered round and staged a mock trial, complete with guards, a confessor, and a public executioner. After pronouncing the animals guilty and administering last rites, they strung them up on an improvised gallows. Roused by gales of laughter, the mistress arrived. She let out a shriek as soon as she saw a bloody cat dangling from a noose. Then she realized it might be *la grise*. Certainly not, the men assured her: they had too much respect for the house to do such a thing. At this point the master appeared. He flew into a rage at the general stoppage of work, though his wife tried to explain that they were threatened by a more serious kind of insubordination. Then master and mistress withdrew, leaving the men delirious with "joy," "disorder," and "laughter".

The laughter did not end there. Léveillé reenacted the entire scene in mime at least twenty times during subsequent days when the printers wanted to knock off for some hilarity. Burlesque reenactments of incidents in the life of the shop, known as *copies* in printers' slang, provided a major form of entertainment for the men. The idea was to humiliate someone in the shop by satirizing his peculiarities. A successful copie would make the butt of the joke fume with rage—*prendre la chèvre* (take the goat) in the shop slang—while his mates razed him with "rough music." They would run their composing sticks across the tops of the galle cases, beat their mallets against the chases, pound on cupboards, and bleat like goats. The bleating (*bats* in the slang) stood for the humiliation heaped on the victims, as in English when someone "gets your goat." Contat emphasized that Léveillé produced the funniest *copies* anyone had ever known

and elicited the greatest choruses of rough music. The whole episode, cat massacre compounded by *copies*, stood out as the most hilarious experience in Jerome's entire career.

Yet it strikes the modern reader as unfunny, if not downright repulsive. Where is the humour in a group of grown men bleating like goats and banging with their tools while an adolescent re-enacts the ritual slaughter of a defenceless animal? Our own inability to get the joke is an indication of the distance that separates us from the workers of preindustrial Europe. The perception of that distance may serve as the starting point of an investigation; for anthropologists have found that the best points of entry in an attempt to penetrate an alien culture can be those where it seems to be most opaque. When you realize that you are not getting something—a joke, a proverb, a ceremony—that is particularly meaningful to the natives, you can see where to grasp a foreign system of meaning in order to unravel it. By getting the joke of the great cat massacre, it may be possible to "get" a basic ingredient of artisanal culture under the Old Regime.

'THE PURSUIT OF HISTORY' – JOHN TOSH

- 1. Why does Tosh argue that the act of writing is important for historians?**
- 2. What are the three basic types of history writing, according to Tosh?**
- 3. Summarise each type of writing in one sentence.**
- 4. Why is asking the question 'why?' more complex than it might seem?**
- 5. What is 'manifest history' and 'latent history'?**
- 6. How does Lawrence Stone try to explain historical causation?**
- 7. What do the terms 'diachronic' and 'synchronic' mean?**
- 8. What is the 'post hoc propter hoc' fallacy?**
- 9. How does AJP Taylor say about the causes of the First World War?**
- 10. Why does Tosh criticise narrative history?**
- 11. What are the benefits and disadvantages of looking at the past both in extreme close – up and in overview?**
- 12. What does Ferdinand Braudel mean by 'submerged history'?**
- 13. What are Braudel's three 'planes' of history?**
- 14. What does Tosh say are the qualities of a successful historian?**