

TRINITY COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

Robert Robson History Prize (2026)

The Robert Robson Prize for essays in History is a competition that can be entered by students in Year 12 or the Lower 6th. Candidates are invited to submit an essay on a topic to be chosen from a list of general questions announced in March each year, and to be submitted in August.

The Prize is organised by Trinity College Cambridge. It was established by a generous bequest from the estate of a dedicated former teacher of History at Trinity, Dr Robert Robson.

The objectives of the Robson Prize are to encourage school students with an interest in modern politics and world affairs to think about undertaking university studies in History or a related discipline. It further seeks to recognise the achievements both of high-calibre students and of those who teach them.

The Prize is for students in the penultimate year of their school when the questions are released in March. For students in England and Wales, that means you would be eligible if you are in Year 12 in March 2026; for Scotland, the eligible year is S5. Students from any country are most welcome to participate. The general rule is that to be eligible for the 2026 competition, you should be expecting to receive your final school results in the year from September 2026 to August 2027. This condition is held to strictly and, to be fair to the participants, no exceptions are made. Each entrant to the competition is allowed to submit only one essay.

Answer one of the questions. You are encouraged to go beyond material that might be taken from school courses and undertake your own reading in historiographical and historical sources. Essays should be no longer than 3,000 words, including any footnotes.

The essay should be submitted via the form on the Trinity College website.

The deadline for submission is **12 noon (UK time) on Friday 31 July 2026.**

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1. To what extent was first wave feminism in Britain a radical political movement?
2. How useful is the concept 'globalisation' for understanding modern History?
3. To what extent were the revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries connected to the development of European empires?
4. In what ways did Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (1789) appeal to an abolitionist audience?
5. What can autobiographical writing tell us about working-class selfhood in the nineteenth century? Answer with reference to two examples.
6. Did Henry VIII get the Reformation he wanted?
7. How did Rome justify imperial expansion?
8. 'The partition of Ireland in 1920 was the logical, if crude, conferral of statehood on already homogeneous communities.' Discuss.
9. How far was late Anglo-Saxon kingship constrained by a clear set of royal obligations?
10. What drove the Chartist movement?
11. How British was Britain's empire in the eighteenth century?
12. 'Empires end in civil war.' Discuss with reference to two or more regions.
13. Why did Karl Marx seek to distinguish Communism from the various different forms of contemporary Socialism?
14. Why did Pan-Africanism flourish in the nineteenth century?
15. How far did the Enlightenment represent a break with the past?
16. 'Power, not profit was the principal motor of the East India Company.' Discuss.
17. To what extent was nationalist ideology a prerequisite to anti-colonial resistance?
18. Do visual images of Victorian politicians tell us anything that we cannot glean from texts?
19. Why were many nineteenth-century Liberals unable to envision EITHER women AND/OR poor men as being included in active voting citizenship?
20. How accurate is the view that war was the main driver of state formation between 1815 and 1914?

21. 'As far as women were concerned, the emancipatory promises of most political revolutions proved to be bitterly disappointing.' Discuss with reference to two or more examples.
22. To what extent did the ideology of the gendered 'separation of spheres' dictate the experiences and opportunities of nineteenth-century men and women?
23. Who drove the abolition of the slave trade and slavery?
24. Were famines 'natural' or 'manmade' in the twentieth century? Discuss with reference to two or more different countries.
25. Did WWI fundamentally transform European conceptions of masculinity?
26. Was Gandhi's concept of *Satyagraha* more of a tactic than a political philosophy?
27. Were the conflicts between Charles I and his parliaments primarily because of his choice of political advisors?
28. To what extent was Mary Wollstonecraft's proposed moral revolution a political revolution?
29. What role did the 'periphery' play in the politics of the Cold War?
30. Did the Ottoman age of reform pit modernisers against traditionalists?